

Mrs Mary Tucker - (nee Forrest)
Ludlow Bridge School
1923-1931

Mary's Grandfather, James Hill Forrest, and John and Alexander, were three of the nine sons of the original William Forrest. Her father, Matthew Augustus Campbell Forrest (Gus), was named after Matthew Forrest who died at Broome when only twenty six years old. Gus and his brother Bruce (Stirling Estate) married two Scott sisters from the Preston River at Boyanup - Gus marrying Clarise Irene Preston (Billie) Scott, who had been a teacher at the north Boyanup School. Sadly she died when her youngest child Keith was only five years of age. They must have been wonderful parents to their eight surviving children, as they are without exception, capable, industrious and very nice people indeed. Gus and Billie Forrest lost one little girl and one soon after she had finished her training as a nurse (Amy) and John, one of their two precious sons, was killed in the Second World War.

When James Hill Forrest bought the land on the Wonnerup Estuary from Reynolds in 1911 and Gus and Billie built their home there, the land was totally uncleared except for the area on which the house was built. It was a weatherboard four roomed home with a verandah on one side, and was lined with pressed tin. There were fireplaces in the lounge and dining rooms, and with the later addition of two big rooms, it made a very comfortable home. Mary especially remembers the lovely big grapevine on a trellis outside. A tennis court was put in, adjacent, in about 1931. This home is well preserved today and was lived in by Keith Forrest and his family into the 1970's.

The Forrests were quite comfortably off and the children were not deprived, though there was no occasion to waste anything. Their income was derived from butter fat, which was taken three times a week to the Ludlow siding. The eldest children milked five or six cows each by hand morning and night - before and after school. On two days of the week they took the cream to the siding in the horse and sulky on their way to school - their father doing this chore on Saturday. On days when there was none to deliver they walked to school.

The original Ludlow Bridge School was of mud brick with a galvanised iron roof and no verandah. It was some 4 - 5 metres square, with a few windows and a pot bellied stove for warmth. It was on flat ground close to the North Ludlow Road, with the door facing south east and the river. The children sat at some half dozen long desks, facing the door.

Between the school and the road was the railway which brought timber from the Stirling Estate to the Wonnerup Mill. Because the railway bridge was south of the road bridge, Mary remembers having to cross over the line after she walked over the road bridge, on her way to school. From home, when on foot, the children approached the school from the north east, but when in the sulky they came to it from the westerly direction, where the existing road is (1984).

Although the ground immediately around the school was flat, it then fell away and sloped down to the river flat, on which the pupils did their drill. There were nice peppermint trees and a few pines in the 'yard' and the area was wire fenced. The Forrest's horse was let loose in here on the days when they had him at school - a light plough horse which was used

for such on the farm. They also owned a Piebald pony which was used for riding and to get the cows in for milking.

The Forrest girls wore little dresses made by their mother, to school, and boots with long socks. They all had their little cases, with lunches wrapped in damask napkins - sandwiches and fruit in season - with figs and grapes from home and apples and peaches from relations at Capel. None of the children liked milk, though they had it in milk puddings etc. The fact that it was kept for home use in the Coolgardie safe and must not have been very chilled, probably attributed to this dislike.

Mr Henry Harris was the teacher when Mary started school at eight years of age. He was a happy middle aged man who wore glasses, and was keen on everything being orderly. He supervised the children's gardening efforts in a couple of garden beds each side of the doorway area into the school. Mary remembers one of the things she planted was Violets.

Mr Harris lived in a cottage over the river (a house later lived in by Ben Needs - see contribution). Mr Gus Forrest lent them a milking cow as the family were keen to have one of their own. Mary's sister Lil (later a teacher) was very good at the copybook writing on which so much emphasis was placed in those times. "...not bad M.A.C.F." - (thinking it had been done by Matthew Augustus Campbell Forrest himself), was the comment one of Mary's teachers, made of this.

It was about this time 1923-24 that Gus Forrest bought a 'T' model Ford. One day he came to the school to tell his children that their little sister Gladys had died (she had been poorly for some time) and he was going to Busselton to get the Dr... Gus took the death of one little daughter and the eldest after she had completed her nursing training, badly enough, but it was a cruel blow to lose his wife Billie, and a very bitter one indeed, his son John during the war.

Helene Langenback replaced Mr Harris for a year at Ludlow. She came by a sulky, after having dropped her sister Alma off, at the Wonnerup School. Miss Langenback was a lovely well groomed young woman in her mid twenties, and was very nice to the children...kind, but firm. Mary remembers it being the Forrest girls task to take the horse out of the little rubber tyred sulky and feed him before letting him loose in the school yard.

Mr McWillie was an unwell man who had been gassed during the first world war. He had a great interest in literature and while in the trenches in France, had written and had published a short story about the adventures of an English penny. He read to the school many of the English classics, i.e. Tale of Two Cities and David Copperfield and Jean Val Jean, a French novel, the pleasure of which remained in the memory of his students all their lives, Mary is sure.

Mrs McWillie taught the girls sewing and was a very pleasant lady. Her husband instigated birthday parties for the pupils, each family bringing a plate of cakes, while Mrs McWillie provided lemon cordial and raspberry vinegar, a treat for all.

After sixth standard, any pupils remaining at school had to be supervised on correspondence lessons by the teacher. But Mr McWillie would not correct the work of those concerned at his school. After two 'wasted' years, Mary had a year at Perth College, for which her father paid the princely sum of 100.00 pounds (\$200). Sister Rosalie was the Principal then.

Mary remembers a Mrs Dorethea (Mickey) Eaton who taught at Ludlow in the mid thirties, but who is not listed. She married 'Snowy' Payne. Also another female whose maiden name was Sheila Holman.