A TIME TO LIVE

An Autobiography

By Herbert Dennis McEvoy

A time to live, so it must be
A tiny speck in eternity
Which though it flies with the swiftest wings
Yet holds a place in the scheme of things.

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Rosemary Willison

R. Willison

FOREWORD

"A TIME TO LIVE" was written by my Father, **Herbert Dennis McEvoy**, shortly before his death. My memories of him are varied. He was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. Of slightly above medium height with red hair, he had the steady eyes and firm handclasp of the man of the land.

I remember specially the bush walks we would all take together, collecting wild flowers, with Jack the dog and our big tortoiseshell cat following behind. He used to sing in a clear tenor voice and to recite the poems of our Australian poets.

I remember sitting by his side helping to milk and drinking the milk, warm and frothy, from the "pansy jug".

People used to smile when he used to raise his hat, smile, and say *"Good morning* (or afternoon) Mrs. *McEvoy."* to my Mother when they went in different directions during their shopping trips to town, but passed each other in the street.

He taught me many things in a short time, the love of this Country, the love of poetry, respect for our (fellow beings) and also how to read (when I was three). My only regret has been that his "time to live" did not enable him to know his grandchildren and great grandchildren to whom I dedicate this book.

Rosemary Willison

TO THEE OH LITTLE BOOK OF MINE

To thee oh little book of mine
These words I write, these lines I pen
To keep a record of the years
Which never will return again.

Through these pages here and there
Past joys and sorrows will entwine
To bring to others, yet to be,
Memories of another time.

A TIME TO LIVE

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By Herbert McEvoy

The year is 1936, the date 6th december. It is Sunday and the hour is 9 a.m. The sun rose in a cloudy sky but, gradually, the cloud have drifted away, leaving only a few feathery streaks aloft. Sometimes they are called "Mare's Tails", or "The Princess' Wedding Veil", at least, that is what my Mother used to call them long ago.

On this morning do I begin my narrative. It will deal with my life mostly, and will tell how the various experiences I have had have shaped my views. It will also tell of the lives of my Father and Mother and my brothers and sisters, as well as recalling little incidents concerning dear friends who are gone. I will mention some people who were not exactly friendly, but they were a minority. There will be some stories of my equine pals of the past, bovine pets and my canine comrades of the chase. I will be looking back to the happy days of my youth, to the revered memory of my parents and some of their good friends and neighbours.

I was born in a little log cabin in the Middle North of South Australia on my Father's farm at Bute. The date was 25th March 1886. My Father's name was Dennis McEvoy. He was one of the eight sons of Dennis McEvoy who migrated to South Australia in 1840 in the ship Buffalo. The first Dennis, my grandfather, was listed as an agricultural labourer, of Blacklock, Dublin. He was half English, half Irish. In 1843 Dennis married Jane Carson, daughter of John Carson, a Scottish wheelwright who sailed to the colony in the ship Mary Dugdale. He, accompanied by his wife, one daughter and three sons, also arrived about 1840. Dennis and Jane were married on 25th April, 1843. Dennis was 31, Jane about 17. The couple, besides their eight sons, also had one daughter, ~~Mary, who became Mrs. McMahon~~. Catharine (Kate) (K. Ity)

Blackrock

Note: one of Kate's brothers was Wm. Andrew & one of his daughters was Mary Ellen who married James McMahon my parents → (by Ted McMahon)

m James Quinn (reputed h-law brother of Ellen Quinn (mother of Ned Kelly))

My Mother's name was Ellen Jane Case. She was one of the daughters of Emmanuel Case (English) and Jane Starr (half English, half Irish). Two of my Mother's sisters also married sons of Dennis and Jane McEvoy. One sister, Elizabeth, married my Father's twin brother, Joseph. Mother's parents also came out in the Buffalo, which, understand, made several trips to South Australia carrying some of the early settlers.

My parents were married in January, 1884. My Father, before he married, was overseer of roads outside district councils. He left this good, remunerative position to take up land at Bute as his first interest was farming.

When he brought my Mother to the farm as a young bride, there was no house on the property. They lived in a tent until my Father built a one-roomed wooden shack (one could hardly call it a house) in which they lived for twelve months and in which their first child, Edith Ellen, was born in 1885.

Edith lived for only about nine days. My parents were now faced with the first great grief of their married life. While my Mother was comforted by friends and relatives, Father had to arrange the baby's funeral. In those days one could not just phone as efficient undertaker.

Three of Father's brothers, Robert, Dan and Frank had also taken up land in the locality, and it was with their help that Father made a little coffin. In it, my Mother, with her own gentle hands, laid the body of her first-born. Then, in the tip-tray, with Diamond in the shafts, they made the sad journey to the Kadina cemetery for the burial. Many years later, my Mother took me to see the small grave of my sister. Mother did not say much, but, young as I was, her expression told me that the loss of her first ewe-lamb was still a poignant memory.

Life went on as it must always go on. My parents worked hard to make their small farm of 320 acres pay its way. The land first had to be cleared of scrub, then ploughed and planted with wheat. Clearing the land was hard, back-breaking, dangerous work. In those early days at Bute scrub and undergrowth covered the land. So thick was the growth that in places it was impossible to walk through it. All kinds of brambles and soft, gummy suckers used to hold the undergrowth together and in places used to grow

right up the trunks of the mallee and pines, also the wild cherry trees that grew on the hillsides. Father managed to clear only about 70 acres in the first two or three years to begin his farming. It was slow, tedious going for one man.

I can remember some of the things that happened when I was about three or four years old. Some incidents are quite clear like the first time my Father lifted me on to a horse and I felt very happy and almost like a grownup. To the great joy of my parents, my sister Olive was born when I was about two years old, and I can remember her quite clearly before she could walk. The little wooden shack on the hill had been demolished to make way for a one-roomed place of pines and mortar built by Father. One end was of stone and had a chimney built into it. The chimney was built by a man called Jack Rorche. That was our little home as I remember it as clearly as if it was yesterday. That one room served us as kitchen, bedroom and living room until I was four and a half. Father then built the second room, also of pines and mortar with a flat roof over all.

There were eight scrub pines growing alongside that little house. How happy we were there through all the ups and downs. What a splendid specimen of manhood my Father was then, tall, straight and handsome, debonair and a wonderful athlete. He was very strong, a splendid rider and a noted boxer.

CHAPTER 2

With the help of our neighbour, Mr. Hancock, who selected alongside our farm, the clearing of the land began in real earnest. Some days they would work on our land, other times on Hancock's place. The friendship that sprang up between those two men survived and deepened through the years until death took our dear old neighbour who was the first that God called home.

One of Father's first tasks was to sink a bore on our land. The first effort did not prove a success, so they dug a dam alongside the Barunga Road. It was a large excavation, an onerous task for two men to take on, and it was carried to completion so well that it not only supplied water for the two farms but for other neighbours as well.

For a few weeks about this time my Father employed a Scotsman named Colson to help with the farm work. He was a tall, raw-boned man with a fairly strong Scottish accent. I remember one day they stopped work for a while to see who could jump the highest. They put a stick with notches between two posts. Father managed the highest jump, which annoyed Mr. Colson very much.
He said, "It's only these damned moleskin trousers. I canna jump we' them on."
"Well," said Father, "Take them off and see if it will make any difference."
"I'll do that." said Mr. Colson, "I know I cood beat ye easily if it wanna for them." So off came the moleskins but the result was the same. Colson then explained that he had had a lot of worry lately, and he "wasna ony mair good as an athlete because there wasna onything like worry for making a mon stiff." He left the farms shortly after that to move on to other things.

About this time Father made a little scrub roller but found it a bit too light. It was 10 feet long and was meant to bring the trees down with a crash. What actually happened was that the roller would come down with a terrible bang while the rest of the tree would be intact. They used to work five horses in this roller. When it proved inadequate they decided to build a heavier one. Father and Mr. Hancock went off and sawed down a big gum tree on what was then the old Hummocks Station. This they fashioned into a big, heavy roller which was used for most of the scrub-rolling on the selections in the vicinity.

For a number of years, in addition to farming whatever area was cleared, the selectors on these mallee farms had to labour away at the rolling, the cutting, the chipping and the burning. The big trees had to be chipped in front of the roller so that they would break off and then the green springbacks had to be cut away. To complete the job, the whole lot had to be stacked in big heaps and burned.

When the land was cleared and ploughed, the mallee stumps used to turn up in thousands. In a newly-cleared paddock, seed would be ploughed in, but, once it had been tilled, it was reploughed and then the wheat was sown and harrowed in. The stumps had to be carted away so that the harrows could get through. As soon as I was old enough I used to help to pick up the little stumps. Later, Olive and I would go out with an old pony in a cart and take

them off. It was all tedious work requiring great patience and perseverance. However, it was carried out so successfully that the scrub in the district has nearly all vanished now, except for a few acres left here and there for shelter in the paddocks or around the homesteads and along the roads and fences.

The first fence around our farm was a post and wire one. First a hole was dug, then the post put in and rammed hard, then two holes were bored and the wire run through them. This fence served to keep the stock (mostly horses) in and saved much work. When the horses strayed, especially if they roamed off into the scrub, it would be a fine contract finding them.

And so the game went on, hard work done with courage and determination. The stout hearts of those pioneer parents of ours were never daunted. They worked for a new life of independence and a future for their children which would not have been possible in the United Kingdom. All hands would turn out to help with the work on the selections, mother dad and the older children working together in the busy times.

The part played by farmers' wives was one of noble self-sacrifice, for in addition to helping with the outside work, they kept the homes clean and as comfortable as possible while rearing their families and instilling into them some of the courage they themselves possessed. It was a gallant struggle, a page of history that will probably never get the prominence it deserves.
Our grandparents were the first to start the good work and our parents carried it on. At one stage South Australia was known as the granary of Australia. This achievement was due to those hard-working men and women of the wheat belt, the "Cockies". Dame Mary Gilmore wrote:

> Shame on those who would deny
> The gnarled hands that set us high.

The period under review was long before the grain and fertilizer drills were known, there was no superphosphate used and implements were primitive. At first, the land was cleared mostly in the flats between the hills because the vegetation on the higher land helped to stop the soil from drifting. The scrub stood on the hills for many years, long after the advent of the seed drill.

I remember well those days when the seeding would start after

duepreparation of the land. The first plough my Father had was an old two-furrow with a wooden wheel on the near side. The process was the scattering of the seed over the ground, then ploughing it in. Father would throw the strap on the seed lip over his shoulder, fill this vessel with wheat and walk along, throwing the wheat as evenly as possible over the soil as he went.

Crops in those days were very light; three bushels to the acre was considered to be a good yield. It was the era of the oilcan and water-bag crops. When the wheat was ready to be harvested, the horses, three in number, would be harnessed into the reaper, the bearings well oiled, the water-bag slung on the front of the machine and away to work.

There was plenty of hum but that didn't mean we were getting a good haul of wheat. Sometimes there would be a rattle and we would know the machine had come across a few grains of wheat and hurled them into the reaper. After three hours I have seen Father pull the machine into the wheat heap (a place where the wheat was emptied on to the ground), open the door and drag the contents out. There would be mallee leaves, sarsparilla leaves, grasshoppers, flies, spiders and amongst the lot we would sometimes see some wheat.

The horses would be rested for a while, given a feed, and we would devour some lunch, usually thick sandwiches and substantial rock cakes or buns washed down with a bottle of luke-warm tea. If we were working near the house, Mother would often come across the paddock with pasties or fresh scones. Then work started again, continuing while the light lasted. This was not the end of the day's work, for the horses had to be fed and attended to and other jobs done. Mother would have a good meal ready, after which Father would smoke a pipe or two and retire early. First light would see Father ready again. If the day was wet and unsuitable for reaping, the winnower would be taken out and a few bags of wheat cleaned ready for the market. As soon as the weather got hot and dry the harvesting would be resumed.

While on the subject of old-style implements, I must mention the old wagon. It is well worth describing. It had one pair of shafts in the middle and Father used to have a pair of chains on each side. He could load 21 bags of wheat

on this vehicle to be conveyed to Bute. He would stand the bags on end and tie a chain across the back so that none would fall off. The most unusual feature of this wagon were the wheels. They were disked and in one place they would incline inward and in another they bent outward. It was hard to tell which one was the worst. When the wagon was in motion the effect was startling. After anyone had got used to travelling on this wagon, I don't think sea-sickness would ever have troubled that person. I never could get used to it. I always walked behind or rode a horse. The tracks it left behind were a work of art which showed up best after rain. You could always tell where that wagon had been. After a few years it fell into disuse and bits of it were used for various jobs around the farm.

Kangaroos and wallabies were plentiful in the district at this time and they played havoc with the crops. The wheat was knocked down so badly at times that one would have thought that a mob of cattle had been through it. The kangaroos had to be destroyed. The farmers used to hunt them with dogs and shoot them, but it was hard to keep the numbers down. Many a time I have seen a kangaroo stage a stand-up fight to the death with the dogs when almost exhausted after a grim chase across country. The Old Man Kangaroo is the pluckiest thing alive and in many instances they were more than a match for three dogs. The kangaroos and wallabies are gone from the district now, but the rabbits have multiplied to an amazing degree.

There were still some Aboriginal people living in the district when I was small. To us they were just part of our lives, quiet, gentle folk who lived by hunting the wild life and sometimes doing odd jobs for the farmers. My Mother was a bit nervous about them, but Father had no fears. He said they were good people if treated properly. However, when I was five or six a strange incident occurred. I recall it very clearly. My Father at that time employed a blackfellow to work for him. This man was well educated, a linguist, a stone mason and very clever. He used to sleep in a reaping machine while he was building an underground tank on the farm. One evening I had wandered a short distance from the house along a little narrow track Father had made through the bush. I wandered off the track a bit, and while playing around, I happened to turn and saw my Father walking towards the house. Following stealthily was the blackfellow, sneaking closer and closer up behind Father. In his hand was a short, black, burnt stick with a heavy end. My childish mind knew that something was wrong. I called

out, "Father, Father". The effect was startling. The black man bounded into the bush and disappeared. My Father came to me, but he did not answer. This incident worried my parents a great deal, but they thought perhaps I was mistaken about the man's intentions. He came back later, but just laughed about what I had seen. He left soon after and a few weeks later, the tank fell in. It was never rebuilt.

The Hancock family were our nearest neighbours and closest friends. Minnie Hancock was about my age and we used to play together when our parents visited each other. Mr. Hancock was a fine man who had quite an influence on me. He was totally honest, very hard-working, and always ready to help anyone in trouble. He was also very determined and somewhat obstinate. He would never back down even when he must have known he was in the wrong. It went against his grain to give way, but it was not often that he was wrong, and we all thought the world of him and his wife.

Uncle Dan lived a couple of miles away, and Minnie and I were good friends with his three daughters, Lizzie, Mary and Annie McEvoy. They were all lovely girls, especially Lizzie. She was very fair, somewhat freckled, though the freckles did not mar her beauty. She grew up to be a very pretty woman though she never married.

Mr. Jim Regan was another old friend of the family who played a big part in my young life. Good old Jim, whose life was as clean and manly as his long, flowing white beard. His heart was as kind and generous as ever beat on this earth. I would often vex him and get him in a temper, but that old man loved me, and many were the times he used to take me on his knee and tell me of wonderful things he had seen and experienced. Old Jim had been a soldier and had travelled far. I will never forget the last day we saw him, when after a terrible illness, he came to say goodbye. He lifted me in his arms and held me close, and said, "Goodbye, and always remember, me bhoy, that old Jim's bhark was niver as bhad as his boite."

I learned to ride at an early age and had a natural love for animals, particularly for the horse. It soon became my lot to ride rough horses at an age when other children were afraid to go near them. My parents used to worry over this, but no harm ever came to me from the noble steed even though I sometimes tried to make them gallop too hard and jump too high.

As a young lad I was healthy, lively and a bit of a scamp. My Father had a job to keep me in order, but, after the age of thirteen, my health deteriorated owing to appendicitis. I had operations that were not too successful at different stages and at the age of fourteen I met with serious trouble. I had started to help Father to lift four-bushel bags of wheat into the wagon. After about six weeks it got too much for me. I had to give up because of the strained chest muscles and heart pains. For two or three years I was seriously ill and my reaper remained idle for all that time.

Each year some more of the land was cleared and made ready for tilling. Now that he had a bigger acreage to farm, Father made up his mind to go in for a bigger plough. The last time he used the double furrow he met with an accident. He was ploughing near the dam beside the Barunga Road. A big stump got under one of the bodies, and in trying to get it out, the body came down and struck him on the head. I was with him and saw Father lying still and quiet on the ground. I let the horses' chains go loose, but forgot one on a big bay horse called Prince; he pulled around and nearly went over the plough but, luckily, the coupling broke and saved the situation or there might have been a serious accident. I crawled up on the plough and released the chain and the horses lost no time in heading for home.

Father told me to take a handkerchief and wet it in the dam. I took it over, but in dipping it in the water, my foot stuck in a hole made by a cow or horse, and I had a struggle to get it out again. Father bathed his head and we walked home slowly. Mother attended to the wound which was bad but Father was back again at work in three days. I think, however, that he felt the effect of that blow on the head for many a day.

Soon after this, Father took the old double plough away and brought back a three furrow. How proud he was of that new plough. It was a great ungainly thing with big heavy bodies, each one weighted to keep the foot in the ground. It had no bridle draught and was a horse-killer; the fourhorses he worked on it could only pull it a few furlongs and then would need to rest.

That year, a happy event took place in our home when our sister Madeline was born. I can remember the day quite clearly. Mother was nursed by a lady from Bute, Mrs. Farquarson. She had a tall, spare figure and a lined

face. I used to say that she was so thin that I could hear her bones rattle as she walked. This lady had a heart of gold, a constitution of steel and was kind, considerate and gentle, one of God's ministering angles in a sick room. She had a quiet sense of humor and it was hard for a patient to get down-hearted in her company. Those noble women such as she wrote their epitaphs in the hearts of the people they looked after and the part they played in a nation's welfare was a great one indeed.

Poor Father had another bit of bad luck when he was carting water on the dray and the tank sprang a leak underneath. He slid a piece of board in under the place where it was leaking with the aid of a crowbar. In getting the bar out, he got his fingers jammed between the bottom of the dray and the tank. There was no adult there to help him. Mother was in bed and we could not make Mrs. Farquarson hear, so Father told me to run for Mr. Hancock. I started off, but just at the gate I met Uncle Robert who had come on a visit. He lifted the tank off Father's fingers with the crowbar and we were horrified to see them pressed flat. The pain almost caused Dad to faint while Mrs. Farquarson bandaged them. They got better in time; it was just one of the accidents that happened now and again to a man working on his own without modern conveniences.

Water carting was a time-consuming job that had to be done when there was no water laid on to farm houses. The water was dipped out of the dam with a kerosene tin bucket and carried up to the cart and poured into the tank. This job was tedious but it was even harder when the dam went dry and Father had to drive the cart six miles to the Barunga Gap to bring home some water. There were times when there was no water at the Gap either, and that meant going to Snowtown (12 miles) or Kadina (18 miles). It could be carried by train from Kadina eventually, which made things a bit easier. Often when we arrived home with the water, the stock would be so thirsty they'd drink about half of it straight away.

I don't wish to give the impression that there was no fun or pleasure in the lives of our parents and their neighbours. They were hardy, independent people or they would not have gone in for farming in the first place. They took their troubles philosophically and made their own fun. Anyone going by and seeing the fun going on would have thought that we were a happy lot of people, and they would have been right. Now and again the

neighbourswould all foregather, and, although it would not be a recognised sports meeting, they would have a great time. There would be tests of skill, strength and endurance, running, jumping, pole-leaping, riding and boxing. At night there would be dancing, singing, draughts, chess and card-playing until the early hours of the morning.

As time went on more and more of the old farm was cleared and some of the wild life began to disappear. Kangaroos became scarce as so many were destroyed and the rest migrated to "fresh fields and pastures new." The scrub wallabies and the "Pinkies" also decreased in numbers. Two other native animals that were frequently seen in the early days, but which have now almost gone into oblivion, in that district anyway, were the wombat and native cat. The cat was scarce even when I was young. I only ever saw one and I thought it one of the prettiest animals of all. It was a sort of tortoise-shell in colour, very nicely marked and with a silky sheen on its coat that even a well-groomed racehorse would have found hard to match.

While on the subject of animals I must tell of the fiercest battle I ever saw between a kangaroo and dog. Someone, I forget who it was, gave our Father a dog, a wire-haired specimen of uncertain breed. It was very big and broad, a yellowy coloured, ugly-looking brute with a big head, as plucky as could be, but no use except for hunting. There was a very large Old Man Kangaroo roaming around at that time. He was a nomad and would be seen in different places miles apart and had become the subject of a good deal of talk among the farmers and other locals because he was so good at eluding the hunters. He was a tremendous height, somewhere in the vicinity of eight feet. His colour was a sort of reddish-blue, so he was known as Bluey.

We were out hunting one day, and about 4 o'clock in the afternoon old Bluey was sighted; we had four dogs with us, three cattle dogs and the big yellow one, which we had called Blucher. They chased the kangaroo for a fair distance until he must have been pretty well exhausted, then he turned and fought. Blucher made one big bound at him and they struggled madly for a while. The kangaroo then grabbed Blucher with his front paws and ripped him up with the claw on one of his hind feet. He tore the entrails clean out of the dog. Even then, Blucher tried to go on fighting and died on his feet. Father had no gun with him that day and the other dogs were far too frightened to do anything but bark, so Bluey ambled off into the scrub at his

leisure. We came back the next day and gave poor old Blucher a decent burial.

A few days after, the Kangaroo again made his appearance near the same place. Father and a man called Jack Hannon who worked for him at the time, were going round a hill when Hannon saw Bluey. Hannon had a long muzzle-loading Lee Enfield rifle with him at the time. He fired at the 'roo and we heard a dull plop as it hit him. Bluey stood right up on his hind legs, stretching to his full height, and fell back dead. His skin was scarred with wounds and, when taken off, it showed at least twenty marks or scars he had received from bullets or tears from dogs. They took his skin home and pegged it out on the side of a shed. I heard Father say afterwards that he got 8/- for it clear. So endeth Bluey.

Once after that we were out again when the dogs chased a flying doe (a young female kangaroo), for about two miles, but it got away from them. It went so fast it hardly seemed to touch the ground as it sped along. I was really glad to see it get away.

The bird-life was still plentiful. At night the dull call of the mopoke could be heard from the scrub, and the shrill cry of the curlew pierced the stillness as they called to each other when far apart. Their cries seemed to carry for long distances on the night air. Curlews are very shy birds and seldom seen. They can run very fast on the ground and fly low.

THE CURLEWS

"The curlews' call rings out on high
Upon the calm night air
It is a shrill familiar cry to me
'Tis even fair

It seems to echo loud and long
And when all else is still
It comes, a sentiment of song
O'er rolling plain and hill"

I remember how often when Father was away and my two sisters were tucked in their beds, Mother and I used to sit and listen to the curlews. I got to love their shrill call and it seemed quite homely. Another bird which was very plentiful around our district was the bustard or wild turkey. They were beautiful birds to look at, very pretty and stately when they moved along. Unfortunately for them, they were also delicious to eat. In flight they always rose against the wind, and this made them an easy prey for the hunter's gun. Many a meal did we have from the lovely birds. Father used to shoot them and Mother knew just how to dress and cook them to the best advantage.

Crows were a nuisance because they were adept at stealing eggs from the fowlyard and eagles often hovered above to carry off the fowls. It was not unusual to see an eagle swoop down and carry off a full-grown hen. We would watch it fly away to the hills, probably to where its young were waiting in the nest. Naturally, Father's gun came out if he was about. Another bird which abounded in those days was the black magpie. It would make the early morning lively with its cries, but it is seldom seen now. It has migrated to more heavily timbered country where "The hand of man has never set foot."

As the native wild life became scarcer, the introduced animals began to take over and become The rabbits multiplied rapidly, too rapidly for gun and trap to cope with. Another menace which has made its appearance since the early days is the fox. It does a great deal of damage and is a problem to deal with as it is a very wily animal.

That same year my parents had a lot of worry with our little sister Madeline. She was about sixteen months old when she was taken ill, and unfortunately, nothing seemed to do her any good. The doctor was puzzled, and we were afraid we were going to lose her. Many prayers were offered up for her recovery. Father walked the floor with her night after night while she was at her worst. Gradually, she seemed to get better and regained strength, but was not quite as bonny as the rest of us. However, as she grew older she seemed to do all right.

Father now built a large wooden shed for a feed shed. He first put high props into the ground and with a lot of thin mallee sticks warped in between he made the walls. He put a very thick roof on and, each year, after the

harvest, he used to fill this shed with cocky chaff. This, along with boiled wheat, used to make the feed for the horses.

We needed bigger, stronger horses to cope with the heavy work, so Father sold nearly all the horses he had and bought others. The new horses could handle the plough better and he got through the work much faster.

It seemed to be time to acquire more land to try and get a bigger harvest as out family increased and expenses got heavier. Father decided to sell some of the land he had along the road nearer to Bute. He then bought more land from Mr. Ted Millstead and extended his farm for two miles or more eastwards between Barunga Road and the railway line.

I have seen Father start at the tip end of the paddocks and work the land right down to the house where we lived. He cultivated 300 acres with the old three farrow plough; it took him three months to do it, starting at the beginning of March and working right through to the end of May. The crop was just a crop, it only went about three bushels to the acre and he got 309 bags of wheat off it. About this time he first tried fallowing. The next year the crop turned out a little better, but it did not make very much difference.

A man called Mr. Dabinett brought down a bay mare for Father to ride because he was good with horses. The mare was a big, strong, ungainly animal with a bad-tempered head and small eyes. No one could do anything with her as she had been absolutely spoilt and Dabinett was frightened of her.

Father put the saddle on her and she did not move. He then got on her and tried to get her to move, but she stood motionless. He tried every way to get her started but to no avail. He dismounted and went for a whip, then gave her a flick as soon as he got on her again. The result was frightening; the mare reacted like lightning, bucking and rearing like a mad thing as she tried every trick she knew to throw off her rider. She ducked her head between her legs, she twisted, strained and doubled up, but Father stayed on. He rode her all around the bottom paddock after a while, but every now again she would stop and have another go at dislodging him, squealing like a pig.

Father kept her for a few days, then told Mr. Dabinett that she would never

be safe as she had obviously been badly handled when broken in. Mr. Dabinett sold the animal to a Mr. Welsh who was confident that he could tame her, but she kicked him and that was the end of her. She was shot.

One evening Father and I went down to the paddock below the hill on the west side to fetch the cow, the only one we had. She was a fine animal, a good milk producer called Brindle because of her markings. Mother thought a lot of her because she was so easy to look after and milk. There was a very big tree standing on one of the hills, a dry tree, its gaunt, bare limbs towering above all the other trees in the vicinity. There was a storm on at the time with a dull, cloudy sky and some thunder. We were driving the cow along about 300 yards from the big tree when there was a loud, crackling noise. We looked around; the lightning had struck the dry tree and carried the top branches about 150 yards from where it stood. There was a tremendous crash when the treetop hit the ground, showering bits of wood in all directions.

A few days after this we took the broken bits of that tree home for firewood. For some reason we could not understand, the wood would not burn and was quite useless for fuel. Just after this incident the cow died, perhaps from the effects of the shock caused by the electrical storm. We did not know the cause of her death, but Mother was really upset about it. Father went off and bought another cow from a Mr. Watson. The new cow was satisfactory but she never replaced Brindle in Mother's affections. To cheer Mother up, Father bought a spring dray and harnessed up a horse called Farmer in it. On our first drive we were all quite thrilled at the extra comfort and speed. It seemed to take no time at all to get about in it. Farmer was a fine horse and a fast trotter, one of our favorites.

Mother was expecting again, and there was much rejoicing when their second son was born, our brother Raymond. He was a beautiful baby, at least we all thought so. Mother's nurse was her Aunt Starr, a happy old lady with a great sense of humour. She was one of the pioneers of the Wokurna district. She adored Raymond and couldn't stop fussing over him. She could make fun out of any incident in the daily round and we all enjoyed the three weeks she spent with us. Mrs. Hancock called almost every day, helping to keep Mother bright and happy.

During the middle of his harvesting Father built another pine and mortar room onto the house. He built it, window and all, in one week. It was quite a neat little room. The harvest was very poor that year. The dam ran dry and water carting took up a lot of Father's time. However, we had fairly good rains about the end of January which supplied some water to the dam and relieved the situation.

We were having horse trouble again. Doll was a pretty little bay mare, a good team horse and very useful. But she got the dreaded disease "Sand" and died under one of the pines near the old house. Mr. Hancock lent him a mare called Vido until Father was able to buy a new one from Mr. Dabinett. This new horse turned out to be no good and was a fair take-down. Father took him back and made Mr. Dabinett refund the money. There was quite a row over it all, but Dabinett had to climb down and take his gruel.

CHAPTER 3

And then came the seed drill and superphosphate. Everything was changed, crops yielded better, land had to be worked differently, and the results were wonderful. The days of the oilcan and water-bag crops passed away and methods of cultivation became more scientific and up-to-date. I remember great discussions about the new methods of farming. Most supported them, but some of the old hands were doubtful. All opposition soon dwindled away when the results proved to be so satisfactory.

The new ideas and inventions revolutionised life on the farms. A few years after their advent, the farmers were able to build better homes and improve their holdings wonderfully. They had more money to spend and life on the land became easier in so many ways.

The sandy areas that had never been much good were now worth cultivating, and much more land was brought under the plough. The yield was so much better that even the hills were mostly cleared of scrub eventually. The first crops sown with superphosphate were the best I have ever seen. None of the later crops were ever so good. This, I think, was partly due to the fact that much of the land was new to cultivation, which always makes a big difference.

Gradually, the district began to improve in many ways. The town of Bute grew as prosperity came to the farmers. Stores were built, houses and a hotel went up and a blacksmith shop was doing well. I remember the Methodist Church being erected as well as the Catholic Church and the first school. The district has continued to progress ever since.

Father was the first to purchase a seed drill, a Massey Harris. The land had to be cleared very carefully; it was hard following the seed drill to keep it clear of rubbish. There were no discs on the first seed drills, in fact, the first seed drills that were sold a few years later were not a success. However, eventually, they were improved upon until they were nearly perfect, the worst feature about them being that the discs wore out quickly and had to be replaced.

After the advent of the super, the feed grew much better with the result that a lot more stock could be pastured, the hay yields were good and big haystacks became the order of the times.

We were able to carry a lot more stock than formerly, so Father went in for breeding farm horses. He raised a number of nice ones which he sold when they were two to four years old. He also bred quite a number a light horses and usually got very good prices for them. He also tried cattle raising, but unfortunately, the losses were heavy because of a disease called Dry Bible. This disease seemed to baffle the stock inspectors and everyone else. The first man to do any good at all with a course of treatment was Walter Hartley. When it was found that his treatment was good, others tried to take the credit from him.

Now that times were better, Father bought six beautiful horses, fine sturdy draughts, a picture to look at. They were the best in the neighbourhood. The next purchase was a fifteen tyne cultivator, after that came a five-farrow plough. What an asset these good implements were! We could get through the work quickly and the horses stayed in good condition. The horses names were -- Violet (bay mare), Doll (another brown mare), Bess (bay mare), Brom (bay horse, white face), Boxer (bay horse, white star), Prince (black horse, white star and strip). We were all proud of that team. Then disaster struck. Father went out to the paddock one day and found Bess was missing. He searched all day with no success. We concluded she had got out

somehow and was lost. Next morning Father was out again searching and this time he found her. She was lying dead on a hillside, probably from the sand disease. We buried her on the hillside next day, wondering what would happen next. A few weeks later, Prince died from "Sand" and Father decided to sell the rest of the team and bought some cheaper horses.

Father often took me with him when he went to work. He bought a little old pony mare called Topsy and on her I learned to ride. When he thought I could ride safely, he used to send me into Bute sometimes with a note and directions of where to go and off I would set sail, proud as a peacock.

One incident I remember about this time concerned a horse called Turpin. Father put him in the cart to drive into Bute. After Turpin was harnessed, he put me in the cart and got in beside me and away we went. Turpin started to kick then jib, so Father put me on the ground out of danger. There had been a lot of rain and a big pool of water was lying near the old house. The horse pulled into the middle of the pool of water and there he stayed. Nothing in the world would make him shift out of it again. Every known method was tried to convince him that it would be wise to make a move. Turpin was deaf, blind and dumb to everything and remained so. He was finally taken out of the shafts and led away. Yet he was a splendid horse anywhere but in the cart.

CHAPTER 4

It was in the year 1896 that our parents started us off to school in the town of Bute. The school was small, but additions were made later. My sister Olive and I were the first to start; until that year we had been taught at home. The teacher was quite pleased with us. His name was Mr. Stewart. My schooling extended over about seven years but, I suppose in all that time, I only attended for the equivalent of about two years. I often used to stay home and help Father with the work on the farm. They were hard but happy days and I must admit that I liked staying home better than going to school. I would avail myself of every possible excuse to stay home.

In spite of missing so much school I did fairly well at lessons. I was like lightning at figures and had a good command of words. In fact, somehow, I always had a love of story telling. Even as a small child, long before I could

read or write, I would ask my Father to write many things down on paper for me. I wanted to record all the little events of our lives. At first we used bits of paper, then Father bought little notebooks for me, and patiently recorded what I asked him. In the end I accumulated such a lot of notebooks that I had to find a place to keep them. I wrapped them in paper and buried them at the foot of a pine tree on top of a hill to the south of our log cabin.

Father must have smiled sometimes at the things I asked him to write, and sometimes it must have been a bother, but everything I asked him was faithfully recorded. I remember being scolded soundly when I told him how I filled Jim Reagan's pipe with mallee leaves and then covered the top with tobacco. When Jim sat down to enjoy a pipe I watched his grimaces with great delight! That incident happened on Thursday 22nd December 1893. Those notebooks have been a great help to me writing this journal.
I used to enjoy telling stories to the other school children at lunch time, but they would keep on asking for more stories until I got tired of it and then I would suggest a more active game like running. I loved running and was quick, in fact, no one could keep up with me until I had an accident to my right foot and leg. I was climbing over a plough, which I had been forbidden to do, when I fell and caught my right leg between the beams. The same thing happened when I was meddling with a chaff-cutter on Mr. Rooney's farm at Bute. I had been warned not to touch that chaff-cutter, and the thumb on my right hand still shows the result of that bit of disobedience.

Now comes another page in the history of our lives. Our sister Laura was born. There is a saying that "coming events cast their shadows before", but not in this case. We little knew what a jewel our Laura would turn out to be, or how she would be the mainstay of our parents in their declining years. Laura was always a pretty child, very fair, with blue-grey eyes and pale red-gold hair. She was much admired, and I recall how proudly my Mother handed her to me when I asked her if I could hold my new sister.

Father now sank a lime-kiln and burnt a large quantity of lime. Another room was then built, making four. It was surprising how spick and span Mother used to keep that old house. She was a neat, methodical housekeeper and a superb cook. She did not lower her standards just because she lived out in the country where conditions were hard.

After we had been going to school for about six months, Father got us a pony called Tommy so we could drive ourselves. He was a hard-mouthed brute, so he was sold and Father got us another pony, a mare called Topsy. She was awfully slow, but very quiet and safe to drive. We left Bute school then and went to Percyton where Mrs. McCormack taught us. She had a fiery temper but was very clever and a good teacher.

We returned to Bute school for a time, then back to Percyton. Mrs. McCormack worked very hard as she taught music after school and all the work and responsibility affected her health. She would sit in her chair and use a buggy whip to some tune. Many a time that buggy whip was flourished for my special benefit. I would duck under the desks to dodge the lash and the poor old teacher would hit someone else. "Oh, dear", she would say, "I do beg your pardon. I'll make that young bugger sit up for this." Away she would start again, while I dived under the desks and dodged most of the strokes.

On one occasion I was told to write 200 lines. I was on my own when Mrs. McCormack went out of the room, so of course I stopped writing. Then she came back and stirred me up again. At last she went out and did not return. Darkness began to set in, then Father turned up, very tired and out of temper. There were a few fireworks between him and the teacher before we set off for home. I was never kept in after that.

In 1898 (I think), Father took land to work on shares with a Mr. Rooney. One farm was situated at Lochiel and one at Bute. This meant a shift from our old home at Bute to a farm about five miles east of Lochiel. It was not a nice place and none of us liked it. While we lived there Olive and I attended school at Lochiel. The five mile walk was another reason for not liking the place. The teacher's name was Miss Hurley. She and a sister lived at the school together out on a lonely plain. Besides working the land, Father also kept a number of cows, making extra work for Mother who was expecting her sixth child. Vincent was born at Lochiel, but we did not stay more than about a year, then moved to Mr. Rooney's farm at Bute. Mother was finding the work pretty exhausting, so, after a few months we moved back to the old home, to our great delight. The Hancock's were very happy to see us come back. They said it had been all hard work and no fun without us.

Although we had been gone not much over a year, the place had deteriorated quite a bit. Father and Mother worked hard to get everything shipshape again. The old saying "there's no place like home" is a very true one, or so we thought, anyway.

Father decided that he needed a really big shed, so off he went and got fifteen large forked branches, on top of which he put another straw top. It was cool in summer and warm in winter under that roof.

Then came the South African War. England was drawn into that campaign through the blundering of Cecil Rhodes and the Jameson raid. It had far-reaching results and the British had to face a number of reverses they did not expect.

Soldiers were enlisted from Australia, sent straight to the front and formed up in front of the enemy. The Boer's opened a fairly heavy rifle and that was the end of discipline. The Aussies acted for themselves, taking cover behind rocks, trees or anything else they could find, and used their rifles to good effect. The Boer's were defeated that time, and that was the start of guerrilla warfare which proved very effective against this kind of enemy.

De Wet and Botha held up the British forces for a long time, causing chaos and confusion amongst our generals. It was not the kind of warfare they had expected. There were no really big battles, it was more a case of small, hitand run raids with long waiting periods in between. You can't hit an enemy when you can't see him.

Father and Mr. Hancock both talked about going to the war. I think they were quite serious, but, fortunately, it finished before they made up their minds.

Towards the end of the war, Father and Mr. Hancock both decided that they each would build a new house, a good, solid stone one. Mr. Hancock engaged some stone-masons with a man named McKay in charge, and they went to work on a nice, roomy house that would stand up to all weathers. Mrs. Hancock was delighted with her new home. Soon Father set about carting the stone for our and found two builders who started the home that had been just a dream for so long. It was completed in about three months.

The little old log cabin that had served us for so long was discarded and was used as a wheat-shed among other things. It seemed somehow pathetic to leave that little old house in which we had been so happy. I find it hard to explain just what it felt like to see it empty. After all the furniture had been taken out, I walked through the rooms, feeling lost. When I went up to the new house, everything seemed strange and unreal. That night I could not sleep, and rose early; I went back to the old place, but, somehow, I did not feel at home there, either. I just felt that, even if we did go back it would never be the same.

The building of the new house was the beginning of another chapter in our lives. Father and Mother were very proud of it. They now had more comfort and plenty of room for their big family. It filled a great need for them, and they didn't look back, but for me the old memories still clung to our first home.

When we settled down in it, the new place was a great improvement, much cooler in summer, though not so warm in winter. Mother and the girls took great pride in keeping it nice and comfortable, and we were all better off all round.

When the school at Percyton was closed, the farmers from around the district got together and built a school at a place called Turnerville. The trustees were: Mr. Hancock, Mr. Harvey, Mr. John Commons, Mr. R.C. Commons and Father. The new school was built partly of stone and partly of mortar and pine. I think this method of building with pines and mortar was called "wattle and daub".

It was there at Turnerville that the younger members of our family were educated. Olive and I finished there.

A fine old gentleman, a Mr. Turner from Snowtown, donated the land on which the school was built, and, on the first Arbour Day, he attended with some of his friends. It was quite a day of celebration for our parents and all the others who had built the school. It was fine to see these hard-working people relax and enjoy themselves. Everyone was in a good mood, and somehow, that day stands out as one of the happiest memories of my life.

One day, not long after this, it was decided that we should watch an eclipse of the sun at the school, so the teacher sent my brother over to our house to fetch some glass to smoke. It was considered safe then to look at the sun through smoked glass. Ray dashed home and broke two or three panes of glass in the windows of the old log house in a big hurry and ran back to school. Everyone got a good view and it was said afterwards that it was quite an event to have obtained such a perfect view of a total eclipse.

As the years rolled by, the attendance at the school fell off. Times were changing, families were smaller, and the school was eventually closed. Sadly it gradually fell into disrepair and one evening I found myself passing by that way towards sunset. What a change there was from former days. All was quiet and a certain rather brooding stillness hung over the old place. I found my heart heavy. In a mood of solemn sadness I thought back to the days of my childhood, the warm and the happy days gone forever.

The walls are all that's standing now
Of the old school we knew
And sadness reigns upon its brow
Where skies once seemed so blue
The wood has rotted 'round the door
And 'neath it's windowsill
No scholars ever enter more
The school at Turnerville

'Twas there in childhood's happy days
We wandered off to school
'Twas there as well as other things
We learned the golden rule
Many a chance we had to learn
Our lessons with a will
For half-past three we oft would yearn
In the school at Turnerville

The children's happy shouts have gone
There is no sign of life
Time relentless, moving on
Has used his pruning knife
Old familiar faces fair
Are gone and hands are still
That often left their traces there
At school at Turnerville

The boys and girls that studied there
Are men and women now
With some there's silver where the hair
Is thinning at the brow
The heart does not beat quite as true
Nor its functions now fulfill
As in those days it used to do
At school at Turnerville

Gone are the days when we were young
We know our die is cast
Now we can but dig among
The ashes of the past
But memory's tender chords will throb
And love will linger still
Our thoughts that time can never rob
Of the school at Turnerville.

And so went the old school with its tender memories, its happy faces and its unforgettable record. The lads who attended there in many cases became soldiers, and one, Laurence Whethers, won the V.C. They were all fine lads and a credit to their parents and teachers. The girls? What of them? Well, today they are wives and mothers doing their part in a Christian way to make this world a better place. Some are single, unselfishly working to assist their aged parents to enjoy their latter years.

And then cometh another, Kathleen, the last of our line. Father and Mother were very proud of our little sister, and she has always given them reason for pride. Mother, before she left this troubled world, saw her youngest child with the largest family of all. Her cherished wish, that she would see us all grow up was not only gratified, but she also saw her children's children.

When Kathleen was born in 1902, Father had not quite finished the seeding. Captain, one of his best team horses, died, and I think it had a depressing effect on him. The harvest that season was very light, the lightest we had seen since the fertilizer came. It had been a windy year and the drift sand had a bad effect on the crops, in some cases killing them.

The winter season came, but no rain, and soon we realized we were facing a real drought. It was a rough experience for all, but it was met with great fortitude and courage by the splendid toilers of the Bute district and elsewhere in the North. The deeper their troubles the more fervent and reverent they became towards the Creator, and the more surely they struggled through to better days.

There was a very little feed for the stock, so we sent away for hay chaff. What a disappointment! It was a real takedown, some of it was just straw that had been taken off the roof of sheds and mixed with a little genuine hay chaff. The starving horses would not eat it, even when we mixed it with a little bran and pollard. We went out to the railway line and cut out the dead grass alongside the line and the animals would eat it in preference to the expensive hay chaff.

I was then sixteen years of age and ready to do a man's work, but, unfortunately, I strained my breast and shifted my heart, causing a serious illness. Dr. Kennedy attended me and I was devotedly nursed by Mother

whose love and care was endless. The doctor told me that a man's full strength was not for me and he was right. I nearly lost my life, but all through that terrible time my Mother's faith and hope never wavered. In later years we tried to repay her for her unselfish sacrifices. We had her with us for many years, but the hard times of the depression caused great worry and privation. Mother still kept up her spirits and gave us strength to carry on. She did not live to see the end of the depression. As often happens, those who face the hardest times leave this world "when the lean years end and the good begin".

All droughts pass, so did the one in 1902, but it left its mark behind it in the "blistering bones decaying on the hillsides", and the depleted flocks and herds on the stations. There were broken hopes that would never be rebuilt and some stalwart hearts that gave in at last. The North can be harsh indeed in times like these.

1903 was a better year in our district though not everywhere. The crops came up and the green verdure covered the paddocks. Our horses could feed again on the sweet green grass. Our relief however was shortlived. There was a mouse plague of unbelievable proportions. The tiny rodents were every where. They destroyed everything in their path. Young, shooting crops were eaten, wheat taken out of the ground, plant life of every kind destroyed, and young chickens eaten. Cats and dogs died of some disease, haystacks were reduced to almost nothing, while stock got thin and some died.

In about three months the mice disappeared as quickly as they came. All attempts at destroying them failed to check their numbers, yet they went and no one seemed to know where. Anyway, we were thankful to see the last of the little pests. The stock gradually improved in condition and slowly things picked up again.

The old pony that Father bought for us to drive to school (Bonny) had a beautiful foal (Logic) on the 2nd September 1902. He grew to be a beautiful horse. The pony was no longer needed to take us to school so Father bred more foals from her. There was another foal (Maud) in 1903, also Stella and Tiny (1904), a true Pilgrim colt (1907). Bonny had one more foal after that, but it was stillborn.

The poor little old pony had been a grand investment. For several years Logie and Maud used to be the harness horses on the farm and beauties they were. After their years of service in the buggy and sulky, they were put to work in the team and both were on the farm when Mother and Father left it in 1920.

The years 1904 was a good season. Splendid rains came and the yields were good all round. Father made a large stack of sheaved hay and early in 1904 he went in for the first chaffcutter we ever had. That year Father had a man called George Baverstock working for him, a man we all liked. We were making a small haystack one day, and George was up on the stack cutting hay with a hay knife. There was a storm at the time, and suddenly a flash of lightning came. George seemed to be enveloped in blue smoke and the hay knife went flying about half a chain from the stack. Father ran to George who was scared almost to death and white as a sheet. How on earth he was not killed I do not know. I went to pick up the hay knife and it was too hot to hold.

George was a very heavy drinker. He was a fine man when he was sober, but his drinking bouts were awful. If he couldn't get enough "pinky" he would drink vinegar, methylated spirits or painkiller. After one of these bouts his condition can be better imagined than described. George was a man of fine physique with a long, shining black beard. He was a clean-living fellow apart from the drink.

After many fresh starts and broken promises Father had to give him the sack. They were both very upset at parting, and I was sad for them. It was a sight that I will remember till my life's end. George Baverstock, a fine, powerful man going away, carrying his swag and crying like a child with no sin on his soul but the one of intemperance.

Next day, after George had gone, I went down to the paddock to get the horses. we had a pretty bay mare at the time with a foal about four months old. I was horrified to see it appeared to have a broken leg. I went home and got Father to come and have a look. He was very fond of this little foal and would have liked to save it, but the break was too bad. He went home and got his gun and put an end to the poor little thing. We walked home feeling very depressed. It had been a dull, gloomy day with light rain. As

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we went over the hill near the house the sun came out just on sunset. The limelights were trained on the tops of the tall trees and glistened like silver. It was a lovely sight to behold.

Father was a member of the Agricultural Bureau at Bute almost from the time it started and regularly attended. The Bureau was responsible for much good work in the district. Most of the old members are gone now, but the younger men still play an important part in the welfare of the district farmers.

CHAPTER 5

Well, the years rolled on, in some ways one much the same as the other. Mother and Father grew older and we, their children, grew up around them towards manhood and womanhood. Young men came courting our attractive sisters and we young men were taking notice of the girls who lived around the place.

Mother still remained remarkably youthful. Father was still healthy, but his hair, what little there was left, went an iron-grey colour. He did not stand quite as straight as of old, but he still worked hard.

Early in 1914 Father went away to visit his sister and brothers who lived farther north around Hammond. On the way up there, he tried to help to lift a box of iron on to a wagon. In doing so, he broke two small blood vessels in the back of his head. That was the beginning of his breakdown in health. He was never the same man again. After the accident, he drove all the way home from Hammond in the sulky.

Then came the Great War. Europe became an armed camp and the Kaiser of Germany unleashed the dogs of war. He sent his forces into Belgium against France and that brought the British into the conflict.

Britain had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium and honoured that pledge. In a few days after the declaration of war, British and Belgian soldiers were fighting side by side for freedom against the biggest military autocrat and the vilest monster that ever usurped a god-given power. Germany at that time had all a nation could want, but her ruler was jealous of the other nations and used the time which he thought was the most opportune to strike a blow against the rest of Europe. How he failed is now a matter of history.

With the old Motherland in trouble, Australia threw herself into the struggle. All military work was speeded up, soldiers were enlisted and trained and military camps sprang up almost overnight. Our men and boys needed no urging to make them enlist, but came forward in thousands as they were required.

Our parents looked on in anguish. Our fathers, too old to enlist, saw their

sons off, perhaps never to return. It seemed that the light of happiness hadgone from our lives.

The cables began to carry their budget of sad messages from distant lands across the seas. We learned that our men were losing their lives in thousands and tens of thousands.

In just a few months our own Australian soldiers had been enlisted, trained and equipped:

AUSTRALIA'S SONS - TURKISH GUNS

When they gained that steel-lined height
And from the strongest shelters drove
The Turkish foe in all his might
That Sunday morn at Anzac Cove
The foeman knew Australia's sons
Were not afraid of Turkish guns

Our boys were in the fight. Australian blood had now been shed in the same cause as that of our British comrades. We were in it with them to a finish. On Gallipoli, in Palestine, later France and on many other frontiers, our boys laid down their lives.

Our brother Ray went off with the rest. We saw him go and saw Mother's face take on a patient, serene sadness mingled with a great joy for she was always proud of her soldier son.

Ah, those mothers! How they hoped and prayed! They suffered quietly, no murmur came from their lips, but bitter sadness wrung their hearts when they received that little slip of yellow paper, the telegram telling them their son had paid the price of patriotism.

And the little town of Bute, standing back in oblivion with its small population of big-hearted patriots, its noble fathers, its wondrous mothers, its splendid girls, its gallant cavalier sons. Its record was unbeatable; it was held up as an example among all other Australian towns because, on a population basis it had beaten the lot in its number of enlistments. Our

pioneer parents had imbued their children with their own courage. Some of them had passed on before the war started so they could not share the credit with their soldier sons.

Still those bitter days dragged on, each day bringing a fresh burden of sorrow to the families of the fallen. It seemed as though we had always been at war and that normal life would never return. There was hardly a family which had not felt the effects of bereavement in one way or another. In some instances several boys from a family were killed. The constant anxiety and fear of bad news wore away at everyone's nerves. It was a time of semi-starvation in many countries of Europe, but here in Australia we were fortunate in having plenty of food.

In 1918 rumours of peace began to circulate. We waited in anxious hope, and in November came news of the Armistice. Even after that, some telegrams came through telling of the last casualties from the final battles.

And then, oh, joy. Our boys began to come home again. Some came back but a shadow of their former selves. Some came back to suffer on and others to face a lingering death while the arch-fiend who caused most of the suffering escaped it all.

Gradually, things began to get back to something like normal again. Our brother Ray came home, but like many others, he showed signs of the privations and hardships he had been through. Mother's heart rejoiced at the return of her soldier boy and she became more like her old lighthearted self.

During these years Olive had married Ern Phillis of Wallaroo and became the mother of two fine boys, Ernie and Eric. Madeline was now Mrs. Charlie Pfeiffer. Her husband was a farmer; they now have five children. Ray and Vincent married sisters, May and Ruby Bullock. Ray and May have one son, Laurie, and Vincent and Ruby are the proud parents of two boys and two girls.

It was time for a change. Father's health seemed to improve for a time after Ray came home, but we realised that he would never be really well again. The old farm was sold to Ray, and Laura and I with our parents, went to live on a small property close to Bute. Father was not really happy there as he

wanted a more active life and some real farming. At first we let it on shares, then later worked it ourselves.

Unfortunately, I was far from well and had to have the fourth operation of my life. For many years I had a troublesome appendix. The first operation was not a success as often happened in those days. Mother came with me to Bute and stayed there while I underwent the operation. I was pretty sick for a while, and Father worried about my health as well as his own. He suddenly decided to sell the farm and buy the Balaklava Dairy.

We stayed there for twelve months, then sold and bought a farm from a man called Elijah Smith. He tried to back out of the deal and caused no end of trouble, but in the end we got the property.

The first season we were there too late to put in a crop which was a great pity as that season was the best for the whole time we were on that farm. The first crop (in 1926) was poor. We only got about 8 bushells to the acre. Feed was scarce, we got scarcely any hay and we had a hard time.

Father suffered another stroke, and, although he improved after a few weeks, he was noticeably weaker and looked much older. His fine physique was beginning to vanish; he suffered terribly with headaches. Poor Mother suffered with him, but she struggled on and bore up well under the strain. It was hard to watch Father in such a state. We did everything we could for him and made him as comfortable as possible.

Just as things were beginning to look a little better, a fire started up and swept all the buildings on the farm. Hundreds of pounds worth of property was destroyed. A new engine, a chaffcutter, a harvester, three strippers, buggy, dray, corn-grinders, saw and bench, a trolley and all our harness. We also lost a bale of bags, about 40 bags of wheat, oats and 80 bags of barley. The stable, barn, fowl-houses, pigsties, fencing and everything else the fire could take. Six or seven tons of hay also went.

The property was only insured for £175-0-0. The South British Insurance Company paid up promptly and did everything in their power to help us out of our trouble.

After the fire we set to work to repair the loss as far as we could. We straightened out the galvanised iron and bought new timber to rebuild the stable. A much bigger and better one was the result. It was hard to carry on through that time because of the fire, poor crops etc. However, we never missed a payment of the interest on the mortgage to Frank McArdle. It was always there. It is said that:

The chain of a debtor is heavy and cold
Its links all corrosion and rust
Gild it o'er as you will it is never gold
Then spurn it aside with disgust.

These words proved only too true in the case of our mortgagor. The fact that he had always got his interest did not weigh one iota with him. This will be explained later.

Our father's health became very much worse. It was patent to all that he would never be better. We decided to sell the farm at Balaklava. We put it in the hands of some agents and John Coles sold it to a man called Scheiffer. The sale was made by a man called Honan. We sold the place for £12-0-0 per acre, taking Schaefer's property near Gawler on the Mallala Road in part payment.

We then went to live on the new property. It was a nice little place and we all liked it fairly well. While there our poor father's health broke down completely. He got very much worse and it became our lot to watch helplessly knowing that no treatment could ever do him any good.

One day he came with me to Gawler in the lorry. On the way home he had another stroke and got off the lorry, falling heavily on the road. The doctor told us there was nothing more he could do for him and we could only try and make him as comfortable as possible. Poor Mother was untiring in her efforts, assisted by Laura whose wedding plans were put off to help her parents.

After three hard years on the Gawler property, we sold it to a Mrs. E M Black getting two houses and cash for it. We then went to live in one of the houses at Edwardstown. It was now a case of nursing a totally

bed-ridden patient. Father was partially paralysed and had lost his sight. He suffered in patience, seldom complaining and his courage never failed. From this time on, he did not suffer so much with the frightful headaches and has been more peaceful.

It was while living at Edwardstown that I met and maried the lovely girl who is now my wife. She is May, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Blackmore. Mother was living close by when we lived in our first home and her motherly kindness was a feature of our married life. As my Mother was, so is my wife today. May and Mother were good pals and our little daughter's coming was a great joy to Mother as well as to us.

At Edwardstown Mother's health began to fail. The doctor's treatment did not seem to do her much good. Not long after our marriage, the man who was buying our property at Gawler began to default on his interest payments.

Our income was cut off, and it made matters hard indeed. I tried every way to help this man, but he went behind my back to beat me in every possible way. The first mortgagor, forgetting all the prompt interest payments from us, was on this man's side. The mortgagor was indeed lucky to have a father-in-law ready to buy the farm and present it to his wife, thus cheating us of our rights. Let it suffice to say that our existence became a constant struggle. With our sick parents to take care of and a very small income, it was hard to see a ray of light ahead. Those were the years of the depression. There was very high unemployment and long queues for every job.

One of the houses we owned at Queenstown became vacant and my wife and I moved there for a few months. We then shifted to Upper Sturt where Mother visited us when she could. Laura and our parents moved to the house at Queenstown and there Mother lived until her death on July 18th 1934. Sometime after moving to Queenstown Mother underwent a serious operation. She seemed to recover fairly well and take more interest in everything. We hoped she would continue to keep well, but after about twelve months she began to complain of a severe pain in her side and shortness of breath. Although not too well, she seemed to really enjoy her visits to us at Upper Sturt. One would not have thought her a sick woman and it was a great pleasure to have her there.

From Upper Sturt we moved to Salisbury to a place I bought from a man who made all sorts of promises about what he would do if I bought it.

Mother was a witness to all these promises. After he broke his word and treated us so badly we decided to leave. We moved about a lot at that time, trying to make a living on small properties which did not pay very well, living for a while at Prospect and Walkerville, then later moved to South Road Gardens Estate. Mother visited us there and seemed fairly well. We also lived at Aldgate, and later went to Islington, then to Hackney.

At Hackney Mother came to see us, and seemed so well and happy that it is hard to realise that she is really gone from us.

In her young days Mother was a splendid rider. She always rode in the old way, side-saddle, and had a wonderful sense of balance. It was a graceful fashion and a skillful rider could manage her mount even when it swerved or shied. A well-made side-saddle was the secret. Some side-saddles were badly made; this caused the horse to get a sore back. A properly made side-saddle always fetched a good price. It had to be made so that the rider's weight was evenly distributed over the horse's back and not just on one side.

Mother had a beautiful voice. One of the old favorites she sang for us was "The Angel's Whisper" by Lover. This used to be a bed-time song. She often sang us to sleep with it as children and we came to regard it as our very own.

Many a time at the gatherings at the old farmhouse she would charm us all with the old ballads we loved to hear. I remember "A Little Ship was on the Sea", and "The Beacon", "Sweet Star of the Sea", "Annie Dear, I'm called away", and many others.

I have tried to show my appreciation of all that my parents did for us through all the difficult times. They were fine people whose courage never failed even in the double debacle of war and drought in 1914. They never gave each other cause for doubt or worry, and were faithful to the end of their lives in a marriage which lasted almost fifty years. This was a splendid example for us to follow.

Our Mother, when she was dying, knew that her teachings had borne fruit. Never once in her life did she fail to give us her loving attention and guidance when we needed it. Never once did we go to her in childhood with our many little trouble without being soothed and comforted. She always understood that the troubles of a little child are very real.

Since I last wrote in this book I find I cannot now complete it. I had hoped to write much more for Rosemary who, I am happy to say, shares my love for books and writing, and has a real gift in that direction. I will now only pen a few words in regard to the part played by Laura in the lives of our parents for the last four years or more.

A short time after I was married, I had to move away from my parents and live miles apart. From that time Laura had to play a lone hand in the care of our parents. No one knows what sacrifices she made.

Away beyond the earth, the good work is registered, away in eternity a heavenly crown is gained.

And now I must bring these lines to a close. I hope that I have been able to preserve a segment of the past for the younger generation and especially for my beloved Rosemary. For myself, whether my life be long or short, the tender memories will never fade, memories interwined with the hope that somewhere, sometime, away beyond the rim of things, we will all meet again.

A TIME TO LIVE

Herbert Dennis McEvoy died on May 9th 1938