

MARYSVILLE MEMORIES

BY CLARE GRAY

My sister Jane and I often stayed at Mount Kitchener House with our parents, Winifred and Edgar ('Gar') Wilkins throughout the 1950's. We were very fond of the two housemaids, who we knew as 'Lois' and 'Shirley'. They were such fun, and very kind to shy little girls. We always rushed to find them when we arrived for our holidays, and they always greeted us warmly and made us feel at home. I telephoned my sister and asked her to name one of her happiest memories of Mount Kitchener House and she instantly said, "Lois and Shirley". I've enclosed a picture of us in the garden of Mount Kitchener House. I'm the little sister, Clare.

Jane and I spent a lot of time with the Hull children; Wendy set up a little shop on the huge sawn off tree trunk outside their Log Cabin at the foot of Mount Kitchener House. We made plastic flowers according to Wendy's instructions, and sold little posies. We also sold lemonade to Mount Kitchener's other guests. They were pretty much captive customers as they walked up from the village back to Mount Kitchener House. The Hulls had a cocker spaniel dog named 'Boris'. I remember him and the fenced in verandah of the Log Cabin. Their later dog was 'Daisy'.

I've also remembered a little more about the riding schools at Marysville. In the 1950's there were two. One was the Marysville Riding School, owned by Mary-Lyn Guest House, which at that time was owned by F and V Fiske. The riding school was on King's Road, fairly near the corner of Pack Road. It was on the higher side of King's Road, close to where Marshall and Lorna Hull (after leaving Mount Kitchener House), later had their home, jug shop and plant nursery. In other words, going up King's Road, away from Pack Road, it was on the left hand side.

I fell in love with a pony there, 'Silver', and my parents bought him for me in June 1961. I have enclosed a copy of the receipt and also a letter from Mr Fiske written at about the same time! Silver was a very pretty pony and you can see from the copy letter from Mr Fiske, also enclosed, that I must have written to him and asked about the pony's breeding. Regardless of the reply, I decided that Silver was a pure bred Welsh Mountain Pony! He was 12 hands high. The other ponies I seem to remember at the Mary-Lyn Riding School, were 'Dolly' and 'Blue'.

The other riding school was 'Blue Hills Riding School', owned by a Miss Martin - known as 'Marty'. This was initially located in Pack Road, just up the hill from where the bakery now stands. It was on the right hand side of the road, going uphill from the Falls Road intersection. In the 1960's or 70's the Blue Hills Riding School was relocated to nearer the track leading to the Fruit Salad Farm. You have a wonderful photo of Miss Martin in your files, showing how lovely she looked on a horse. The ponies I remember at the Pack Road stables were 'Shadow' (a piebald), 'Rhumba', the Shetland pony 'Cobber' and a horse called 'Apache' or 'Comanche'. I think there may have been a TV series of a similar name at the time. Marty had a much loved horse named 'Gary". He was what is called a 'grey horse' with a white coat. I'm not sure if Gary is the horse in your file photo. It is quite likely, as it is certainly the right colour and the horse in the photo has a very fine stylish look.

Marty used to be the dessert chef at Mount Kitchener House, as well as running the riding school and we would see Gary tied up in the garden of Mount Kitchener House waiting for

her, while she prepared the desserts for the day. The desserts were usually of a sort that could be cooked, or set in trays and cut into squares. For me it was a wonderful link with the outdoors that a horsewoman had prepared them! Miss Martin lived in a cottage outside the town. There was a yard for her horse in the front and a big wagon wheel, perhaps as a decoration. I remember when we drove past always finding it hard to understand that a woman who seemed so much the mistress of the outdoors, and a daily stable yard of horses and ponies, children, teenagers, parents and holidaymakers, would ever bother going indoors or need to live anywhere, as ordinary people do.

I've also enclosed a photo of my daughter, Melissa Gray, playing croquet on the Croquet Lawn at the Cumberland in January 1982. The photo shows some of the trees and shrubbery that were such a feature of The Cumberland, where our family stayed frequently during the 1970's and 80's. We also stayed at the Scenic Motel and The Tower Motel.

I took my mother, Winifred Wilkins to stay at the Cumberland in 2007 or 2008. That was our last time in Marysville before the fires. However, as you can see from the photocopy picture I bought her back again, now aged 94, in May 2012. Thanks to the reinstatement of the much loved familiar walking tracks, she was able to do the Beauty Spot (short circuit) walk. I think you can see from the photo, just how pleased she was to be setting off into the bush around Marysville again.

(Source: Letter dated 24th May 2012, Queensberry Street, North Melbourne)