

Memories of Riverstone

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I have been reading the memoirs of my mother, Constance Eileen Forsyth (nee Connie Goldsmith) and her first reference to living at Riverstone reads "We went to Riverstone, between Parramatta and Windsor, and lived in a house near the Catholic Church, next to the Vaughan family. They had two sons, Jack and Ray. My Dad became a book-keeper at Darling's Store. That was in 1910 because I remember that was the year King Edward the seventh died, and Halley's comet appeared".

The Goldsmith family lived in Riverstone for a short time, and returned in 1913 when Edith Goldsmith (my grandmother) purchased a modest dwelling and some land in Creek Street. My grandmother was employed as a seamstress in Sydney.

Between 1914 and 1918 my mother worked for old friends, Mr and Mrs Henry Blake in their shop at Milsons Point. Hilda Blake, their daughter and Mum remained very close friends until the time of Hilda's death.

After almost four years at Milsons Point, my mother returned to live at Riverstone, and also became a seamstress working in Sydney. The train departed from Riverstone 6.30a.m. and returned 6.30p.m. A long day, but Mum said the young people on the train had lots of fun, and formed friendships which lasted through lifetimes. One friend who travelled from Blacktown was Frank Tscherne, a member of a well known family.

My mother, Connie Goldsmith, married my dad, Alexander Forsyth of Parramatta in 1919.

My recollections of Riverstone from about the age of five years are spending Sundays with our grandparents. Mum, Dad, sister Selma and I would travel by steam train from Parramatta (we lived at Harris Park) and it was an exciting journey back in 1927.

My grandfather had tilled the soil and commenced a strawberry farm Mum and Dad. Selma and I would help with the picking of strawberries for market the next day. We had a lot of fun picking the berries, being warned to whistle all the while to make sure we were not eating the strawberries. Mum's younger brother, Len, would help us pick while grandfather would sit and brush the berries with a soft brush and pack them in punnets. The filled punnets would be packed into a large suitcase, and Len would take them to the Sydney markets on his way to work the next day. If there was a surplus, my dad and Len would take them (in Dad's old Essex ute) to the main road and sell them on the roadside. In later years we were joined by Mum's older brother, Walter and his wife Margery and in time their small daughter, Margaret.

These were very happy days, and while we were all working Nana Goldsmith would be preparing a delicious roast beef and Yorkshire pudding dinner for us in her wood burning stove. At night, by the light of a kerosene lamp, we would have a lovely cold meat and salad tea, followed by a huge bowl of strawberries and clotted cream. My sister and I would walk across the creek to Sam and Doll Ratcliffe's home, to collect the cream. We had to cross the creek on a rickety old bridge, also we passed by a lovely little natural spring. We have photographs of these places as my Uncle Wal was a great photographer.

At the end of the day (before the Essex) we would wend our way back to the railway station, and so on to home, tired but happy. In later years both my Dad and Uncle Wal had cars, and so the train journeys came to an end.

When travelling to Riverstone by train, I was conscious of the Meatworks further on from the station, but being a child I did not pay much attention. We would pass Conway's Newsagency opposite the station, go through the railway gates, and pass the Hotel on the left hand comer. We walked along the dirt road, and then took a track through the paddocks until we came to the Goldsmiths in Creek Street. At other times we would walk on a little further on the dirt road, until we came to Creek Street, then tum left. The people I remember living in Creek Street were the Wiggins and Empsom families. I remember the Wiggins family most, as they had a beautiful ornament which was a little house inside a glass dome and when you shook it, "snow" drifted down and covered the house. This is a common ornament today, but way back then it was the only one I had ever seen.

Josie East was the owner of the Hotel during this time, and I was invited to lunch with her daughter one day. I was having a holiday with my grandparents at the time. I remember the lunch well. We had soup, and a hot dinner, followed by pudding of what looked like prunes and ice-cream. The ice-cream (as it appeared to be) was in fact boiled rice. I was so disappointed as ice-cream was a rare treat in those days, but the prunes and rice was most acceptable and enjoyable.

As the milkman did not call at the house, Nana Goldsmith used powdered milk, and it was quite an occasion for us kids to shake the bottle of water and milk powder until nicely smooth. Also we had a lot of fun feeding the chooks with a mixture of bran and pollard which grandfather made into balls, and we would bowl these along the ground to the waiting chooks.

At the front gate was a lovely arch, and a beautiful peach tree grew dose by which in season would be laden with hit, as were the other trees on the property. Lots of flowers bloomed in the garden, best remembered are lovely verbenas. A large water hole was on the left hand side of the house.

Other people I remember well were the Shaw family. Mr and Mrs Shaw, son Fred, and daughter Evelyn. We saw a lot of them over the years, and Evelyn's wedding reception was held in my parent's home at Harris Park. All the Shaws have passed on. Other names I remember are Sadie Roser and John Russell, who married. John has passed on, but Sadie lives on the Central Coast.

Walter Goldsmith was born in 1902 He worked for Gestetners in Sydney. In 1927 Wal married Margery Elspeth McGregor (a resident of Schofields). He joined the RAAF. during the war years, and. moved to Brisbane towards the end of the War. He became Gestetner's Queensland Manager after the War and until his death in 1953. Margery passed away in 1975. Their only daughter, Margaret, was born in Sydney, and now resides with her husband Richard Cameron and family in Brisbane.

Nana Goldsmith was a wonderful sewer, and made some beautiful gowns. She and my mother (Connie) made the wedding gown for Margery McGregor and Nana beaded all the gills of the gown, and the bodice and sleeves, it was very beautiful. I was also lucky, as Nana beaded a white georgette evening dress for me when I was about 20, I was the envy of my friends.

Leonard Goldsmith was born in 1912 at Merriwa. Len was a brilliant student and accountant and worked at the Riverstone Meat Company, before moving to northern areas where he became manager of several meat works. Len married Marie Nolan in 1942, three children of the marriage live on the Central Coast and in Sydney. Len and Marie retired in due course to Long Jetty, where Marie now resides. Len passed away in 1986 aged almost 75 years.

My mother, Connie Goldsmith was born in England in 1900, and married my dad Alexander Forsyth of Parramatta in 1919. My sister Selma and I being the only children, Mum was always very active in charity work, especially during the war years, and after. We always lived in and around the Parramatta area, until 1969 when Mum and Dad moved to Valentine, near Belmont. My husband, Harold Johnston, and I had moved to Valentine in 1964, and we persuaded my parents to come and live near us. Dad passed away in 1973, and Mum in 1989, in her 89th year.

My sister, Selma, now lives in California with her husband. Her son, Alex, and his wife and their children live close by. Selma and her family have made frequent trips to Australia.

Grandfather Goldsmith died in 1935, and after some years my Grandmother was persuaded to leave Riverstone and spend her time with her three children and their families. She passed away in 1947 aged 72, which in those days we considered a good age, but not so today.