

Queen Elizabeth II Congratulates Queen Nancy I

The Story of Nancy Anderson nee Strachan

Rosemary Phillis

There are some people whose names spring to mind when you talk about the history of Riverstone and Nancy Anderson (nee Strachan), is probably the best known. Nancy is the original "Queen of Riverstone" and has just celebrated her 100th birthday. It was a fitting acknowledgement for the Queen of Riverstone to receive a congratulatory letter from the Queen of England.

Nancy was born on 27 March 1918. Her parents were Herbert Strachan and Nellie Gunton. She was one of nine children. The children, in age order were, Jean, Marie, Sidney, Ena, Nancy, Joyce, Merle, Maxwell and Barry. The family lived in Richards Avenue (also known as Butcher's Row) and the children went to school at the Riverstone Public School.

Life where Nancy grew up was captured by Clarrie Neal in a 2004 article on Butchers Row.

No. 35 was another of the original brick homes built in the early 1900's. It was first occupied by Herb Strachan and his wife Nellie (nee Gunton) until 1934 when they moved into No. 49 after it was vacated by the McNamara's.

Following the departure of the McNamara's the house was then occupied by Herb and Nellie Strachan with their 9 surviving children - 6 girls, Jean, Marie, Ena, Nancy, Joyce, Merle, and 3 boys, Siddie (Squeaker), Maxie, and Barry. This family had been living in No. 35 and a larger house was required.

Of the girls, Jean worked in the textiles, Ena was a cleaner in the main office, Joyce in the preserver, and Merle worked in the preserver, packing room and the canteen. The husbands of Jean, Marie, Joyce and Merle all worked at the works. The 3 boys, Siddie, Maxie and Barry all started as drovers at the works, with Siddie spending his entire working life there as a drover. After more than 20 years as drovers, both Max and Barry left the works and sought outside employment.

Nancy Anderson has many fond memories of her younger days in the "Row" with the children playing together and the friendliness of the close knit community. She also remembers the well kept homes with their flower gardens at the front, vegie gardens out the back, and behind the back fence, the dog kennels. Today it saddens her to see the houses starting to deteriorate.

Nancy also remembered the day her sister Marie was to marry 'Tiger' Locke, - Marie sitting up in the sulky driven by Joe Fitzgerald, going past their home on the other side of the line, on her way to the church at Windsor.

As a young girl on a hot summers night she recalls the family sitting on a rug on the grass near the watchman's office watching their father unloading the stock trains. In those days the trains were unloaded at the front of the works near the main gate.

Often the engine driver would step down from his hot cabin and sit with them having a chat. Sometimes these drivers would make sure that lumps of coal would fall from the engine in front of their homes in butchers row, great for use in their fuel stoves.

Nancy was a good vigoro player and was a member of the successful Riverstone Country Life Vigoro team. In the Historical Society's 1998 Journal Judith Lewis wrote about the local competition and part of the article is reproduced here. Interestingly Nancy was listed as a member of the first Riverstone team in an article in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*.



Nancy behind the stumps on the vigoro pitch.

Photo: Rhonda Rieser (nee Anderson)



Back Row: Iris Wiggins, Lalie Ridout, Jean Wood, Gwen Stanford, Sylvia Wiggins, Florrie Russell, Betty Dench

Front Row: Nancy Strachan, Bonnie Day, Linda Byrnes

Photo: Sandy May

1933. A District Vigoro Association is Formed.

At a meeting at the Olympia Theatre, Riverstone, on 24 January 1933 a Vigoro Association was formed in the Hawkesbury.... The RIVERSTONE team was comprised of: M. Conway, N. Strachan, I., E. & S. Wiggins, L. Byrnes, F. Russell, G. Stanford, B. Day, J. Rabey, J. Woods and E. Drayton....

Nancy Anderson (Strachan), a member of the Riverstone team, was interviewed by her great grand-daughter, Holly Stone, for this article. She remembers her uniform as being a maroon dress with white on it. As part of the uniform they also wore white sandshoes and white caps. They practised twice a week and their coach was Harry Davis.

Nancy also recalls that it cost a penny to play and a bingo team raised money. The Gazette recorded fund raising dances at both Riverstone and Vineyard. The Riverstone function was held in the Olympia Theatre and was in aid of the district association. The Vineyard dance "under the auspices of the Blue Birds Vigoro Club was held on Saturday evening, the funds benefiting to the extent of £4"....

At about the same time, 2 June 1933, headlines blared: "ALL OUT FOR SIX.

One of the most sensational dismissals of a vigoro team was witnessed at McQuade Park Windsor on Saturday afternoon, when Riverstone skittled the home side for 6 runs in their first innings 17 in their second... Riverstone scored 113 and 69... Stanford and Russell, who bowled throughout, were responsible for the collapse... Nancy Strachan scored 48 not out and 22."

George Drayton recently recalled "when I was young we used to go to the sports ground to watch the vigoro matches. Nancy was a very good player and athlete, she could really hit the ball. People used to start chanting "bring on Nancy, bring on Nancy". In our eyes she was a star.

After a successful vigoro season in 1933, at the presentation dance at the Olympia Theatre, Nancy was presented with a silver cup for "services rendered to the club as wicket-keeper".

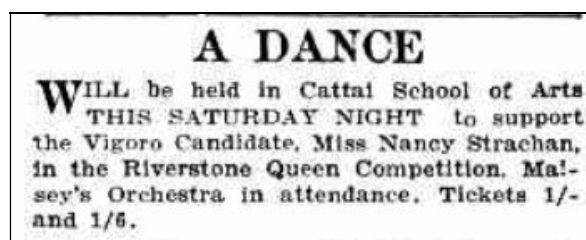
Back to Riverstone Queen Competition

1933/4 were busy years for Nancy. Not only was she involved in the vigoro club, she also took part in a fund raising event associated with the 'Back to Riverstone' week, which celebrated the switching on of electricity and supply of water to Riverstone.

The Back to Riverstone Committee decided that they would raise funds to establish a park in Riverstone. An arrangement was made with the Department of Lands that the Department would resume the land for recreational purposes in Garfield Road and the department would match every £ raised by the Committee. The land would then be placed under the control of Blacktown Council.

The major fundraiser for the Committee was a 'Back to Riverstone Queen Competition'. There were four candidates, Miss Nancy Strachan, nominee of the Country Life Vigoro Club; Miss Beryl Jarrett (Riverstone Meatworks Candidate); Mrs Maude Stockwell (Returned Soldiers' Candidate) and Mrs W. J. East (Business Houses Nominee) who withdrew early in the competition, but still raised funds.

Reports of fundraising activities appeared in the *Gazette*, such as this one from 20 October 1933.



Nancy embarked on an energetic round of fundraising through activities such as dances and tennis competitions. The *Gazette* of 19 January 1934 reported: *The organisers for the vigoro candidate, Miss Nancy Strachan, in the "Back to Riverstone" Queen Competition, have held a number of successful functions during the past couple of weeks, and no stone will be left unturned during the remaining few days in an endeavour to place her at the top of the poll. Miss Strachan, apart from being a vigoro player, is a really popular young girl.*

Popular she was, at a special concert on 26 January 1934 (in those days referred to as Anniversary Day), the results of the competition were announced, with Nancy Strachan the winner by over 1300 votes. To thank her supporters she placed a notice in the *Gazette* of 2 February 1934.

The Queen of Riverstone Coronation Pageant

Plans continued in relation to festivities associated with "Back to Riverstone" week, culminating in a concert at the Riverstone Olympia Theatre, the main feature of which was the crowning of "Queen Nancy". The following photograph featured in the *Gazette* of 29 June 1934, along with a detailed description of the proceedings of the evening.



1934. The crowning of Queen Nancy at the 'Back to Riverstone' Ball in the Olympia Theatre.
Back Row: 1. Harry Moore 2. Maude Stockwell 3. Beryl Jarrett 4. Nelson Andrews 5. Lyle Rosenthal.
Front Row: 1. Jim Fitzgerald 2. Cliff Conway 3. Fred Dench 4. Joy Allison 5. May Davis 6. Norma Clarke. 7. Queen Nancy Strachan 8. Pat Conway 9. Shirley Duncan 10. Audrey Whelan 11. Neville Waters (hidden) 12. (unknown)

From Photos of Riverstone

It was an extravaganza, costumes were even hired for the coronation pageant. The Olympia Theatre in Riverstone was filled to overflowing long before the proceedings were to commence. The pageant was arranged by Mr M. J. Pressland of Windsor, assisted by the Ladies' Carnival Committee and the participants had only one full dress rehearsal before the night. Mrs Les Clarke played the marches as the participants entered and left the hall.

A report from the *Gazette* of 29 June 1934 provided a wonderful description of the event, some extracts of which are included below in italics.

The procession entered the building to a fanfare of trumpets. Mr Rosenthal played the part of the Herald and was dressed *in a crimson scalloped cap and feather, crimson tunic and gold lace, cape of crimson with white trimmings, crimson pantaloons and long silk stockings*. He was soon followed by Councillor Harry Moore who, in the part of Archbishop, *dressed in flowing robes and a Bishop's mitre, entered the hall and marched up the aisle. He was followed by two Pages (Fred. Dench and Cliff Conway) bearing the crown, orb and sceptre on velvet cushions*.

Several other participants took their place, then came the person the audience had all been waiting for. Arriving to a fanfare of trumpets, Nancy entered the hall. *The Herald announced the arrival of Her Majesty the Queen (Miss Nancy Strachan), who accompanied by train-bearers (Pat Conway and Norma Clarke), slowly and gracefully marched up the aisle, and, on reaching the stage, was received by the Lord Chamberlain and conducted to the throne. The Queen was attired in an elaborate court dress, her long crimson velvet train being greatly admired*.

The Archbishop then made a suitably official speech and crowned Queen Nancy I.

"In as much as it hath pleased the people of Riverstone" said the Archbishop, "To elect a Queen to preside over the destinies of the aforesaid country, and as their choice has fallen upon you, we, your loyal supporters, greatly rejoice at the selection that has been made, and trust that your reign will be happy and prosperous and that you may be endowed with health and happiness. Turning to the Pages the Archbishop received the crown from the velvet cushion, and, placing it on the head of the Queen with his blessing, proclaimed her "Queen Nancy I, of Back to Riverstone Week".

In her hands he placed the orb and sceptre with which, he said, she was to keep due order and authority. There was a wonderful demonstration by the audience when the Archbishop declared, "Long Live The Queen". The Lord Chamberlain then curtsied to Her Majesty and by her command read the speech in reply from the throne.

Once the ceremony was over, the Herald announced that the Royal Party would retire. *The trumpets sounded, and the Queen rose and bowed to the audience, who applauded vociferously. The procession then filed out of the hall, and a veritable tornado of applause terminated one of the most striking impressive events ever attempted at Riverstone.*

Once the excitement of the coronation was over, Mr Rosenthal, President of the "Back to Riverstone" committee, invited all of the candidates back to the stage, where he provided a summary of the results of their fundraising activities, which came to £371 11s. Of the total funds, Nancy Strachan raised £141; Beryl Jarrett, who came second, £135 3s 2d; and Mrs Maude Stockwell, £73 3s 9d. Mrs W. J. East, who withdrew early in the competition, raised £22 4s 1d.

After the coronation, the four fundraising participants were presented with a gold wristlet watch and the proceedings concluded with the singing Auld Lang Syne and the National Anthem. Nancy still has her engraved gold watch, photographs of which are shown on the following page.

The success of the fundraising allowed for the purchase of land for a park and on 3 June 1935 a new 15 acre park and sports ground was officially opened by Major J.B. Shand, M.L.A for Hornsby. The area was known as Riverstone Jubilee Park, but these days is known as the Riverstone Park.



Nancy Marries

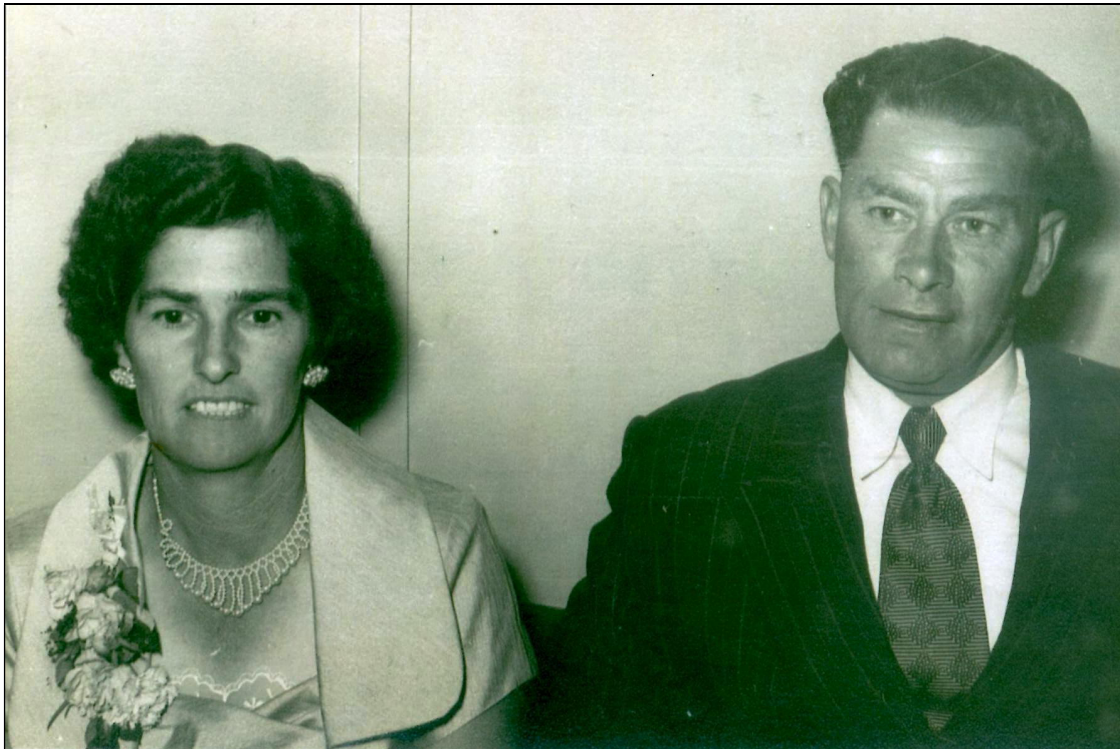
On the 25th February 1935 Nancy married Malcolm Anderson at St Peters Church of England at Richmond. Malcolm was one of the seven children of William and Rosannah Anderson, the others in his family were Alma, Nellie, Edna, Jean, Madge and Mervyn.

Nancy and Malcolm lived in Richards Ave before moving to 17 Bourke Street, where they raised their children, Reginald, Valda and Rhonda.

Nancy's daughter Rhonda believes that in the early years Nancy may have worked cleaning the Managers house in the Richards Avenue. Most of the time though she worked at a shop across from the Meatworks until the shop burnt down. Then she worked in the Canteen at the Meatworks. At one stage both she and her sister Ena worked cleaning the Office at the Meatworks, Nancy working the afternoon shift.

Malcolm worked for years at Taylor's Produce store at Riverstone until he became ill and had to retire. Malcolm's hobby was birds and he built aviaries in the backyard where he kept pet canaries and quail.

Nancy became a grandmother when her children married and had children of their own. Reg married Fay Greenhalgh. Their children were Suzanne, Colin, Kim, Julie and Ron. Valda married Don Moulds and they had Debbie and Vicki. Rhonda married Herb Rieser and they had Duane and Glen. Nancy now has great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.



1957 Nancy and Malcolm Anderson.

Photo: Blanche & Jim Buchanan



Merle Strachan, Nancy Strachan, Max Strachan, Lawson Banks, Valda Anderson, Shirley Wilkinson, Faye Wheeler with Ron on her lap, Joyce Strachan.

Photo: Rhonda Rieser



Nancy near canary cages in the backyard.



Nancy and Rhonda.



Nancy with her children Reg, Rhonda and Valda.

Photos: Rhonda Rieser

Life in Retirement

When she retired Nancy devoted her time to family, especially visiting those who were sick. She never drove and the family recall how she walked everywhere. Her husband Malcolm died on 22 May 1977 at the relatively young age of 64.

Nancy was a good cook the family enjoyed her scones, baked dinners and her pies, especially the apple and gramma ones.

She enjoyed reading the form guide and putting a small bet on up at the TAB as well as watching football on television. She supported St George before switching over to following Manly.

In later years Nancy moved into a granny flat at her daughter Rhonda's place and as her health declined she moved in with Rhonda who continues to care for her.

Turning 100

Nancy turned 100 this year on 27 March. She celebrated the milestone with family and friends who called in to visit throughout the day.

The family genes must contain something for longevity, as her sister Merle turned 95 on the same day. In a further co-incidence with dates, her great grandson Tyler was also born on 27 March.

Fittingly, the 21 March 2018 edition of the *Hawkesbury Gazette*, (formerly known as the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*) featured a photo and a lovely article on Nancy.

Nancy received congratulatory letters and cards from the Prime Minister; the Governor General; the State Premier; Kevin Connolly M.P.; Shelley Hancock M.P.; Michelle Rowland M.P. and the Mayor of Blacktown City Council. Council also sent a beautiful arrangement of flowers.

Most appropriately of all, Nancy received a letter from Queen Elizabeth II.

Happy Birthday Queen Nancy. Congratulations on a fine innings, 100 not out.



Photo: Rhonda Rieser



Nancy and her brothers and sisters.

Back Row: Max, Ena, Barry, Sid

Front Row: Jean, Marie, Joyce, Merle, Nancy

Photo: Rhonda Rieser



The Extended family of Herb and Nellie Strachan.

Back Row: George Hopkins, Barry Strachan, Don Moulds, Max Strachan, Blanche Strachan, Sid Strachan, Ena Hopkins, Herb Rieser, Rhonda Rieser, Ken Foster.
Centre Row: Merle Banks, Joyce Foster, Nancy Anderson, Vicki Moulds, Jean Griffin.
Front Row: Wes Mullinger, Christine Foster, Valda Moulds, Brenda Mullinger, Fay Anderson, Reg Anderson.

Photo: Joyce Foster