

MY LUDLOW DAYS by Daphne Gillard

We arrived at Ludlow soon after Easter 1970 and Tom took up the position of Storeman.

Our eldest son John went to Busselton Senior High School catching the school bus at the end of our road which led to our Forestry cottage no. 1110. Steven, John's younger brother, didn't start school until the following year.

I loved our cottage, which was on a large block. In a short period of time, we had established a nice, green lawn and Tom, with manure from our chooks, had a very good veggie garden. I had a number of flower gardens as well as boysenberry vines and chokos, and three large strawberry beds.

As the years went by, a number of people started calling our place, Daph's oasis" as I also had lawn and plants across the road, in front and side of our place. People used to come and pick the numerous boysenberries, in season. I got sick of making jam and pies, most of which I gave away to family and friends.

The house next to us was vacant when we moved in but then had numerous tenants over the years, including Fred Cotton, his wife and family. Forest Officer, Ted and wife Sue Riley moved in some time after our John and Kerry had left for John to commence work with the Forest Department in Nannup. Ted and Sue and two of their three children who were born while they were living at Ludlow.

The next house down was the home of Wyn and Alex Thomson and their children. Wyn became my much-loved lifetime friend. Alex was in the gang but also a dozer and tractor driver.

Alex had been in Timor during the war, fighting the Japs and was one of the group of soldiers left behind. Like spirits of the jungle, they appeared and disappeared, making the Japs think there were many more Aussies there. It's been said they kept the Japs busy, keeping them from Australia's Top End. It's well documented that they were heroes. Most of the local tribes, ill treated by the Japs, were good to the Aussies. They provided food and information enabling the diggers to carry out lightning attacks, appearing as if from nowhere. They stole items from the Japs which were useful to the Aussies but some of the local people weren't friendly. A number of Aussies were betrayed and killed by the Japs. The Aussies finally had enough parts, stolen from the Japs or found, to make a radio. They contacted Australia but, at first, were mistaken for Japs. To cut a very long story short, they were finally believed and rescued.

Alex was one of those amazing men, a hero, but he never spoke of the war, or very little, to his family. One day though, he did talk to me for a little while showing me photos of tribesmen. He called them "boys" and smiled when looking at the photos. Then suddenly he said, "That's enough, go home Daph."

Next to the Thomsons, lived Ron "Speedy" Barret and family. Ron Barret was a crane driver and also in the mill. After they left, Ron "Happy" Howes moved in with his family.

Next, a small place that had numerous tenants over the years but was empty at the time we arrived. Then Charlie Dunlop and his wife. Across the road lived Stan Andrews and his wife. They left shortly after we arrived and Fred and Dot Blurton moved in. Fred was a good worker. He was in Tom's crew when Tom became an overseer. He was, as Tom often said, his right-hand man, especially at fires. He also became Tom's friend, like Dot to me. We were lifelong friends. Their three boys and our Steven were friends too.

The Blurtons' were a tragic family. Before they came to live and work at Ludlow, they'd lost a young child. Then in 1981 (I think), young Robert drowned up at Busselton jetty. In later years, Robert's twin brother Wayne, became ill. Eventually, he received a heart/lung transplant (I'm almost sure that's what it was but at 87 years of age, my memory isn't as good these days.) He lived quite a few years before rejection and death. Only Mark, the youngest remained.

I'd become fond of all three of the boys who, as youngsters living at Ludlow, spent a lot of time at our place and I used to go with them and our Steve, along the river, helping them catch tadpoles and gilgies.

Steve would never believe that I hadn't released the tadpoles and gilgies when he was at school. One day I caught the culprit, it was his tabby cat, Cheeky. He was putting his paw in and scooping out all of Steve's catch. I rescued some but Cheeky ran off with a couple in his mouth! I'd taken a photo of this event to prove to my disbelieving son, it wasn't me!

Fred lived until a day or so before his 90th birthday. Mark and his wife cared for him until he went into the hospital. Dot (Dorothy) spent a few years in a care home because her weight prevented her getting around with her crook legs and Mark could no longer care for her. We went to Fred's funeral and not many months later, Dots. She was the same age as me. They were our really good friends, and it was so sad to say goodbye, but it was nearly heartbreaking when young Mark died the following year. We'd known him nearly all his life and I still shed a tear thinking about him. He and our Steve had remained best of friends, and he was devastated at the loss. Last time I spoke to Mark he said, "I'll come out and see you soon", he didn't. It was all so very sad.

The next house over that side was occupied by Roy and Ev Ryal and family. Roy worked in the Planer and Brian, their son, also worked in the compound, probably in the Planer as well. Tom took over the Planer from Roy.

Next, Dixi and Joan Foot had lived in their house for a lot of years. Their kids had grown up and left home by the time we moved to Ludlow. Their elder daughter had

been in a car accident as a teenager and was left lying unseen, all night, badly injured. She survived but remained crippled in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. When her care became too much for Joan, she went into and remains, in a care home for the rest of her life. Dixie had been a prisoner of war during World War 2. He always said he'd been lucky because they were treated well by the Germans.

Next to them were the Johnsons, Geoff and Sylvia and their daughter, Gloria. Gloria was the office girl. Geoff was in the gang. He died soon after he retired of a heart attack.

Clifford's house was next. Cliff was a very strict overseer. As far as I know, Mary and Cliff had no children. Mary and I got on well, and I used to visit her often.

Then Ted Espinos and wife Alma. Their kids had grown up and left home by the time we went to Ludlow. They were in the last house on that side. They were lovely people. Ted became the storeman after leaving the mill. He'd been in the mill for years and was the overseer, but he'd had enough.

Ted and I spent quite a lot of time talking when he was storeman and came to our place. In those days the storeman used to go to Capel once a week to get whatever the Ludlow families needed. Because I don't drive this was a huge help for me and any of the other families in similar situation, particularly in summer when the men might be away fighting fires or burning. They were the good old days at Ludlow.

Ted and I became quite fond of each other. Many years later at the Back to Ludlow event, Ted was there with his daughter. When he saw me, he began to cry, hugging me tightly for quite a while. He said how much he missed his beloved Alma and the good old Ludlow days. We hadn't seen him for a few years, and he was so very happy to see me. He made me cry too. Dear, gentle Ted was looking old and tired, but he was happy to catch up with all of the old Ludlow family.

Yes, in those days, we were like one big happy family. As far as I remember everyone got on during our early years at Ludlow. The local farmers were also our friends.

Before the bridge, up in the bush at the back of the tennis court, in a small home, lived Les Warner. Les had lived most of his life, from a very young age, even before he left school, working for the forestry trapping rabbits. Les had never married. Everyone liked Les, he was a caring, kind, gentle man.

So now, to Over the Bridge

Over the bridge was the old school house where Jack King was living when we arrived, but he retired soon after.

The school itself was already gone when we arrived at Ludlow

The school house then had a number of families live in it including, Russell and Sophie Tate. Russell was killed when felling tuart trees.

The next house was an officer's house, and the young couple didn't stay long before being transferred.

Harry Kravanis, his wife, and family lived in the corner house. Then Bill and Elaine Lilly and family.

The other two (officers) houses were eventually moved into Busselton but, before that, Ted Cracknell (O.I.C.) and wife Joy lived in one and Billy Harris and wife Jan lived in the other. After they left, Des Donnelly (O.I.C.) and wife Judy moved in. Later, John and Kerry Gillard and family lived in the end house. John worked for the Department in the Bunbury office.

Ludlow was such a happy place. We lived in the middle of pine and tuart forests. We cooked on wood stoves and stayed warm with the wood fire (and cooled off by opening the windows/doors), got our hot water from the wood heater, had outside laundries and toilets. We lived very basically but had fantastic friends and neighbours who were always willing and happy to pitch in.

We had a water supply from the Ludlow River, with a pump which had to be "fixed" on many an occasion. Not such a problem when the men were around but burning and fire seasons often meant waiting quite a while before we had water. We had a storeman to bring our mail, paper and necessities as we were out of town with no shops within walking distance. The kids all caught the school bus to and from Ludlow every day.

We had wonderful Christmas and parties with the Ludlow and farm friends and neighbours. The ladies would make all the goodies to eat. There were so many wonderful cooks, and everything was home made. One year, all the Ludlow men missed out – they were away at a fire.

In later years, I got a group of us together to do art and also arranged for a teacher. We also had a few of the ladies doing pottery. We also had exercise classes and other classes and groups organised over the years. This was when we still had the wonderful old Forestry school. That was where we first had the Christmas parties and farewell get togethers. Our John had his 21st birthday party there. Sadly, we lost that much loved building in a devastating fire. The young footy club kids had been staying there for the weekend as they often did. A young officer took photos of it burning down and loaned them to me to paint. Later, I sat in the ruins drawing the remains. I'd already done a drawing of the building quite some time before it was lost so I had the before the fire, during and after. It was very sad.

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Reminisces by Daphne Gillard (ph 9727 2219)