

Violet Alderton

Coral McDonald

In 2001, the Federation Pathway at Schofields Public School was officially opened using the same scissors that were used to open the Sydney Harbour bridge in 1932. Coral tells the story of her Aunty, Violet Alderton and how the scissors came to be used at Schofields.

Violet was born in Leichhardt in 1914, the daughter of Leslie James Alderton and Violet Lillian Cooksey. Other children were Bert (Bertrand) (1910), Leslie Richard (1912) and Stanley (1916).

The Aldertons were from Schofields and Violet's mother and father settled there, raising their four children.



Les Senior and Junior, Stanley and Violet swimming at Eastern Creek.

Being the only girl, Violet was a bit of a tomboy when young. As she grew, she experienced poverty. Father worked on the wharves, but they were called out on strike. The Depression was hard on everyone. Violet's mother, although from a wealthy family, was the one who worked, taking in washing, collection and selling firewood and playing the piano for concerts and dances. The children left school, but only Les found work.

Being staunch Labour supporters, Violet's parents much admired Jack Lang, the Premier of New South Wales. Somehow it was arranged that Violet to work for him at quite a young age. She was his chauffer and personal assistant until he retired. Violet developed from a tomboy to a person to enjoyed dressing very stylishly in expensive Fletcher Jones suits and skirts, as well as the best of shoes and handbags, coats and dresses.

Her first car was a 1948 Ford Mercury, followed by several Jaguars. All were lovingly cared for and enjoyed by her and her family. She looked for quality in everything, including food and later houses.



Violet's 1948 Mercury. She looked after the car so well that it was sold for more that she paid for it.

Her great loves were animals, music and dancing. She was so proud the time she was the belle of the ball at Oakville in her early 20's. Marriage didn't appeal, but there were a number of beaux.

Because of her love of animals, Violet persuaded her brother Les to partner her in the purchase of poddy calves to raise and sell. Les was not to know that she would name each one and that not one would ever be sold.

Her first home was built in St Albans Road, Schofields, where she lived for some years. Moving to the Blue Mountains seemed a good idea, so the house was sold and Violet moved into a beautiful home in Faulconbridge. It soon became apparent that the climate was too harsh, so a new home was built in Schofields, which included a flat for her dad. He passed away however, before it was ready and so Mr Lang, who was still running his newspaper in Auburn, moved into the flat. Many were surprised to see him travelling on the train to work each weekday. Later he became very ill and died in his 90's. Some items were willed to Violet by Mr Lang, including the scissors which were used to cut the ribbon at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Violet felt that these scissors should be available to the public for viewing and so donated them to the NSW Government.



The scissors which were used to cut the ribbons to open the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 and the Schofields Public School Federation Pathway in September 2001.

In 2001 the Schofields Public School centenary footpath was laid. The donated pavers were inscribed with the names of staff and pupils, past and present. For the opening ceremony, Mr John Aquilina, the Minister for Education, (accompanied by armed security guards for the scissors), cut the ribbon. They were allowed to be used on this occasion because Violet had been in the first kindergarten class at the school. Her elder brother, Bert, was the school captain and had made a speech at the opening of the school in 1923. Embarrassingly, it was discovered that Mr Aquilina was left handed and couldn't cut the ribbon - school captains to the rescue! They all managed to cut the ribbon together.



School captains, Michael Soul, Nicholas Aylott, Natalie Youreb and Elise Hunter. Violet Alderton and John Aquilina standing on the Federation Pathway.



Holding and discussing the scissors. Minister for Education, John Aquilina, Violet Alderton and David Simmons, Principal of Schofields Public School.

Violet and her sister in law, Jean, were very good friends. They both enjoyed being well dressed and going together to shop, lunch, see movies or just driving to have a picnic, or visit her brothers. However much of her time was taken up caring, firstly for her father and later, Mr Lang.



Violet (on the left) and her sister in law Jean Alderton on the front verandah at Hebe Cottage.

After the death of Mr Lang, Violet's cousin visited her and told her of the loss of his son. The two decided to help each other. Violet purchased Hebe Cottage, with an intention to bring it back to its past beauty. During her childhood, it had been owned by the Bliss family, and Violet would play there with the children.



Hebe Cottage in 1991 after some of the restoration work had been completed.

Photo: Rosemary Phillis

Her cousin built stables and a trotting track to train his horses and assisted with some of the restoration work. Much was done to the outside and interior of the house plus electrical and plumbing repairs. The back portion of the house had to be left as money was short.

Sadly, at this time, there was friction between the cousins, and Violet was showing early signs of dementia. The property was sold and her new residence was the Windsor Country Village in Bandon Road at Vineyard. Gradually, the dementia became more advanced and Violet experienced a slight stroke. Whilst in hospital, it was decided that a care home was the best home for her, and she lived at St. Hedwig's Blacktown for the remainder of her life. She passed away the day after her 95th birthday.

Violet repeatedly declared that she had a wonderful and interesting life. She was a loving and caring person, admired by family and friends.

Photos: Coral McDonald