Margery Jean Grylls (23.8.1921 - 6.9.2014)

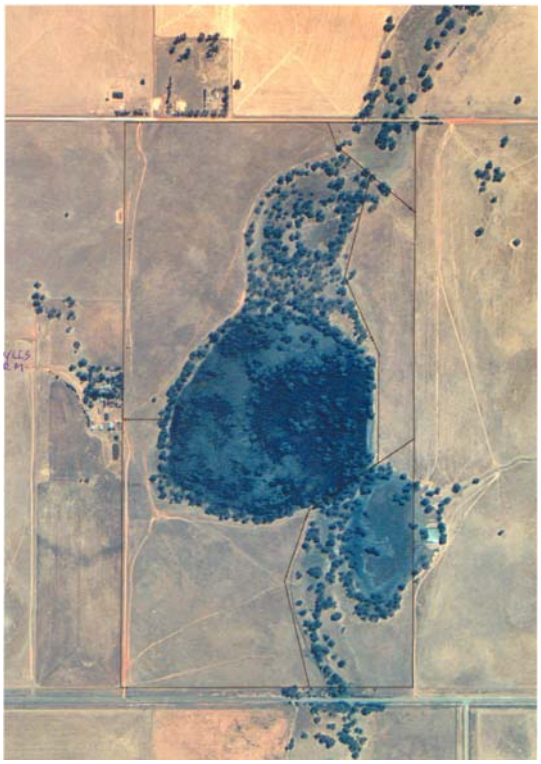
Margery Grylls, May 1943

1921	Born Bendigo 23.8, approx. 7lb baby
Home	"Tang Tang", Dingee
1926	Peritonitis
1929	Started school at Dingee State School
	Grade 1 & 2 – 1 year
	Grade 3 & 4 – 1 year
	Merit Certificate (Grade 8)
1935	To Bendigo High School, Form D (Year 9)
1936	Form C (Year 10)
1937	Form B (Year 11), Leaving Certificate
1938	Form A for a few weeks, then worked as a Junior Clerk at the T&G Insurance Company
1939	Appointed Student Teacher at Gravel Hill State School, Bendigo. Measles in August, Mastoid operation.
1941	May or JuneTemporary Head teacher, Winnambool State School, 14 miles NW of Manangatang, 23 pupils from Grade 1 to grade 8, School gazetted "not suitable for a female teacher". MJF: "there was a great pile of bottles behind the shelter shed"

1942	Melbourne Teachers College, boarding with 13 other girls at 24 Story St, Parkville. Board 27/6 per week, salary 26/8 per week (Mr Micawber – result “misery”)
1943	Appointed to State School 4189 Normanville, leased building, 8 then 7 pupils
1944	Married 27.5.1944, School closed
1945	28 February, John Desmond born, October-November, Des demobilised, £35 ($70) in bank.
1946	July, purchased Vic Mahar's farm with deferred pay and a Soldier Settlement Loan
1947	21 October, Bronwyn Margery born
1948	House lined and re-roofed
1950	Appointed Head Teacher, Normanville State School, 6 pupils. Bought Hillman car.
1952	16 January, William Steven born
1955	26 June, Karen Elizabeth born
	Gold Medal, federation of Mothers' Clubs
	Divisional Commissioner, Girl Guides
1968	Dad died
1970	Bronwyn and Geoff Married, Mother died
	Regional Commissioner, Girl Guides
1979	March, Karen married; December Bill and Vicki married
1981	26 March, Des died
	Councillor, Shire of Kerang
	Mallee Family Care, later Life Member

Recollections of childhood

When I was born in a private hospital in Lily St Bendigo on 23.8.1921, and weighing 7lb, I was the first child of John and Myrtle Grylls of Dingee. I was named Margery Jean for my mother's sisters, Jean Forrest Gibson and Winifred Annie Margery. Also my grandmother's pet name was Margie. Mother, Myrtle Tonkin Johnson, was then 32 years old, the eldest daughter of a family of 3 daughters and 4 sons, of William Joseph Johnson and Margaret Martha (née Tonkin). Dad was 35, the younger surviving son of a family of 5 daughters and 3 sons of John Grylls and Elizabeth Patience (née Wearne). They were married on 14.2.1920 at the Lennox St Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Victoria, and after a brief honeymoon at Port Campbell they came to live on the farm, "Tang Tang" Dingee.



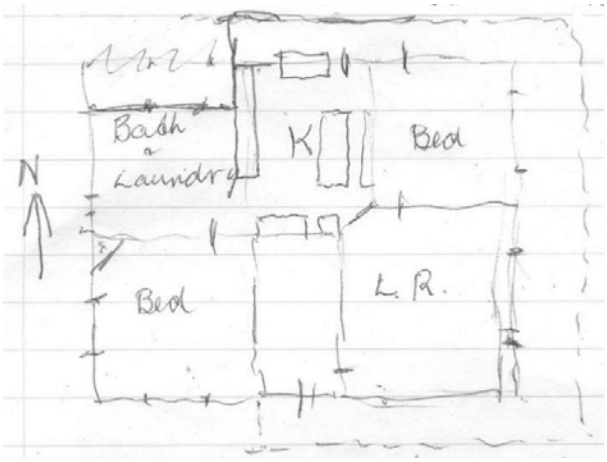
"Tang Tang" Water Reserve, now a Wildlife Reserve, with the Grylls farm on the western side, fronting onto the Dingee-Rochester Road

Dad had enlisted in August 1914 and served overseas in Gallipoli and France until returning in January 1919. He was horrified to find in his absence the farm had been decimated – mortgaged to buy a house in Bendigo for his mother and stripped by his elder brother of worthwhile machinery and even wire out of the fences. It was not expected that a soldier would have survived action in both Gallipoli and France and even pneumonia on the way home. Dad had considerable deferred pay but this was soon used up in defraying some of the mortgages, setting up basic machinery, purchasing a team of horses, a buggy, and putting the neglected house in some sort of order.

Notes added – found in fragments after Margery's death on 6 September 2014 are shown in dark red (her favourite colour!) after this. The correct placing in the narrative is difficult and arbitrary:

Mother had light brown hair in a loose bun skewered with half a dozen large hairpins and (transcriber writes: it is a bit confusing here, I think one can make sense of it): parted with falling softly. Soft and fair-skinned. Grey blue. Considerable amount of ill health.

The House



Climatically the mud-brick house was very comfortable with thick walls, a bungalow roof, and a deep verandah around the new rooms. The kitchen was the hub of the house with a large wooden table and a long wooden stool on the east wall. Dad's special bentwood chair with its shortened legs stood at the north end, where he was definitely the head of the house. On the white tablecloth in front of him was the meat or roast with the breadboard on his left. Mother sat at the other end with the vegetable dish, the teapot, net-covered sugar bowl and milk jug in her care. Dad carved the meat and administered summary punishment with the flat of the carving knife for any unseemly behaviour (Dad's punishments were instant and often severe but I feared them less than Mother's considered retribution. These were often administered with a piece of leather strap which hung beside the mantelpiece.)

When we were young, Grace was said, which even today comes automatically as “for what we are about to receive ...” if I am suddenly so requested.

There was a very good double-oven wood-fired IXL stove with a central firebox. One oven was always used for cooking but the other served many useful needs and purposes, from storing kindling, warming motherless lambs, or our feet and shoes on very cold mornings. The big black kettle was always hot but it took some skill to stoke the firebox to keep the oven at the required temperature for the various cooking needs. The mantelpiece was an important place in the household (I suppose because so much of life revolved around the stove): newly received letters were stuck behind the tea caddy or the clock or the salt box. “Have you looked on the mantelpiece?” if something was mislaid.

Behind the stove was a tiny window that let in some light and was the favoured spot for the bottle of sourdough yeast or the ripening of a tomato.

A strong wooden box held the cut billets of wood, and I can seldom remember Mother having to get wood from outside, but, I can recall Dad being upbraided for cutting wood for a nearby widow when the home box was empty. (Dad was always conscious of the plight of those women whose husbands had been killed).

On the left was a pipe with a shiny brass tap bringing rain-water inside. It had a kerosene bucket underneath that served as a drip or slop bucket. There was no sink or draining board but along the west wall was a bench made of a beautiful piece of timber, nearly 90cm wide, 2.5cm thick, and 3m long, which had been the top of a baker's bread or flour trough. On this stood a tin washing-up dish and tray, a wire soap shaker, and sandsoap. Some gadgets hung on the wall nearby with pots and pans underneath. Further along was a collection of things, such as the current ironing, newspaper, and anything else. Mother got worse as she got older.

Next was a ventilated cupboard, known as a “safe” which contained crockery, food, and cooking needs. (It was my duty on Saturday to tidy this and put in fresh newspaper lining – also to polish the brass doorknobs and taps. Among other impediments were bills and recipes on spikes. On top was stored the lovely Rochester kerosene lamp – with a pineapple design brass tank. A daily chore was to fill this with a metal pump from a 4-gallon tin of kerosene, to trim the wick, and to clean the glass. Because we all used this one source of light around the table and we were close together, did this reinforce the closeness of the family?

On the south wall was the only built-in cupboard. It contained a plentiful supply of preserved fruit and tomatoes (at least 120 jars) as well as all the jams and tomato sauce that mother had made. The First Aid chest was high up there with the bottles of Eucalyptus Oil, Camphorated Oil, California Syrup of Figs (*no* Castor Oil), Vicks Vaporub, Zambuk ointment, Boracic Acid Powder, and Iodine (beloved by Dad and feared by us), strips of old sheets for bandages, a First Aid and Home Nursing book, a Snakebite Outfit, thermometer, cotton wool, and a triangular bandage with its various uses printed on it, AND the Heenzo bottle (Heenzo was made up with a sugar and water syrup flavoured with the contents of a tiny bottle of concentrate put in a 750ml bottle. This was the standard mixture for coughs.)

Another tall cupboard stored the household linen and with the bottom space for children's toys (if this was not tidied at a certain time of year, Father Christmas wouldn't like it and wouldn't bring any more toys).

The door to the north led to a sunny verandah – a very pleasant place on cold but sunny days. It was a favourite spot for drying hair, convalescing children, motherless lambs, the airing of clothes, and for plants needing warmth and sunlight. One of my earliest memories is of sitting there with my knees spread and with scissors very carefully cutting along the coloured stripes of my crochet woollen petticoat. (It is the only thing I can remember Grandma Grylls giving me – but I have a vague memory of her teaching me to crochet). I was punished, but I don't remember the punishment – perhaps because it was justified.

Opening off the kitchen was a large bathroom and laundry. It had a built-in wood-fired copper in the corner with a deep bath alongside. Saturday night was BATH NIGHT and the order of the bath prevailed. The hot water was ladled in, about 10cm deep and the cleanest child bathed first – Gwenyth or me followed by the boys. A dipper of clean water was poured over us as a rinse – Mother was good with warmed towels but Dad was more spartan, with a cold water rinse, but he always made sure he wiped between our toes. I get a comfortable feeling yet when I remember them rubbing me dry and talking to us.

There was a board across the bath holding an enamel washing basin, the soap dish, Dad's shaving gear and leather strop, toothbrushes and glasses. In the mornings we collected a dipper of warm water from the kettle in the kitchen to wash hands and face. During the day it was cold water washes, but at night we used the basin of warm water to wash our grubby hands and feet. This was standard practice for most families, as hot

water services only became more common in the country after 1945.

On the other side were the cement wash troughs also with a brass tap carrying rain water. This was a luxury, as in many country homes the water had to be carried in. The clothes were sorted and boiled in the copper, whites first, then coloureds, and work clothes last. In turn they were lifted into a cane basket, drained, and carried over to the troughs to be rinsed (no wonder Mother had 5 miscarriages). The second rinse was in blue water and the table linen was starched. Children were sometimes pressed into service to turn the handle of the wooden wringer before the clothes were taken outside to be pegged onto the clothesline – a wire strung between two strong uprights and supported in the middle with a wooden pole (a clothes prop). They have been known to collapse, allowing the washing to fall on the ground. Imagine the despair of the tired woman if that happened!

On washing days we were often bathed in one of the rinse waters and rinsed down with a dipper of clean water. The soapy water was used to scrub the seat and floor of the outside toilet as well as the laundry floor and verandah. Mother used soapy water for aphids in the garden and the least soapy to water plants.

The large (6.5m square) living room was not used very much. It had a beautiful polished wooden floor of 7cm Jarrah boards which I remember I helped to polish with Fisher's Wax and elbow grease. An earlier memory was of being chastised for walking over it with a flour sifter – the white flour was visible in the joins for a long time.

The excitement was intense when the telephone was installed in the corner – my father's practical mind putting it at a height where we could sit down to use it. It was a wooden box with two large dry cell batteries, a mouthpiece, and a separate earpiece on a cord which, when hung up, cut off the call. We contacted the Exchange by turning a handle which rang a bell. Each subscriber on our party line had a different signal allied to Morse code: 3 short rings for us and three long rings for the Exchange, 2 short and 1 long for our next-door neighbour, etc. There were 5 or 6 on our party line, which had advantages as well as disadvantages. One could ring anyone else on the line without charge and converse for as long as you liked or have a mini-conference with others. But of course anyone could lift their earpiece and listen in (being careful not to have any distinctive sounds in the background). Or they could interrupt your conversation if they needed to use the phone.

Much drama one day when an hysterical neighbour, scared of a swagman on the road, tried to ring any of her neighbours but not waiting long enough for an answer, with the result that no-one knew for whom the call was intended so no-one answered for some time.

It was the responsibility of the owner to build and maintain their part of the line so often Dad would have to walk along it to untangle the twin wires or remove a stick or a magpie's nest. Beware of the shock if someone rang while you were holding the line!

There was a leather settee and armchairs as well as the piano and gramophone. A large extending dining table dominated the room. It had been the dining table of “Fortuna”, the old Lansell home in Bendigo. The Prince of Wales (Edward VIII) as well as other dignitaries had dined at it.

Books were important – there were two large bookcases as well as Mother's smaller one, of which one was a beautiful hand-carved one made by John D. Tonkin, Mother's maternal grandfather, who was a joiner before he came to Australia supposedly to help install an organ in an early Melbourne Town Hall in 1857. The other contained the 20 volumes of Arthur Mee's Encyclopaedia and other books. In the drawers were board games such as Ludo, Chinese Chequers, Snakes and Ladders, etc. On the walls were original paintings by Neville Cayley, of Kookaburras, Blue Wrens, and Robin Redbreast; pencil drawings by Margaret Martha (Mother's mother) and good photographs taken, developed, and printed by Mother, of scenes of her walking trips – Baw Baw Plateau, Wilson's Promontory, and Mallacoota.

The entrance to the cellar was in the corner of this room, screened off by walls made of hessian and wallpaper. It contained Dad's box chest with his treasures and souvenirs as well as his well-kept Army uniform. The cellar had shoulder-high ledges with ventilation openings to ground level outside. It was the only place to keep food cool in the very hot weather. I can remember the lovely smell of apples and pumpkins stored there. Early records and piles of old Bulletins were interesting but it was filled in after the 1956 floods, covering all sorts of memorabilia.

In one of the two bedrooms there were two brass beds with feather pillows, horsehair mattress, blankets and white Marcella quilts. All bed linen was white.

The hall or small sitting room was cosy in the winter time with a fire in the white-washed corner fireplace. Dad sometimes read to us while Mother darned socks or knitted. We sometimes played board games or read or did a jigsaw – never cards. Dad's parents were Wesleyan Methodists, and although 4½ years in the Army had changed some of his ideas there were still taboos, reinforced by Mother's Presbyterian upbringing (her father was Superintendent of the Sunday School in Richmond for many years and a Special Children's Magistrate as well).

Under the east verandah was bare soil, and one job for children that we did enjoy, was to puddle this ground with water and an old hair broom. It made a very hard and clean surface when it dried. Later on the verandahs were floored with cement.

The house had a large bungalow roof and there is a photo extant of John and myself, aged about 5 and 6 years, standing on the hip each side of the wireless mast. We had a great game of sliding down for the full length where there were no roofing nails and stopping with our feet in the guttering. As a safety net there was the grapevine pergola, but Mother still didn't approve.

Daily life

In preparation for marriage, Mother attended Miss Lucy Drake's Cookery School. At her home her sister Jean helped while Mother was teaching or studying.

Mother was very aware of good nutrition and was an excellent meal cook. She had some fixed ideas – nothing too highly spiced or salted, avoid food that was too hot or too cold, fried foods were to be avoided and a minimum of cakes and sweets, so she wasn't the best cake cook in the district.

Dad was a good clean butcher and usually killed hogget mutton. The meat was roasted, casseroled, stewed, or boiled – nothing wasted. The head was cleaned for soup and Mother found the brains a delicacy; even the caul fat was rendered down to be made into soap later. Caustic soda was added to the heated fat in the copper, then the mixture cooled and cut into bars when set. It turned brownish with age but was used in the Laundry. For personal use we had Velvet soap, with Pears soap for Mother and the baby.

On a trip to Bendigo Mother would buy variety meats such as sausages, tripe, black puddings, pig's cheek, and trotters. One year a pig was killed, but I don't want to go into that again, from the squealing to the scraping of the bristles.

We always had fowls so there was always a rooster available for a special occasion. Rabbits were plentiful and Mother cooked them well – either as a casserole or crumbed. She was opposed to the slaughter of wild duck, although they were plentiful on the Tang, the Water Reserve that formed the eastern boundary of the property. Sometimes it was a good year for mushrooms and there was a special joy in gathering them.

For breakfast we had porridge (Weetbix in summer), plus eggs boiled, poached, or scrambled, never fried, with tomatoes or lamb's fry. School lunch was cold meat and sandwiches and fruit wrapped in a starched white napkin.

Mother loved a garden and Dad had a background of being self-supporting. His parents were the first settlers there in 1875 and had established an orchard which was a source of fresh fruit. A row of 21 almond trees bordered the north, with a block of jam fig trees, a large pear tree, 2 apple trees, and 2 large mulberry trees, one a magnificent one whose roots eventually spoilt the water in the well nearby. This fruit was large and luscious, much better than its neighbour, but it had another advantage: it was easy to climb and its branches formed a very convenient crotch to sit and read and keep a weather eye on the back door for Mother needing me. Dad and I were good value in picking mulberries as we had once eaten too many. It was years before. I could enjoy them again – Dad never. There was a superb fig tree at the front with those large luscious brown figs and I have the touching memory of Dad carrying an especially nice one resting on a leaf for my mother. He sometimes brought mushrooms in a hat for her too. All along the front of the house was a wonderful grapevine, planted before 1886, with large bunches of purple grapes. We used it to climb onto the roof. Mother planted an orange tree which never thrived but later we had peaches, nectarines, apricots and lemons.

Mother preserved all that she could and made apricot, fig, mulberry and melon jam. The melons were grown in the vegetable garden and it was a family activity sitting around the kitchen table preparing this fruit – Dad slicing, children seeding, and Mother dicing.

I can't remember truisms or advice but in our household Mother was never expected to carry or chop wood or carry heavy buckets of water while Dad never changed a nappy. I can't remember that he ever cooked a

meal. Definitely a firm division of labour. Her love of garden books and good music, although no radio until I was 13 or 14. She made our clothes – and grieved that, apart from George, her family in Melbourne didn't visit.

We always owned up when something had gone wrong, told the truth – sometimes, but not always, the most tactful thing. We found injustice very hard to bear.

The vegetable garden supplied most of our needs, with carrots, parsnips, silver beet, beans, peas, lettuce, tomatoes, and pumpkins. Mother preserved at least 100 jars of tomatoes and made all our tomato sauce. She didn't believe in highly-spiced foods, so no pickles.

The staples such as potatoes and onions, with flour, sugar, oatmeal, rice, candles, and matches etc were purchased at Kelynack's Store in Dingee. The first store had been a Farmers' Co-operative Store, but when I remember it, it was a tumbling-down, dim, general store, with tin billies, ropes, hurricane lanterns and what-have-you hanging from the ceiling, with a very old lady (Mrs Kelynack Senior) tearing off a corner of white wrapping paper to make a cone and filling it with boiled lollies for John and I to share when Dad paid the monthly account. Later her sons built a new store on the other side of the road – Albert with the general store half, and Roy with newspapers, lollies and, wonder of delights, ice cream! It came in shiny cylinders packed around with salt and ice. I suppose it was available on certain days but it was a treat for us to buy a penny cone on Saturdays when Dad and Mother went to tennis. Apart from being the town gossip, I don't know what role Fred played, but Gwenyth appreciated his kindness in helping her with her bicycle.

We were fortunate living on a farm with no close neighbours as we were forced to make our own entertainment and there was very little opportunity to play with others. There was a cost, perhaps, in not learning to relate to people at an early age but we had wonderful things to play with. The Tang was always a great place. We would go in the horse and buggy when Dad was inspecting the sheep – splashing through the floodwaters with the water nearly up to the wheel hubs and learning the best places to cross to the other side. And when the water was very high, diverting it into burrows and catching the rabbits as they came out. We knew all the bird nest sites – the swans' nests on the top of the lignum, the floating nests of musk duck, the cormorants' nests high in the swamp gums. Climbing the magnificent trees to try to catch the young shags, but they plopped down into the water and swam away under the surface so that we couldn't catch them. Making a raft out of kerosene tins. Learning to cope with very large black leeches. Using low branches as a swing or pretending they were horses. I can't remember a proper swing. We made our own see-saw with boards across a log. Balance was developed by walking along the thick boards of the sheepyard and putting up with the hiding when walking around the sheepdip. One of us would most certainly have been drowned if we had fallen when there was water in it or killed if it were dry. Playing in the old stripper, driving it, making a cubby in the back. Climbing all the beautiful trees with the excitement of finding a nest of eggs in all the out of the way places.

The only bike available was a full size man's bike, so we tried to learn by holding onto the stub fence and putting one foot through the fork. No wonder the first aid kit was often in use. We made our own kites of brown paper and string, and of course this meant using the saws from the blacksmith shop to cut the timber. We certainly got punished for all the tools, nails, etc we hadn't put away. In the summer time our feet became very tough as we didn't like wearing shoes, so cuts and splinters were common. I can still remember walking on a piece of black hot iron fallen from Dad's anvil and the fuss I made. Making play houses in the dust – most eleborate and many-roomed ones. Cutting thistles for cah.

Mother had a lovely piece of embroidered voile and had it made up into a dress with a plain white top with a pale blue circlet of flowers. When I sat in Dr B's dentist's chair it stuck to the red velvet.

School concerts were a trial as I could not sing in tune. I was once told to stand in the back row and not to sing. It blighted my life and I was later told that it was because I had not sung. So when we had a Cantata, I was the one to speak the prologue – very scary by myself in front of the curtain. Action songs were very popular: “10 Little Mothers”, 10 girls with their dolls, as we turned them over to spank them mine said “Mama”. The boys that year were nigger (sic - not a racist bone in the recounter's body) minstrels with faces blackened with burnt corks. A mother, Mrs Yeaman, apparently was quite good at organising them but we thought her very bossy. Unfortunate

Life between the World Wars was another kind of battle – farm prices were depressed, and then came the Great Depression. As country children we were fortunate as we always had a comfortable home and enough to eat, and everyone else had the same problems. No trouble if you wanted to keep up with the Jones. The Jones were down there too.

Because the farm had been mortgaged and Dad's elder brother had taken almost everything he could, Dad's deferred pay was soon used up. Interest rates were high, and I now know why some neighbouring farmers left their properties at this time. Fortunately we managed.

Mother was the eldest of 7 children, and her family who owned a hardware and china shop in Bridge Road Richmond, had spells of trying times. Fortunately she had brought with her a good Glory Box, with an excellent supply of quality linen, sheets, pillow cases, towels, tea-towels, serviettes and tablecloths which stood them in good stead. "Buy good quality – and look after it". Many economies were practised, but a good face was presented to visitors.

Some of the economies were common practice. Before they became too thin, sheets were cut down the middle and the sides joined, backs of cotton shirts were used for tea-towels (but there were always good ones available), and old flour bags were used in many ways. Aprons were always worn to protect clothes and to cut down on washing. School and best clothes were always changed as soon as we got home. Clothes were patched and darned and Mother made most of our clothes. Fortunately, they didn't smoke or drink, and lollies, cordials, tinned foods etc were for rare special occasions. But importantly, we always had good boots or shoes, books, gramophone records, and were taken on holidays or visits to Melbourne. These economies paid off as I was able to attend High School in Bendigo – the only child in the district to do so. It was a financial strain on my parents, but it all depends on your priorities.

I suspect that an occasional Birthday Cheque from Mother's parents was put to good use. Before a trip to Melbourne to visit them, Mother bought me a beautiful fawn overcoat trimmed with snakeskin, at the Beehive (Bendigo) sale.

Christmas was a time to look forward to eagerly. Large parcels came in the mail and mysteriously disappeared. We each appropriated one of Dad's socks and tidied the toy cupboard. On THE DAY we were awake at daybreak to see what had been left for us. One year we were very disappointed when we received between us, Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopaedia – but later had hours and hours of entertainment and instruction from it. At Christmas dinner we had the rare luxury of a tin of pineapple, and a bottle of lime juice cordial. Dad would bone, roll, and season a loin of lamb. As Mother was an excellent cook we enjoyed that with gravy and vegetables. People did not travel to make large family gatherings but sometimes an informal picnic was organised among the nearby extended family – to the Tang or to the Terricks near Mitiamo.

Some history

A big setback was when I was 4½ years old and desperately ill with peritonitis and needed a most expensive surgeon and a long stay in hospital in Bendigo.

The hospital run by Sisters Bramby and Jackman was in Wattle St, and I can remember the spires of Sacred Heart Cathedral, where Dad in his extremity went to pray for me. Dr Long was the most expensive in Bendigo and was considered the best surgeon.

Dr Long always referred to me as his "little miracle" but Mother worried that the champagne I was prescribed would incline me that way later on. He was a very gentle and kindly man and sitting on his knee at subsequent visits is a pleasant memory. Many years later, alone in Bendigo, when I needed a Doctor I asked for his son whose fee was 10/6 ($1.05) instead of a Guinea ($2.10) for his father. But he had still kept an interest in me and came also – at no charge.

He was a most gentle man, but why did he want to shoot quail and snipe? As a child patient the nurses all petted and spoiled me but I was glad to get in a real taxi with Mother to go home by train. What joy to see David's dear little face peeping out the back window of "the car". Yes, Dad had bought a Ford car, but the expenses of those illnesses was a serious handicap to them for a long long time. Apparently I had a hernia and adhesions which were repaired when I was 14.

Dad has been heard to say "you don't know about marriage until you have 3 children with whooping cough at the one time". I was apprehensive when Dad came into the bedroom carrying a shovel with strange blue flames and an acrid smell. Putting sulphur on glowing embers was supposed to help. A common sight in the schoolyard at the time was a child rushing to hang onto a verandah post until the paroxysm of coughing eased. Because of our isolation our family didn't have any of the ordinary complaints until we started school or later. I didn't get Measles until I was 18, German Measles at 21, and Mumps when I was in my early 40s, at the same time as my children.

While for reasons of distance and bad roads we didn't always go to Church, Sunday was the Lord's day. The Methodist Church was the only one available, with a Bible-thumping fear-of-the-Lord message. Mother would go first in the pew with the baby, then me, followed by the boys John and David, and Dad guarding the end. A firm pinch was administered when deemed necessary – no yelps either. We envied the family in the back row who had a bag of biscuits to while away the long sermons that were considered necessary in those days. Later an Anglican Church was built in Dingee and we found this service much more interesting, with all the getting up and down. But the Methodists sang their hymns with much more gusto.

It was unheard of to have organised sport or to pay money for any activity on a Sunday. It was a suitable day for a picnic or to visit friends or relatives, and a social game of tennis could be condoned. World War 2 changed a lot of our values.

We were not baptised; our parents giving us a good Christian upbringing and believing we should make our own commitment when we were old enough. Sunday was respected – on Saturday all necessary jobs were done. A wood supply ensured, shoes cleaned, and hair and bodies bathed. Rough play was frowned upon and reading or the gramophone was encouraged. Mother had a good wind-up gramophone and very good records from her single days, including a single-sided Clara Butt for which she paid the astronomic sum of £1 ($2). We children had a good supply of Kiddie-phone children's records – possibly birthday and Christmas presents from Grandma and Grandpa Johnson and Uncle George. Later Sundays were more relaxed but I was a teenager when I was reproved for knitting on Sunday: it was suggested that I may have to unpick it in the after life.

I had been given a new hymn book for my birthday and was clutching it carefully crossing a flooded creek on the way to Church when, horror of horrors, it dropped in, floating away and staining the water red. Fortunately a neighbour was just behind us with a lighter vehicle and he retrieved it. It was never quite the same after, with some pink wavy pages.

When I later went to Bendigo I went to the Presbyterian Sunday School and Church, with a more balanced Minister who, even then, was encouraging unity among the Non-conformists. I walked a mile each way morning and afternoon, but I don't think it has made me any more caring than my children.

The same creek that tried to steal my hymn book marked the division between the open plain country where we lived and the box-tree-lined roads nearer to Dingee. There was always something interesting to be seen there: a Dotterel's nest, just two eggs in a shallow depression in the gravel, while overhead on a limb a Magpie Lark's perfect cup-shaped mud nest. We knew where all the Magpie nests were – beware when she was hatching, as she would dive-bomb unless we were vigilant. The Eagle's nest, the hollow nests of the Parrots, the Lizards and Goannas, were all of interest to children who walked, drove, or rode to school.

David, Gwenyth, John and Margery at the Tang, 1931

We seldom saw other children – the nearest were 3km distant, and the majority a world away in Dingee on the other side of the creek, about 8km.

We had plenty to entertain us. We made play houses and we played in the stables and the old straw shed – sitting up in the buggy driving an imaginary horse, searching for sparrow eggs in the thatch. We climbed everywhere – the trees at the Tang, the windmill, the mulberry tree, the roof of the house and the very large pepper tree that had a hen's nest in the fork. A very large red-gum tree had fence posts stacked around it, and whilst peering down and deliberating if I could slide down I took the quickest and shortest route and knocked myself out. I can still feel the scar in my hairline from the resulting cut.

An old stripper/harvester was good value and we harnessed the dogs into carts and tried to prevail upon the cats that they would enjoy the ride. Dad's smithy was always a source of interest – lots of things to turn or grind or to pump the bellows making "things".

We made mud pies – I remember lining up for the strap from an irate mother because we had used eggs to mix them. They were extra-good mud pies though.

The Tang swamp was always a good playground, with trees to climb, water to paddle in, birds' nests to discover, and digging for Aboriginal stones in their old kitchen middens. Then in the Spring, discovering the first Early Nancies, Vanilla and Bulbine Lilies, Buttercups, Billy-buttons and the glistening Sundews. We would walk across to visit Jane Mitchell, my father's cousin (much loved by us) and be entranced by the wonderful perfume of the tussock grass. Now, unfortunately, only a memory after the disastrous effects of the 40s droughts.

Also the memory of watching a pair of brolgas dancing. Unforgettable!

We would drive with Dad checking the sheep while he pointed out items of interest, then taking the lunches over to the shearing shed and playing in the wool. Of course we had small jobs like feeding the fowls, gathering the eggs in all sorts of interesting places:

"Two in the manger,Four in the shed,
Six in the box where the chickens are fed,
And nearly two dozen way out in the scrub"

We gathered the kindling or took the baby for a walk in her pram. We set the table or matched the socks, cleaned our shoes, and did our homework, which was spelling, writing, and using and learning 6 to 10 words each night. And then, reading, reading, reading. The Junior Argus was good value, with lots of interesting articles as well as puzzles and things to do.

From a very early age I always had a garden and still have some of the descendants of those plants. Dark pink Belladonna lilies, Winter Iris, Grape Hyacinths, Jonquils, Zephyranthes, and the lovely Sternbergia. In the evening or winter time I would find great pleasure in Yates Catalogue with the enticing pictures of the annuals on which I would expend some precious pocket money and much anticipation.

Cann River, with me in the back seat

In 1927 for the opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra, we had a very lovely holiday in the Ford car, travelling down through Gippsland. We started off by going to Yallourn to visit Uncle Khum, where John was allowed to go on the Flying Fox and I wasn't. Then we proceeded along the Prince's Highway to Cann River and Orbost, and slept in the bed of the Snowy River, and I remember with Mother showing me how to make a bed hole in the sand – good thing a flood didn't come down. Then we drove through to Buchan Caves. I wasn't very happy about going into caves but then up over to Queanbeyan, where we ran into a horse, with not much damage to either car or horse. At one stage we visited the construction of Burrinjuck Dam, where again John was allowed to go on the Flying Fox and I wasn't. Then we had a tour into Canberra, three weeks before the opening of the Parliament House. All the statues were draped ready for the final opening. The

trees were remarkable: they were all about 4' high and I don't remember much more until we were driving home in the rain around through Jerilderie, where the car went right round in a complete circle on the muddy road.

Other holidays – when Gwenyth was 2 or 3, when I was 11 or 12, one holiday we had a house at Hampton where we spent a lot of time on the beach. When I was 16 we camped on the foreshore at Apollo Bay and had a wonderful time. We spent a lot of time diverting the Wild Dog Creek from running along the foreshore straight into the sea. Very disgusted next morning to find that the sea had righted it. I got very badly sunburnt there by being a stupid 16-year-old. That was possibly the last holiday I had with them.

School

My brother John and I started school together in 1929. I was 7½; I could read and print, but had to be taught writing. One of those years was very wet and the roads so bad that the horse knocked up and we couldn't go to school for some weeks. The 4½ mile (7km) journey each way took a lot of time out of Dad's working day, so I soon had to learn to drive. Kitty was a mailman's former horse, accustomed to stopping at everyone she met on the road, which was often very embarrassing for me when I had to explain that I didn't need to stop them. On cold winter mornings, in spite of thick coats, caps, gloves and a rug, our hands were so stiff it was difficult to undo the leather harness. I wonder if the teacher who strolled across from the adjacent residence, knew that, with the best will in the world, we couldn't hold our pens easily. In summer the hot sun wasn't pleasant either. On the way we would water the horse, then undo the traces and bridle before putting her in the school stables with the chaff we had brought. There were seven separate stalls and a variety of conveyances. We had a gig, and later a 4-wheel buggy; Davidsons had a lovely phaeton, McElwains a gig, and Reids had a lightweight gig with a spirited ex-pacing horse. She still believed that if she saw a horse in front she had to beat it. We were often left behind in a cloud of dust and the exultant faces peering back. Later on John insisted on driving and was more adventuresome. I don't remember how he explained to Dad about the broken traces as a result of seeing how close to the fence he could drive without hitting it. Another exciting time, when the reins came undone and one rein dropped and the horse started going round in a circle. We knew John could cope but the young Student Teacher with us got a bit excited.

I was not very happy at school. Because I started late and could read I was accelerated – the 3rd Graders wouldn't play with me and the 4th took a long time to accept me. There were other differences. We were isolated 7km east of Dingee, whereas there was a Closer Settlement near to the township so those children had lots of opportunities for companionship. Perhaps that is why I am still a bit of a loner although liking the companionship of friends. Also Mother being a city girl, and Dad having had 4½ years overseas meant that they had different values. One does not dare to differ from one's peers. I couldn't believe it when I later went to High School in Bendigo and was accepted. It was wonderful in spite of being very homesick.

In winter I was dressed in a navy blue pleated tunic, white blouse, and lace-up shoes. John and David had navy serge trousers with braces under blue blouses. In summer I had neat Tobralco or cotton frocks and a regulation straw hat. We all wore calf-length socks kept up with elastic garters but I always envied the girls who had frilly frocks and patent leather shoes, even if they did become scruffy. I did not envy the girls who had to wear heavy black boys' boots. (Their brothers often ran barefoot to school carrying their boots around their necks to put on later. This was so they wouldn't wear out as quickly.)

I had long thick plaits pulled severely back from a centre parting. Ribbons slipped off very easily and more than once I was careful to keep my back to Mother to delay as long as possible the awful truth that I had lost one ribbon and had to tie the two plaits together with white 7cm satin ribbon. We didn't know about rubber bands then.

A furrow was made up the centre of the very long school yard culminating at the stables and with the football ground beyond. Girls had to play on the Right, and Boys on the Left, but adjacent to the school we could combine to play rounders (with a broom handle and tennis ball – many misses, but when contact was made, oh boy!) We held impromptu concerts in our girls' shelter shed, and skipping was a favourite winter pastime. Everyone had their own rope, but we also played with a communal rope, with all the varieties of skipping. Only boys played marbles (except Nancy G). Other games were Statues on the Lawn, Hopscotch, Jacks sitting on the porch, Kick the Tin, Hidey. Also building cubby houses, and there were some super-duper ones. At the time the long lines of sugar gums were pollarded. Boys played cricket and football, and all seniors had to work in the garden on Fridays.

Mr Allen was an excellent teacher but then we got a lazy, incompetent, and unjust one for several years.

Mother wouldn't let me be recommended by him for my Merit Certificate, so I had to sit for an externally-set exam, with any who were doubtful of a pass – very humiliating at the time, but I understood. Both my brothers John and David suffered from him so when Gwenyth was ready for Grades 7 and 8, Mother withdrew her and taught her from the Correspondence School, and she had an excellent grounding plus the bonus that, if she finished her set work she could go and join Dad outside. So she got a wider education, and Dad appreciated the companionship of his "Little Poss".

I liked all schoolwork except sewing time. Hemming a handkerchief or making a petticoat in madapolan (a firm white fabric) by hand was torture. I couldn't keep it clean, and all unsatisfactory stitches had to be pulled out. A white baby's singlet for knitting is remembered because the steel needles stuck, making a grubby band right across. Knitting must have become easier later on because I can always remember knitting something and competently made a lot of our clothes.

On 24th May was Empire Day, Queen Victoria's Birthday, and we celebrated with a sports day. All kinds of races, flat, sack, three-legged, egg and spoon, thread the needle, potato and slow bicycle, together with football kicking and bowling at a stump. There was an Old Buffers' Race, that Dad won, and a Married Ladies' Race.

One year there was much excitement when an aeroplane circled and landed in an adjoining paddock. I was one of the first to arrive with the boys, although I couldn't win a sprint. Mother was horrified, as I was supposed to be fragile because of a hernia from the peritonitis. I didn't play much sport until after a repair operation.

At the end of each year a concert or musical play was presented by the pupils. One year the 21 big boys of Grades 7 and 8 sang Negro songs with their faces blackened with burnt corks. We girls sang an action song with our large baby dolls. (After rehearsal one day I was running back to the schoolroom, fell, and smashed her beautiful porcelain face). I was not allowed to sing, but spoke the prologue – very nervous: first on in front of the curtain by myself in a pretty new floral Tobralco frock with white Peter Pan collar.

Father Christmas came to the school and I received a little pair of nail scissors "because you have such nice nails"!!! I have never bitten my nails since!! Mother was responsible for starting a Mother's Club for the school, and was Secretary for many years.

The school was about 600m from the station, with the railway line just across the road. During those Depression years men carried a swag across the country looking for a job, any job, so they used to try and ride in the goods trucks. We could see them dropping off just as the train slowed for the station. Swagmen would sometimes call at home looking for something to eat. Mother would give them a big sandwich with thick slabs of cold mutton and renew their supplies of tea and sugar. Some would offer to cut wood in return. They would like to sleep in the stables or sheds but we were very nervous about that as a careless smoker could burn them down.

Mother missed her large family and would try to take us to Melbourne to visit them and to show us the City, and the beach. She took us to the Zoo, the Museum and Art Gallery, and one year walked us up Collins and Bourke Streets, pointing out special landmarks and buildings. We were shown St Paul's Cathedral, Scots' Church, and taken for tram and train rides. What a lot we have to thank her for. On one occasion we took a neighbour's 20 year old daughter with us. She had never been to Melbourne and Mother thought she would enjoy some time in Myers. We were astounded when we met her half an hour later having "seen" Myers. Even in those days she must have only taken a stroll through the ground floor. We tried the new escalator in the Manchester Unity building – riding up, then walking down the stairs, to ride up again. Mother timed these visits for the "White Sales" after Christmas. In the evening she would inspect all the window displays and then next morning be ready to make her purchases. Foy and Gibson had a big new store on the corner of Bourke and Swanston Streets and the saleswoman walked down 3 floors to get me a lovely lacy straw hat that was in the front window – all for 2/6 (25c).

In January 1936 after a hernia operation I stayed with Mother's sister Wyn at Brighton Beach. They had a lovely home and garden, a live-in maid, and a bathing box on the beach. A very different world for a farm girl in the 1930s. They were very kind and cousin Joan took me to the City to see the decorations and window displays for the death of King George V, where all major buildings were draped in purple and black. The temperature was 104.5°F (40.3°C – Aunt Wyn was horrified) and as well we attended the Memorial in the MCG, the girls all in white frocks and the women in black. Most impressive. Because Bert was a member, we sat in the Members' Stand.

Mother's other sister Jean was a softie but Uncle Edgar was every inch the Naval sea captain that he had been. He won the job of Hallkeeper at St Kilda Town Hall from 300 applicants and certainly saw that the staff kept everything ship-shape. I often stayed with them right until I was married. Cousin Geoff was my age and one night I heard him rattling tins and money. He was juggling between fares, board, insurance etc to take me dancing – quite a treat, as he was a splendid dancer. One year Aunty Jean made me a pink frock for Christmas using Geoff as a model – he was not amused. When she married she became Mrs Deare, but everyone agreed she was always a dear.

Because Dad's sisters lived not far away, we saw much more of them, and both Aunty Marion Old and Aunty Ethel Cardwell minded us when Mother was suffering from recurring bouts of pyelitis as well as the miscarriages. Olds lived in Dingee, and Uncle Ernest had a blacksmith's shop, which was always entrancing to children. A specialty was a grinder worked with bicycle pedals, while forgeing and shoeing horses were very exciting. The cousins were grown-up young ladies with ball gowns and boyfriends – something different again. There was a little shop run by Lil Grylls, where we could buy ½^{d} of lollies etc, and traffic and people and trains to see.

Aunty Ethel lived in Bendigo, just past the Cemetery and backing onto Back Ck, where there was still some gold to be found. We used their washing cradle and dish and were rewarded with tiny specks. They kept a horse and buggy and it was interesting to drive into Bendigo and stable the horse in the Belfast stables in Queen St. At that time the clip clop of horses carting wood to the mines was still a very common sound coming from Mandurang and Strathfieldsaye. Aunty Ethel spoiled us, but her word was law and we loved her.

At one time we stayed at Mandurang with Aunt Mary and Uncle Jack – fascinating because of the different terrain: the Sheepwash Ck, and sandy gravel, blackberries, walking to school and playing with the Carey children who lived nearby, as well as the Thomas children. All kinds of different things.

Dad's youngest sister Flo had been an Army Nursing Sister in India and a Truby King Baby Health Nurse. She was always distressed about the poverty and hunger in the world and introduced the Save the Children Organization to Australia. She set up bathing facilities for Aboriginal women at her home in Smith St Fitzroy, as well as trying to interest the Government and others to the needs of mothers and children. Wheat was a disastrously poor price, and she tried various recipes on us with a view to feeding hungry children in India. We weren't impressed, as we always associated it with feeding the chooks. Nowadays, Bulgar, Tabouleh, and Wholewheat flour are part of my kitchen. She occasionally came to stay, to nurse Mother, and at the home birth of brother David. I was a nervous child, and one night she took me out into the yard and suggested I listen to the night noises while she explained what they were – the calls of the bitterns and mopokes, the bleating of the sheep, and the sharp bark of a fox. I have never been frightened at night since.

Mother was always conscious of the limited life experiences in Dingee and joined me up as a Lone Guide (me, the world's worst letter writer) but I was very fortunate to have a most dedicated leader, Miss Weller, who spent hours preparing the most beautiful letters and tiny knots for me to learn. She had to run her own unit as well. But I was and still am a lazy letter writer and I must have been a bit of a trial. In December/January 1933/34 I attended a camp at Fossil Beach, Mornington that was conducted by two young and enthusiastic Camberwell Guiders. I had a lovely time in spite of being very shy. Aunt Flo met me at Spencer St Station and we had a glorious ride on the front of the dummy of the cable car down Bourke St Hill at night – fabulous! Then I had a room to myself – luxury to me – at Princess Mary Club next to Wesley Church in Lonsdale St where Flo was a permanent resident and I was treated like an adult. She wasn't above telling me to stand straighter, as well as other things that were good for me.

At camp we filled our palliasses with straw (a no-no nowadays) and helped put up the tents. I didn't mind the latrines etc but not bathing in a cold tent in a tin tub. I was looked after by the very caring leaders and the metropolitan Company guides, some of whom became very well-known in the Guiding movement because of those attributes – Marjorie Lane (née Baker) was the Patrol Leader, and the Camp CO was Clare Broadhurst. Miss Elaine Moran (Lone Guide Commissioner) met me opposite where the State Theatre is now, and we all travelled down in a furniture truck. It was a memorable camp as we had a rainstorm one night and had to sleep in the loft of a large barn, while the Guiders read us goodnight stories to calm us. I believe Marjorie presented me to be enrolled. What a thrill over 30 years later to renew that spark of friendship. Next year we were billeted at the Berry St Foundling Home, East Melbourne. I caused a mild panic for the Guider in Charge. She had taken us to the city to the newly-opened Coles (Nothing over 2/6). I looked around and finding no other Guide in sight got on the tram and went back. There was a very relieved

Guider when I walked in, as she had counted heads and realised that one country girl was missing.

We travelled down to Frankston for the World Scout Jamboree, which was a day to be remembered by all who attended. It was a very hot day, the black sand was very affectionate, and standing to greet Lord Baden Powell was too much for many and they fainted. The Scouts carried around dixies of water, and we were allowed ½ cup each. At the end of the day the only Guides without black faces were those who had taken part in a display and were able to have a shower.

They still talk about that camp. Some years ago I met a Mary Lane whom I felt I knew but we could find no point of contact untilcamping at Fossil Beach was mentiioned. She had also been a Guide there.

Another day we travelled right out into the country to Syndal, where I passed my Tenderfoot, made my Promise, and in a lovely Bushland setting was enrolled with the Lone Guide badge with the lovely enamelled L. I was sorry to have to part with it when I joined 4th Bendigo in 1935.

Later life

The next momentous step was starting at Bendigo High School. Several country children started at the same time and we were at a bit of a disadvantage as the city children had done French, Latin, and better algebra and geometry in years 7 and 8 – missing the cooking wasn't a problem. We were in Room 9, famous as the base for Miss L. McGillivray – a large lady respected and loved for her teaching ability in English.

Dad, with pressure from his sisters, didn't believe that girls should be educated, so Mother had quite a problem persuading him to let me go. It was a big financial burden for them too. Board was £1 ($2) per week, and school fees £2 ($4) per term. No such frills as summer or winter uniform; only very few girls had the luxury of a navy short-sleeved frock and white collar. Almost all wore a navy wool serge box-pleated tunic, long-sleeved white blouses and school tie, with straw hats in summer and navy hats in winter, plus the hated black lisle stockings and black lace-up shoes, with grey gloves completing the outfit. One had to report to the Headmaster if for any reason you couldn't wear the stockings on one day.

Also as girls living away from home, if we wanted to go out at night we had to have permission from Miss Kelly – and we did. I was fortunate to board with Mr & Mrs Townsend, he the Principal. They had heavy school expenses in spite of a scholarship, with two sons at Melbourne University doing medicine and dentistry. For lunch each day, their other children, twin daughters, Mr Townsend, another boarder, and I all walked home together and back to school. No wonder we were fit. They had a wonderful historic home on a hill with a very high brick wall all around it with a tall pine tree that could be seen from all over that part of Bendigo. The house had a butler's pantry and scullery, but I can't remember much else. The son Lance was adored by all the neighbourhood boys. Mr Townsend was very interested in ships and could always be diverted by a question about the wonderful new “Queen Mary”. No wonder his sons enlisted in the navy when war was declared. Sadly Mervyn, a newly-graduated dentist, was lost on HMAS Sydney.

Then there was no further need for boarders, so I left to stay with Brown in Hustlers Terrace opposite the Convent and then Mrs Hamer. He worked for Cohns (allowed to have one bottle of beer when he came home at night) and she had been a florist at Irelands in St Kilda before marriage, and had some interesting stories to tell. She was so kind to me, but the cleanest housekeeper I have ever met. It was a bad mistake when I left to share a boarding house in Frederick St when David started High School. Not a pleasant woman and not good for David and me. We later got separate board and later I went back to Hamers.

I started my teaching career as a student teacher at Gravel Hill State School. I also attended some night classes at Bendigo School of Mines – dressmaking and lettering. After classes Yvette Chatfield and I enjoyed crumpets and coffee in Allan's Walk. Later, while I was at Teachers College in Melbourne Yvette did a secretarial course and we sometimes enjoyed a meal at a nice restaurant, Russell Collins (Vegetable Plate – 2/6, 25c). Later Yvette came to stay with Des and me, and met and married Harold Brimacombe. Our friendship has continued.

I was sent as a relieving teacher to Winnambool, 14 miles NW of Manangatang. It was a long trip, arriving at 9:30 at night. The accommodation was arranged for me. We shared the accommodation with the train driver and guard, and they taught me how to play Crib. A member of the School Committee came next day and took me out there. The Presbyterian Minister came too and gave me some advice about where to stay. He took me to Mrs Wisewell, who said she really didn't want to board the teacher again. When I cam home from school the first day she said, yes I could stay, because she knew I didn't smoke. There were 23 students, and I saw rural poverty because all the farms were Soldier Settlement farms with 640 Acres – insufficient, and it

was a drought time. I saw tremendous dust storms. I rode a bike 4½ miles to school, and often had to walk because of the sand across the roads. The students were all very good. We tried to make a garden. Imagine how stupid it was: a garden in a drought. We carted water and planted plants, of course forgetting about school holidays, when everything would die. I had a nice rapport with the children. When I was travelling up I said to my mother that I wouldn't need an evening gown, going to that place. The first week I said "Send two!" Everybody rallied around and they had various balls. In spite of petrol rationing. They shared cars and I went to quite a few balls and I learnt to dance.

Because of the wartime scare, they were moving children from schools like Yallourn away into the country, and it was a brilliant idea from the Education Department to send city children up to the country. Now Winnambool was 14 miles NW of Manangatang which was x miles from Melbourne. The people were poverty-stricken farmers. We had to be up there at Christmas time. We had to wait there for quite a few weeks before the Department decided we weren't needed and could go home – after Christmas.

Grylls Family, c1942: David (1924), John (1922), John Grylls (1886), Gwenyth (1931), Margery (1921), Myrtle (1889)

In 1942 at Teachers College in Melbourne I boarded at a house in Story St, Parkville, opposite University High School. The majority of students were girls; very few boys – they had all enlisted. The course had been shortened to one year instead of two. There were 14 girls boarding in the house – with one bathroom: I don't know how we managed, but we did. I met Alma Leorke and shared a room with her. It was the beginning of a very long friendship. We got on extremely well together. We used to like to read at night, of course, which was forbidden. We rigged up a string going from the light switch right over to Alma's bed so that we could control the light if we heard footsteps. I'm also still friendly with another of the girls from that time, Betty Dickie or Betty Gibbs as she is now. We both had a strong interest in gardens and she came from near Rochester.

My first school after college, and my last school – twice – was Normanville. When I was looking at the list of possible schools to apply for, I saw Normanville but didn't see the "D" next to it showing that it was in a leased building, and it was a shock when I came out to find that it was in a Hall. It was cold in the wintertime and burning hot in the summertime. How the children ever coped?

It was extremely hot in the train coming up, so much so that my shoe polish melted in the suitcase. Mr Fenton met me at the station with a wheat truck and took me out into the Mallee. After the first week I was amazed to learn that there was a beautiful Lake Meran not far away. There were very few children. The two older children at the school, Kevin Manuel and Wilma Shipp were completing their Merit certificate. Older boys at a rural school were a great help to the teacher.

For the school holidays, I was at home at Dingee. On my way back to Kerang, this soldier and friend, who had known I would be on the train, were standing in the train doorway at Dingee station hoping to meet me, and I looked at this compassionate and interesting face. I don't know if I fell in love straight away, but I was very impressed with him.

The Fenton's car was waiting there with the keys in it for Des to drive himself home, so we went to his Aunty May's house for a cup of tea before we drove on out to the Fentons. I was conditioned to like Des straight away because I had heard so many good reports about him from the various neighbours and family friends. And we very soon did some very heavy courting. I was always surprised that Mrs Fenton encouraged me, for she was a bit fussy about her eldest son.

So I corresponded with Des for the remainder of the year, and we married on 27.5.1944. The story is continued in Des+Margery.pdf.

Notes added – found in fragments after Margery's death on 6 September 2014:

This records the **Round-Australia trip** that her mother and father took in 1955:

When David came back to live at Tang Tang after living at Merino/Digby, Mother and Dad moved out to a hovel of a house at Tandarra before buying a Kombi van and touring right around Australia. They were at Rockhampton when Karen was born 26.6.1955. They visited many friends including Dad's best man J. P. McKinney and got quite a shock to find he was separated from his wife and living with Judith Wright. They married later. They visited many of the Western Australian Grylls at York. After looking at houses in Kangaroo Flat and Golden Square they bought a timber home on the corner of Oak and Panton Streets.

Cornish heritage

I wondered why my father would call a woollen pullover a gansey (sic). He was a strongly Wesleyan Methodist. Where did I get my brown eyes and hair and sturdy legs? Or, my swarthy Aunt Mary?

I can't remember when I became aware of my Cornish heritage but it was an exciting moment when I found a long long line of John Grylls and even Margery as my mother always told me it was a West of England spelling. With the help of a “cousin” I started to trace my family line and in doing so found many from Grylls/Grills families, all from Cornwall and made many friendships. Some of our line and others not yet proven and then another large contingent from Devon – Kingsbridge, Torbay etc found by recording my Grandfather and gradually finding his brothers and then later all his family.