



# THE PIONEER

RURAL & RESIDENTIAL  
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## John Bowen – A Full Life

### The Early Years

This article is the first of two about John's life as told to me during an interview with him last year.

John was born on 1 April 1933 to parents Alice and Cecil Bowen in Stroud Hospital, Darcy Warner's previous home. John was third in the family after sisters Rae and Claire and Bob followed John. Alice passed away in 1937 during childbirth when she was having the fifth child. John's fondest memory of his mother is of her bread and butter pudding.



His father later married Joyce Ford. Cecil and Joyce had two sons, Ted and Allan. John looks on Ted and Allan as brothers, not step brothers.

Cecil Bowen was a bullock driver, born on 14 August 1899. John, aged 15, lost his father due to angina on 5 July 1948. John remembered that he raised 50 day old chickens with his father. This would prove fruitful in John's future endeavours.

When he recalled memories of his father and the bullock train, John explained how Listening Hill was named. The bullock drivers would ride horses up through Millbrook and Simsville Roads, riding out of a morning, and they would *listen* for the bells of the bullocks – and that's how the area became known as Listening Hill.

John attended Stroud Public School, and then Stroud Central School, a local high school, and where John did the Intermediate Certificate as a dying wish to his father.

His first job was working for Ted Murray at the general store in Stroud. The initial role was bagging up potatoes and bushels of wheat as well as serving in the store, learning the art of salesmanship. John was promoted to the position of taking orders from the local ladies, encouraging purchases of additional items by supplying samples such as warmed chicken soup, as he drove around to the houses in the district to collect the orders. At 17, John became the grocery delivery truck driver which was a very hard job.

In 1953, aged 20, John was drafted for National Service. Training was at Ingleburn which was a big shock to John as it was his first trip to Sydney. The camps after training were mainly in Singleton. John did two of these camps and then spent two years in the reserve forces. John learnt the value of discipline during National Service. After five years he was released.

During his National Service, John kept his job at the store but his pay went from seven pounds per week to four pounds and three shillings per week. Upon discharge from the National Service, John returned to the shop.

John bought a truck to deliver road gravel for the council. This was the last time he had a permanent weekly wage. He has worked for himself since then.

Before we discuss the business ventures, we should introduce the family. John met Doreen at the Baptist Church and they married in 1958. Three children followed, Christopher, Shirley, and Philip. They have five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They built their first family home for 1,350 pounds. John described Doreen as a marvellous woman, a great manager, and the most wonderful person from the beginning. They have never had an argument.

Sharon Burke © 2016

Many thanks to John Bowen for allowing me to write his story. If you would like your story published by Sharon, please contact her through the R & R office.