

Memories of Riverstone

Dawn Olive Neal (nee Douglass)

I think it is wonderful to be able to write about Riverstone and full marks to the Riverstone Historical Society.

Coming from an old Riverstone family, it gives me great pleasure to talk about my family, the Douglass'. I was born in Riverstone on the 18th of March 1932 and delivered by Sister Barnes at the Private Hospital, Garfield Road, Riverstone. Our family lived at 82 Crown Road, three generations side by side and what wonderful memories I have. All the love and affection anyone could hold. There was Mary and Robert Gunton (my great grandparents), Eva and Percy Douglass (my grandparents) and of course my parents, Jack and Dorothy Douglass nee Eather.

We lived there for about four years and then moved to Butchers Row, I remember every time we crossed the rail line I cried my eyes out to go back home. When I was five, my brother Des was born and I remember Mum going to hospital in the horse and sulky to Garfield Road. Des now lives with his wife Barbara at Inverell, NSW and has three children and numerous grandchildren and one great grand daughter. Then Barry came along three years later and he lives at Windsor, NSW. Barry has four children and just as many grandchildren. I have five sons and seven grandchildren and two great grand children.

Pop Douglass and his three sons all worked at the Meat Works. Pop was the best Mutton Butcher holding a record to dress a sheep in no time flat. According to the private diary of Mr William Hanna, the highest tally for four hours was 76 whereas Percy Douglass holds the record for 86 mixed sheep in four hours.

The Meat Works was once on strike for six weeks, so Pop and his boys, Jack, Darcy and Curley rode their pushbikes from Riverstone to Pitt Town and back to pick potatoes on the May farm. Believe you me, the spuds they brought home were most welcome on the plate. They went rabbiting and we had a lot of that and also my father Jack was a good fisherman and there was always fish from the creek that was crystal clear in those days.

In 1945 my beloved mother, Dorothy Joyce passed away at the early age of thirty-four, after this we all moved in with my father's parents, Percy and Eva Douglass in Crown Road. From there I married Jack Neal and we moved to Richmond with Dad, Des and Barry and we raised our five boys.

However, I never forgot the kind-hearted people of Riverstone. I remember that in those days you never visited anyone without coming home with eggs, cream or milk. The Schofield's lived next door to Gran and Pop and always had veggies growing and they always made something to give you.

I now reside at Boambee East, just south of Coffs Harbour on the NSW north coast.