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Irene Worth (nee Towers): Early Family Life

This article will touch on the life story of our Bulahdelah local, Irene Worth.

Irene was born in Taree on 2nd February 1938. Her family lived in and around the Bulahdelah district for many years with Irene spending a short amount of time in Newcastle. The Towers family did not leave the district their whole lives.

Irene's father, Ted Towers, from Taree, worked for the Forestry Commission at Coopernook. Ted and his work colleague, Jack Dennet, obtained the job of putting in a fire break at the back of the Alum Mountain. They rode their horses from Coopernook to Bulahdelah in one day to get there, only stopping at Nabiac to rest the horses. During this time Ted camped in Green Gully, at "The Glen", on the corner of Lakes and Conglomerate Roads, where he met Irene's mother, Hazel Richards. Hazel's mother cooked meals for the men and they got to know the family through obtaining supplies from the farm.

Irene's parents married in 1937 and moved to "Bannockburn", a neighbouring farm of "The Glen". This area was owned, in the main, by the Richards family. Ted would stay in the work camp during the week, returning home for the weekends. Irene was born during this time.

The family moved to The Crawford and lived on Tom Ireland's farm. Ted's work with the Forestry Commission moved to a camp in the Johnson's Creek area, near Stroud. He was a foreman, managing men cutting timber and logs in the bush, riding his pushbike to the camp from The Crawford. At this time, Irene's sister, Phyllis, was born.

When Irene was four or five years old, the family moved to the forestry house at Wilina, near Coolongolook. Brother, Ray, was born during this time and the family stayed here for three or four years.

They then moved back to Bulahdelah and bought a house in Edgar Street. Ted left the Forestry Commission a few years later.

After leaving the Forestry, the family moved onto share farming in the dairy industry. Initially, they were on an Ireland family farm, where Irene's brother, Kenny, was born. Ted rode his pushbike, with a 10 gallon drum of cream on the bar between the handle-bars and seat, from the dairy to the milk stand on the side of the Pacific Highway to be collected by trucks going to the Oak Factory. The cream was used to make butter.

Next, they moved to the Burdekin Farm in the Crawford area, and then to George and Mary Richards' property on Lakes Road.



Initially Irene went to school at The Crawford, a one teacher school with one room for all students, kinder to year six. The children went on to attend Bulahdelah Central School which Irene left at the age of fourteen, after completing the Intermediate Certificate.

After leaving school, Irene helped around the dairy as her Mum was pregnant with Jan. After Jan was born, Irene went to work for Mrs Tom Gooch, known as Aunty Vel, a family friend. Mr Gooch had a transport and fuel company. Irene was employed as a housemaid and received five pound per fortnight plus keep for her wages. Irene did this work for about a year.

Irene started nursing after she was asked to sing at a cousin's wedding. She needed a new dress for the event so she went to Eastham's dress shop where the chosen dress cost five pound, equivalent to a fortnight's wages. The owner of the store recommended that Irene become a nurse so she could earn more money to buy nice things, and from there Irene's nursing career began.

The family moved to Emu Creek and this was the last farm before Irene's father retired.

In a future article we will learn more about Irene's adult life.

We thank Irene for sharing her story with us.

If you would like to share your story, please contact the girls at R & R Property.

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