

# Olga Robshaw

Clarrie Neal

A Schofields' resident who has served the community well over the years is Olga Robshaw, daughter of Herbert and Elizabeth Davis who lived on the top of the hill in Grange Avenue.

Olga was a Life Member of the Blacktown Women's Bowling Club, achieving that honour after 37 years as a member, including many years as the Secretary, Vice-president, and President. She is also well known for her interest in garden clubs, and for the beautiful floral arrangements she created on special bowls days.

Olga is best remembered as the face of the Blacktown Advocate, serving 22 years as a writer, owner and editor. Olga featured prominently in the special issue of the Advocate printed on the 16th March 1995, to celebrate its 50th Anniversary.

Olga took over the reins in 1953, with the previous owner Jack Ward as a salesman, who was described by Olga as being 'kindness itself'.

Running the paper with three young sons to look after was not easy but Olga said the support she received from the community was tremendous. She had a strong commitment to the area. When she took over the office was in Crabbs Chambers in Campbell Street but the paper was printed at Macarthur Press in Parramatta.

By June 1955 Olga started printing the paper in Blacktown, after finding and converting an old sawmill in Doonside Crescent. The masthead on June 2nd proudly stated 'Printed in Blacktown'.

*You used to do everything then, Olga said. I went to council meetings, I did the writing, the layouts, and I would proof read. I would sometimes help print it and then help deliver. It was an all night job, I'd have a few hours sleep and start it all over again the next morning.*

Olga's parents Elizabeth and Herbert Davis gave her a lot of support in running the paper. Her father would deliver the paper to the bakers to be delivered with the bread in the morning. Bert was tragically killed in an accident at Schofields' railway crossing in 1959 while out delivering.

A disastrous fire in the printing works in 1964 *just about knocked us out* Olga said. The next year Olga sold the paper to the Cumberland Newspaper Group, which had been printing the rival paper the Blacktown Post. The Post was incorporated into the Advocate in 1965.

When Sam Birney started the Advocate in 1944 it was a 'two page rag', but when Olga sold it to Cumberland it was a respected 24 page paper with a circulation of 21,120.

Another article in the special 50th year edition told how the paper helped the community, under the heading 'paper helped local causes'.

*The people of Blacktown had a lot of heart. People just didn't sit back and wait for things to happen, they made them happen.*

*There wasn't a swimming pool in the area so we formed a swimming pool committee and started to raise money for one. We didn't have an ambulance station so we got up a committee. We set up another committee to get a hospital.*

*I used the Advocate to further good local causes and that's what a good local paper should do. The paper was a good influence in the community.*

*The area really has changed from when I was at the Advocate. It has gone from that horse-and-buggy, pothole-mentality to a thriving city. When I first became editor Blacktown was a sleepy place, the shops would still close for an hour at lunchtime.*

When the Blacktown railway crossing was replaced by a bridge in 1955, Olga actually wrote a death notice about it, saying the crossing would not be missed.

Olga left the Advocate in 1976 and retired from journalism in 1985.

*Olga Robshaw passed away on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2002. A keen gardener, Olga started a garden club in the Hills Shire around 1992. In 2003, in her memory, the Olga Robshaw Encouragement Award for gardening was introduced as part of the Baulkham Hills Council Orange Blossom Festival.*

*More details on the life of Olga Robshaw are available in a folder at the Bicentennial Museum at Riverstone.*