

# The Vineyard in the 1940s

*Gloria Strachan*

The first recollection of any importance was starting school for the first time, I was seven years old. For some reason you started school at that age those days, then it was changed. Mum taught me how to read and also the alphabet, so I was ready to learn. I loved school. By the time I reached the senior classes there were only eight in the class.

We had a large lunch shed for wet and cold windy days. Walking to school on frosty mornings with the frost still on the ground at 9 o'clock seemed to be fun with the frost crunching under our feet.

Events of the times I remember delighting in: Wattle Day the 1st August. Raising the Flag for assembly. Playing all our favourite games – Hopscotch, Oranges and Lemons, skipping, marbles, chasings. Empire Day we had our sports day and picnic.

In the summer we did some classes outside under the gum trees – Nature Study was one and the other was Geography. We also had a large map of Australia marked out on the playground where we learnt all about Australia. Arbour Day we planted trees.

When the war was on there was an Air Raid shelter dug a distance from the school and we practiced running and jumping in on most days.

The next big event was Sunday School in St Andrews Church Hall next to school. After the Church Service is when we had Sunday School. My teacher was a resident of Vineyard, Beryl McLean. Sunday afternoons were special as my dad used to take my brother and me for bushwalks where he taught us all about trees, plants, birds and animals we came across on the day.

When we were a little older in the early teens, there was the fishing at South Creek to look forward to, getting there seemed a marathon of a walk.

When I was very young, some of the relatives would get together and have sing-a-longs outside during summer, one of the relatives played the mouth organ and another the Concertina, (small squeezebox).

Then there were the bush fires, there were many those days, we dreaded the summer because of them. All the residents pitched in and helped the Fire Brigade by protecting each others houses, many were burnt. There was a very bad fire in the early forties, we had hot westerlies and the fire started out at Berkshire Park or further and came straight across Riverstone Meatworks paddocks and across to us surrounding most of the homes in our area. This particular fire was bad and Mum put the two of us under the kitchen table and covered us with wet towels and we were told not to come out, I remember being frightened.

When I was about 14 years old I joined the Vineyard Younger Set run by the older teenagers of the time. This group held dances at the Church Hall, picnics and bus trips to Bobbin Head, the Mountains, Mitchell Park etc. We even had a game of cricket on Sundays in the Vineyard Park. All this didn't last very long as they all found partners and went their own way.

Another big event in our lives would have been *The Rivoli* Theatre. It was very popular with everyone not just the Vineyard residents, there was often standing room only.

I also remember hot summer nights with the curlews singing out, they had such a mournful sound.

What I miss, now I no longer live there, is looking out my bedroom window on a Sunday morning at the birds in the garden next to my window. The Wattle birds feeding on the nectar and the Yellow Robins nesting in the pine tree. I miss all the wonderful creatures that live in the bush.

I left Vineyard three times in my lifetime and returned twice, the last time I spent 12 years living in Otago Street. I built a house on five acres which was part of the original land belonging to my great great grandfather and on this land I spent some of my happiest years, it was so peaceful there.