

The Bushfire and a Grave in the Cemetery

Patricia Smith (nee Woodland)

My name is Patricia Smith, I am the daughter of Ruby Woodland. When I was growing up I lived in Riverstone with my Grandmother, Mrs Ada Woodland, who lived past the cemetery.

I remember the time of the bushfires – Nan locked the doors and said we would be safe if we could reach the cemetery. We were running as the fire seemed to be taking over us. Just as we reached the fence of the cemetery, Nan said lay down on this slab, keep your head down as the fire will pass over us.

I will never forget the slab we were laying on, it was Mr Conway's grave, who owned the paper shop. Just as I looked up, not taking any notice about keeping my head down, I saw the fire was about to reach us, but at the same time the wind, at that moment, changed direction and the fire never reached us.

Someone was looking after us, but the only thing Nan had left were the keys in her pocket, she had lost everything.

In a strange co-incidence at a Riverstone Public school reunion in 2007, by chance, Patricia found herself sitting next to Cliff Conway, son of Mr Conway whose grave is mentioned in the story above.