



# THE PIONEER

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## Life in Winters Past

Winter in Stroud has always been cold and community spirit warm. As winter leaves us, this article will take a look at aspects of winter life in Stroud as it has been recorded in newspapers and memories through time.

In the winter of 1889, fundraising and sport were enjoyed then as they are now. Interestingly, the summer sport of cricket was being played in the cold weather. A match was held between the Stroud and Booral Clubs. The Good Templars and Presbyterians held a picnic to raise money to be put towards 'the debt on their buildings'<sup>1</sup>. Another cricket match was held 'between the married and single members' of the community and it was 'an easy victory for the bachelors'.

Picnics and films were enjoyed during the chilly months of 1911. 'A picnic was held in the recreation ground as a send-off to Mr W. J. Yates<sup>2</sup> and his family who intend shortly taking up residence at Wards River'. It was reported that Edison's Pictures were shown on a Saturday night with the Coronation pictures considered good and the rest fresh, interesting, and funny.

Skating was big in 1914. Does anyone know where? In July 1914, the correspondent reported that Saturday Night "Carnival Night" had a full hall. A range of events and prizes were enjoyed on the night. The potato race was won by Horace Green and W. Hutchinson won "Placing the eye in the pig". Costumes had prizes too. The fancy dress winners were Ruby Wilmen and Tommy Durbridge as "Lad" and "Lassie". The best skating couple was Miss Waters and Mr Horace Green. Skater of the season was awarded to Little Edna Williams, who was expected to be a professional at her pastime. The judges for the evening were Miss Youdale and Mr J. Bennett.

Fast forward to the 1950s. Aunty Shirley grew up in Washpool Rd and has shared some winter memories<sup>3</sup>. The family lived without electricity, using a fuel stove and an open fire for cooking and heating. Clothing was homemade with Shirley's mum sewing clothes and knitting jumpers to keep them warm. They enjoyed winter swims in the river! Yes, Shirley assures me she swam in the winter as she was not a cold person! Shirley attended Booral School. Here, they played many games in winter, including tunnel ball. Shirley played cricket with the boys because she was a tom boy. Vigaro and hockey were played at Stroud Sports Day. It was



not uncommon for Shirley to walk on frost-covered ground with no shoes and she did not get chilblains! There was no running water so they washed at the outside tap, even in winter!

Sharon Burke ©2015

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and *The Dungog Chronicle*.

### 'A Winter's Morning'

By Doris Barnes, Stroud Road Public School, 1936

*The sun shone high above the hills,  
Upon the frosty grass,  
And little flowers raised their heads  
As rabbits scampered past.  
The sparkling frost soon disappeared,  
The birds sang in the trees;  
And snatches of their merry songs,  
Came on the chilly breeze.*

<sup>1</sup> The Good Templars is a worldwide organisation of teetotallers that promotes total abstinence from alcohol. They held their meetings in a building in Memorial Avenue, Stroud.

<sup>2</sup> Stroud Baptist foundation member.

<sup>3</sup> Telephone call with Denise Haynes' Aunty Shirley on 17/6/15.