

Williams Produce and Hardware Store, Schofields

Nell Moody (nee Williams)

My mother Lillian Rothwell, who was born in Junction Road had bought into a partnership with Mr Coleman, a grocer of Railway Terrace, for 40 pounds in the 1920's. She and my father met when Dad and his little truck were employed by the Rothwell and Coleman shop to deliver the grocery orders. They married in 1932.

My mother loved "business." She said she had learned the "hard way" bargaining at De Luca's greengrocery shop in King Street, Sydney before World War 1 when she was a child. She and her brother would pick mushrooms at dawn after rain in the paddocks of Schofields, out as far as the Rouse Hill she said. They would pack them in hand made boxes and take them by train to Central. (The service was faster then in the steam train).

She did all the negotiations for the Williams family with the Australian and English solicitors in regard to the inheritance. She too had great faith in Schofields and built two shops with flats above, next to the hardware shop. Rothwell Crescent at the back of them was named for her mother.

As I wrote this, memories of the 1940's and 1950's came flooding back.

.. Getting stung by a wasp while playing on the floor of the Post Office in the front of the shop. My mother ran the Post Office with my cousin Gwen Rothwell in the 1940's.

.. Being doubled on the bar of Sid Bye's bike from Schofields Public to the shop after school. This was great fun!

.. Hanging on the tabletop of one of the trucks while holding my bike as Vic, Charlie, Sid or Dad seemed to hit every corrugation.

.. Watching my Grandmother Martha Rothwell, carefully going through the World War 2 casualty lists in the S. M. Herald, with a magnifying glass in case someone's son was mentioned. Schofields, in those days, seemed more like a family than a district.

.. My grandmother's second handbag full of recipes, 'cures', newspaper cuttings and bible tracts which she loved to pass on. She could add the columns of pounds, shillings and pence, keeping a running total in her head until she wrote down the final total, and she was never wrong.

.. My mother always on the phone, in the shop and at home, making appointments for customers and neighbours at doctors, hospitals and solicitors etc. and helping with problems. Not many people had phones then and a number of New Australians were not confident in English.

.. Cleaning what seemed to be the biggest glass plate windows with scrunched up newspaper and water.

.. Learning to pump petrol by hand.

.. Morning and afternoon teas and lunches. My grandmother or mother would make tea in the big enamel pot and Dad, Vic, Sid and Charlie would cross the road and join Gran, Mum, Alan and I. Even dear old Charlie from over the line would come. I remember it being a time of jokes and laughs, cricket stories, a little bit of gentle teasing for me and constant good humour. I think I was very lucky to have those years in the shop. Schofields was a lovely place in which to grow up.

My parents sold the business to Joan and Laurie Rothwell in 1972. They owned it for 10 years, selling it to Mal and Phil Holland (MJ H Products P/L) in late 1982.

The produce store (on the Railway land) fell into disrepair, (I remember my parents going to a lot of trouble to get Oregon flooring), and was demolished in 2009.

Walter Williams

In December 1937 my father Walter Williams and his five brothers and sisters each received 700 pounds (Aust) from an inheritance from his mothers' family in the English Midlands. Each bought real estate in various parts of Australia and England. My father spent his share in Schofields. He bought land in Railway Terrace where he built a produce shop, a large bulk storage opposite on land leased from the N.S.W. Railways, and a number of blocks of land in Station Street which he later donated to Blacktown Council for a park so that "the children at Schofields Public School will have somewhere to play cricket".

My father had previously run a produce business from a shed in St. Albans Road. He would order a truck of wheat, then wheel one or two bags at a time on a barrow up Railway Terrace to the shed. He had a small one ton truck which he used for deliveries but he could save on petrol with the barrow. When he had sold most of the wheat from the railway truck he would have sufficient money to order another truck. The inheritance made a tremendous difference.

The enclosed photo is of my father, Wally Williams, standing beside his brand new 1928 Chevrolet car on his way to cricket. He said that when he first got the car people used to stand beside the road to watch and wave, but that by the 1950's they were laughing.

I learned to drive on it amongst the stumps in the paddock, as did many others. It was truly a mighty car - 3 or 4 people could stand on its running boards, some with their bikes, it could go through deep water without missing a beat so long as one kept the engine at an even pace and it could pull a loaded truck out of a bog.

Cricket was my father's great love. He believed it was "character building". I was a grave disappointment to him. An only child, I was given the best of bats and balls. I was bowled to endlessly and all I could say was "how much longer Dad?"



Standing outside the shop in the 1950's. Left to right Vic McWilliam, Charlie McInnes, Sid Bye, Alan Coulter, Lillian Williams, Martha Rothwell, Walter Williams and Mrs. Rutter, a customer.

Photo: Nell Moody (nee Williams) Collection