



*Memories  
Of  
Bruce & Esther  
Fletcher*



The Life Story of

**ALFRED BRUCE  
FLETCHER**

Born on 25th September 1921

Deceased on 13th June 1999

Born on the 25th September 1921 at 76 Rosa Street, Oatley in NSW Australia, and registered at the registry office at Rockdale in NSW, to Alfred Reginald Fletcher and Adeline Elizabeth Mary Fletcher (Coomber). A brief summary of some of my forebears, so far as my knowledge goes is as follows:



Alfred Bruce Fletcher 10mths old  
Taken in 1922



Bruce on his rocking horse  
"Snowy"



The Fletcher Household  
76 Rosa Street  
Oatley.

Photo taken in 1952





Beryl 21 and Wally 25  
at 76 Rosa Street  
Oatley.

Date taken 27/02/1950

Bruce's brother and  
sister





Alfred Bruce Fletcher  
"Bruce"





Left to Right:

Adeline Elizabeth Mary Fletcher - Bruce, Wally and Beryl's  
mother

Elsie Winifred , Clarinda Louise, Dorothy Alice  
Adeline's sisters

Raymond Giles and Earl Giles (Aunty Vy's Children).





Adeline Elizabeth  
Mary Fletcher (Nee  
Coomber) aged 17yrs  
old in 1906





Adeline Elizabeth Mary Fletcher (centre) taken at Jenolan Caves where she worked at Caves House as a waitress in 1917.



Beryl Skinner (nee  
Fletcher) Bruce's Sister

Keith and Beryl  
Skinner's  
wedding day on  
the 15/10/1955





Beryl's wedding on the 15/10/1955

Left to Right:

Bob Brady - Best man, neighbour to Keith

Betty Taylor - Matron of Honour, Beryl's friend

Keith Skinner

Beryl Skinner

Bruce Fletcher - Elder brother, gave her away

Colleen - Keith's neice, Keith's brother Roy's daughter

Pamela - Beryl's neice, Bruce's daughter



Wallace Frederick Fletcher , Bruce's younger brother.



Wally 66yrs , Beryl 63yrs and Bruce 70yrs



Banjo

My father (Alfred) , as a boy, was a good entertainer and played the banjo. He worked as a boatbuilder's apprentice for Holmes & Co. of Berrys Bay, North Sydney. He lived close to the boatshed and would start at 6am, go up home for breakfast at 8 am, work till lunch and finish at 6pm. He built a 15 foot (5m) sailing cutter in the lounge room and had to launch it over the front balcony. In later years he installed a motor in it and eventually sold it 40 years later still in perfect condition.

Before the 1914 - 1918 World War he was in the Scottish Regiment Reserves and when Australians were called to the war in 1915 both he and his younger brother enlisted in the A.I.F (Australian Imperial Forces). His brother Fred was sent to France where he was killed in action at Fromelle (France). One of the medals he earned was called "Mention in Dispatches". He earned promotions throughout the war so that by the end of the war he had reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. At one stage he was a musketry instructor, he was gassed during the war and this remained in his body for the rest of his life. Also, the constant shelling played havoc with his nerves and eventually caused his death indirectly, as he shot himself at the age of 54yrs. After the war he worked at Cockatoo Dock in Sydney and later in Garden Island Naval Dockyard in Sydney.



Cockatoo Island



Sergeant Alfred Reginald Fletcher  
E Company , 1st Battalion Royal Scottish Regiment.  
Reserves Prior to 1914-1918 war  
Photo taken approximately 1913





Sergeant Alfred Reginald Fletcher who rose to Lieutenant and at the end of the war he was offered the of rank Lieutenant Colonel if he went into the Reserves. Photo taken approximately 1915



Medals of Sergeant Alfred Reginald Fletcher

\*Return from Active Service Badge

\*WW1 Service Medal

\*British War Medal

\*Victory Medal with a large oak leaf and he also received a small oak leaf for "Mention in Dispatches"



Corporal Frederick Fletcher  
3310, 55th Battalion Australian Infantry ,  
A.I.F who was Killed In Action on the 20th  
July 1916 aged 22yrs  
Fromelle - France



Medals of Corporal Frederick Fletcher

\*WW1 Service medal

\*British War Medal

\* Victory Medal

My father's father, Albert Charles Fletcher, was a watchmaker and worked for Saunders & Co. in Sydney for 50 years. As a young man he was a sailor in a square rig ship trading between Australia and America. He also played banjo's and a cello (a large violin). He moved with his family (wife, two sons and one daughter) from North Sydney to Oatley in 1908. The wagon drawn by six horses began at day break and arrived at dark with all the furniture. He died peacefully in bed.

Saunders and Co watchmaker and jeweller advertisement.

09th August 1899

**"A. SAUNDERS"**  
**STRONG, RELIABLE, ENGLISH LEVERS.**

Four jewels, top jewel 1000, 1025, 1050, 1075, 1100, 1125, 1150, 1175, 1200, 1225, 1250, 1275, 1300, 1325, 1350, 1375, 1400, 1425, 1450, 1475, 1500, 1525, 1550, 1575, 1600, 1625, 1650, 1675, 1700, 1725, 1750, 1775, 1800, 1825, 1850, 1875, 1900, 1925, 1950, 1975, 2000, 2025, 2050, 2075, 2100, 2125, 2150, 2175, 2200, 2225, 2250, 2275, 2300, 2325, 2350, 2375, 2400, 2425, 2450, 2475, 2500, 2525, 2550, 2575, 2600, 2625, 2650, 2675, 2700, 2725, 2750, 2775, 2800, 2825, 2850, 2875, 2900, 2925, 2950, 2975, 3000, 3025, 3050, 3075, 3100, 3125, 3150, 3175, 3200, 3225, 3250, 3275, 3300, 3325, 3350, 3375, 3400, 3425, 3450, 3475, 3500, 3525, 3550, 3575, 3600, 3625, 3650, 3675, 3700, 3725, 3750, 3775, 3800, 3825, 3850, 3875, 3900, 3925, 3950, 3975, 4000, 4025, 4050, 4075, 4100, 4125, 4150, 4175, 4200, 4225, 4250, 4275, 4300, 4325, 4350, 4375, 4400, 4425, 4450, 4475, 4500, 4525, 4550, 4575, 4600, 4625, 4650, 4675, 4700, 4725, 4750, 4775, 4800, 4825, 4850, 4875, 4900, 4925, 4950, 4975, 5000, 5025, 5050, 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Bruce's  
Grandfather  
Albert Charles  
Fletcher



Cello

My father's mother, Lucy Jeanes was a kind gentle lady always giving things away. Her father was Captain of a square rig sailing vessel but sent his wife and Lucy, aged 4, out to Australia from England on a steamship. She passed away.

On my mother's side- My great grandfather was a half owner and captain of a square rig sailing ship trading between England and India and my mother's father drove the Cobb and Co. mail coach - the Forbes mail from Bathurst to Forbes.



The original Cobb and Co mail coach

The family lived in Forbes and later in Parkes 23 miles away. He was a stock and station agent in Forbes. He and wife Ada Ferguson had 10 children of which my mother was the second born. He and Ada are buried at Waverley Cemetery in Sydney. The last I remember of him was a tall stately gentleman with a long white beard. When the railway came to Parkes in 1898 the Cobb & Co. coaches had finished so grandfather Coomber had a wagon with 4 horses which he took to the railway station to wait until the train came in and would convey the passengers.



In loving memory of our dear parents  
James B Coomber died the 13th March 1930 and  
Ada Coomber died the 27th May 1941  
Buried at Waverley Cemetery



James B Coomber and ADA Ferguson ( Coomber)  
were married in 1884 in Forbes.

Children	Born	Deceased
William Archibald	1885 Forbes	1941 Bowral
Elizabeth Mary Adeline	1887 Parkes	1968 Burwood
Violet Eureka	1889 Parkes	1949 Sydney
Alma E	1891 Parkes	1981 Parkes
James Oscar/Oswald	1891 Parkes	1963 Helensburgh
Roderick Charles	1893 Forbes	1974
Gordon Wallace	1895 Parkes	1950 Redfern
Elsie Winifred	1898 Peak Hill	1969 Newtown
Lousie Clarinda	1900 Peak Hill	1959 Wollongong
Dorothy Alice	1903 Peak Hill	1982

A word about my mother's brother - Rodney Coomber. He distinguished himself in his young days as being the greatest rodeo rider in Australia defeating all comers. A fine horseman he spent many years in far west Queensland catching brumbies (wild horses) , breaking them in and droving them down into NSW to the sale yards. He once told his finance' of 11 years he would be back in 3 weeks time to marry her and he arrived 3 years later.



Now about myself:

The earliest memories I have are of my father's house; a pretty spanish bungalow style with a beautifully laid out yard and lawns and paths at the front and at the back a pathway down the centre. There was a duck and fowl yard at one side and the balance laid out with fruit trees. It was a sloping block 66ft wide and 132ft deep. The laundry was under the house as well as a wood and coal shed. My father's workshop was a closed in back verandah until he built the garage. In 1926 he bought a 1924 dodge car from a friend for thirty pounds (\$60.00). It was a coupe with 1 seat across the front and a luggage compartment at the rear. I slept here on some trips when I was small.



Bruce's father's house.

Alf's Bungalow "Wandilla"

90 Rosa Street Oatley Bay June 1920



Alfred Reginald Fletcher driving his 1924 Dodge with his sons Bruce and Wally leaving to go to Harrington.

My grandfather's house was in the next street to our place and we used to go through the back gate and through the vacant block behind to get down to our place. My father bought one acre which divided into four blocks. In later years there were three brothers called Chiswell who were furniture manufacturers and wanted to live close together so my father sold the three blocks to them. One Saturday morning dad was giving me a piggy back through the back block down over large rock's on our way to the boatshed at my grandfather's house. When he let me down off his back, a chisel which was in his overall pocket went into my stomach. I was about 3 years old.

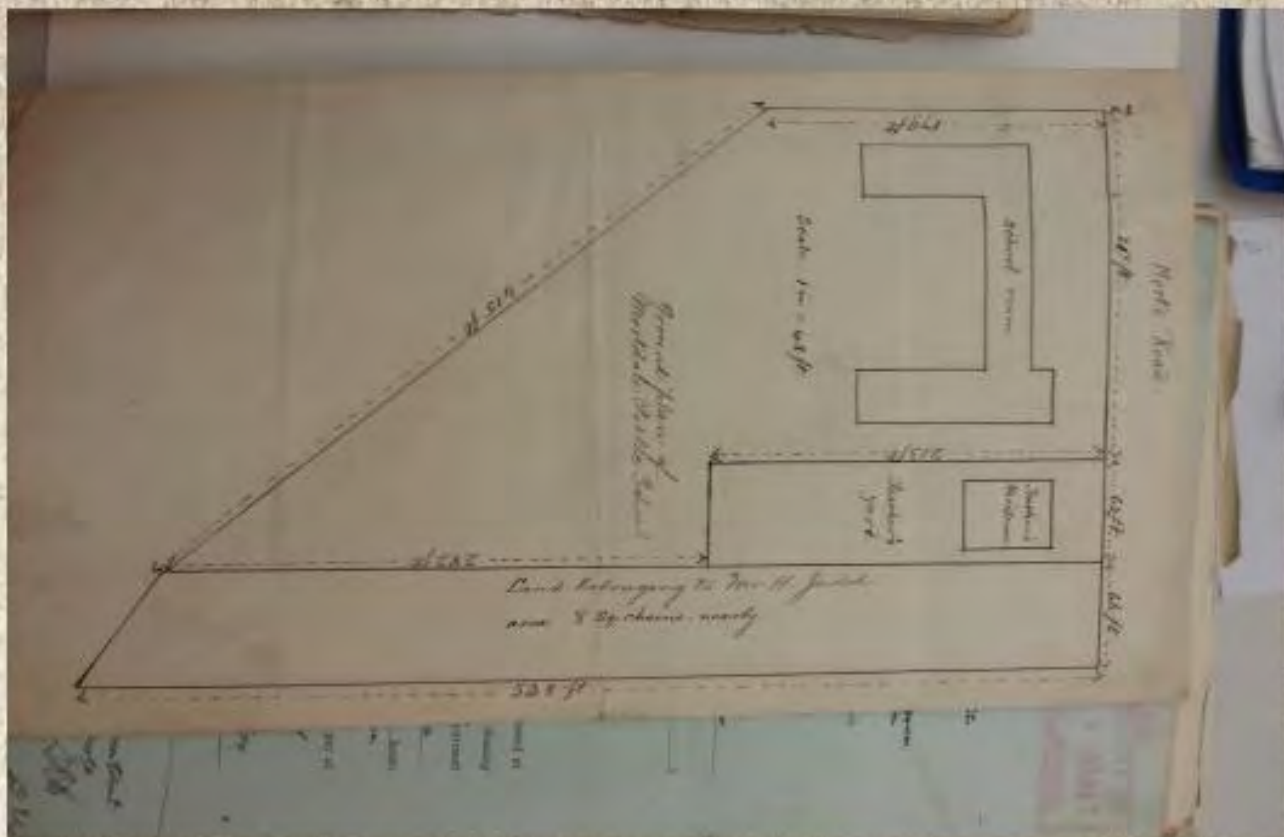


The Chiswells 92 Rosa Street Oatley remains the same today. Photo taken 19/03/2014

When I was 4yrs and 3mths old my mother took me to enrol at Oatley Public School but they would not enrol me until I was 5 yrs old. My mum then took me over to Mortadale school where I was accepted but had to walk two miles each morning and afternoon. The first day I started my 3 cousins took me to school and I sat out in the playground not knowing where to go. I never felt so alone as I did that day. The headmistress of the infants school sent a boy out to tell me come inside and I told him "no", so she sent him again to say that if I didn't go in she would come out and get me with a big stick. This scared me into going in with the boy.

The headmistress questioned me and took me to the kindergarten teacher Miss Knight, who was very kind and gentle and made me feel relaxed. My school days were uneventful except when I was in fifth class my father moved to Strathfield for three months while he drew plans for a radio station at Newcastle. It was radio 2HD and he then went up to supervise the building.

That three months change of school upset me and when I got back to Mortdale I did not do as well as I should have as I had missed some of the work and exam time I didn't know the answers. Anyway, I got through sixth class and went to Sutherland Intermediate High School which only went for 3 years. This was all I needed because I wanted to do an apprenticeship in boatbuilding the same as my father. I took woodwork and technical drawing along with the standard History , Geography , French , English Bookkeeping and Maths. I always got high marks (usually 95% - 100%) for woodwork, tech drawing and maths and usually 60% - 80% for the others. After 3 years of catching the train from Oatley to Sutherland, I passed my Intermediate Certificate with three A's and five B's.



Plans for Mortdale Primary School



Mortdale Primary School garden in 1929



Mortdale Primary School boys band 1928



2 HD Studio and office block



There was a neighbourhood family called Shean and I went to Mortdale school with Harry who was six months younger than me. We had played together since we were about 3. Harry's sister Marjorie worked at a furniture place and she asked her boss if I could start there. I had already applied to Garden Island Naval Base where Dad worked and had to wait three months for their reply. When I went for the interview at the furniture factory the boss was showing me all about chairs and realised he thought I wanted to be an apprentice so I told him I wanted to be a boat builder and had my name down at Garden Island so he did not take me on.

Finally , I was successful with the Garden Island job but my father being well known on the Sydney waterfront got me started at Cockatoo Island dockyard.



Bruce and Harry Shean on board a boat for Bruce and Esther's wedding anniversary.

Photo taken 4/02/1992



Cockatoo Island 1930 - 1940

I Started first in the boatshed where I worked on dinghies and thirty-eight foot target towing launches for the navy. These boats had twin V16 engines as they had to tow a target at 28 knots. The target was towed one mile behind so that tow line itself weighted quiet a lot. We also built launches for Civil Aviation Department.

After nine months in the boatshed I was transferred to the slipweigh where the keel blocks were being laid for the tribal class destroyer "Arunta". She was 376 ft long. After working on the keel blocks I later went "lining off". This involved being an assistant to a shipwright tradesman. He would read the plans and mark the deck bulkhead and would hold the chalkline then paint the lines and circles with a small brush. I would pick up the plans and try and follow what we were doing and asking questions; this is how I learnt. About a year later the shipwright, Ken Fraser (his daughter Dawn was an Olympic swimming champion) and I were working back after everyone else had gone home so that we could set up sights for sighting the propeller shafts right through from "A" bracket to forward end of the engine room.



Ken , Dawn and Rose Fraser

There was a wooden shaw in our line of sight so we had to put another one alongside it then remove that one. As I swung the maul (shipwright's 7 pound hammer ) it hit another shaw behind me and sheared off the wedge hitting Ken on the leg along side the shin- bone. This put him off for 6 weeks. The following day I approached the shipyard foreman Billy Ross to see what I would do and this is when my learning paid off, for he asked me if I could line off a small engine seat and then gave me the job; but as linning off requires an assistant he gave me a first yard apprentice. I completed the job and reported to Billy Ross who checked it out and finding it to be ok gave me another job and when Kenny Fraser came back, instead of me going back with him Billy Ross left me linning off and gave Kenny another boy. The shipwrights then held a meeting about me, a second year apprentice linning off. This was a responsible job and paid 3 pence (3 cents) per hour extra but Billy Ross convinced them that I was doing the work well so he won out and I remained in the job.



When the 'Arunta' was launched they let me stay with it around at the fitting out wharf where I remained until the ship was commissioned. I went out on all the ship's trials and after she was handed over to the navy I went on the sister ship "Warramunga". I had notebooks of information taken from "Arunta" and knew exactly where everthing went apart from the deck gear. There was the ventilation, the pumping and flooding, the hot and cold fresh water pipes, the hot and cold salt water piping, magazines and store rooms. While at Cockatoo Island I took photo's because that was my hobby. One day I was taking photo's of an American ship in the dock and the officer on watch aboard the "Tromp" (a French sloop) saw and reported me to security guards who took my camera. Later on I was escorted down to Naval Intelligence at Garden Island and saw Lt.Sidley. I went back to work and three months later was again taken down to Lt.Sidley who gave me back my camera but kept the film. There were no charges laid (as there would have been, if I had been in a civil court) because there were references given by my foreman and also the manager of Cockatoo Dock.



HMAS Arunta



Naval Dockyard Cockatoo Island drawing office



HMAS Warramunga

At the end of my five year apprenticeship in 1943, because the war was still going I had to apply to the Manpower Office if I wanted another job and I had been offered a job in the drawing office at the Australian Shipbuilding Board which had offices in the Kembla Building in Margaret Street, Sydney. So far I had not been in the drawing office at Cockatoo and I was keen to gain the experience.



Drawing Office

During the apprenticeship I had been going to Sydney Technical College where I gained my Trade Certificate, but now I was in the drawing office I went back to Tech and obtained my Higher Trade Certificate in Naval Architecture. I then started the Diploma course in Naval Architecture but stopped to complete my learning by going to sea as a ship's carpenter.



Sydney Technical College



Then I decided to to marry a very pretty girl who I had been taking out for the past seven years. Her name was Esther Bates and I met her at Harry Shean's place as Esther's family and Harry's family were friends and we all used to walk over to the Mortdale Movie Theatre each Wednesday and Saturday night. We fell in love and on the 14th February, 1942 we were married.



Bruce Fletcher 17yrs and Esther Bates 20yrs on Cronulla beach in 1938



Esther Bates 22 yrs on  
Cronulla Beach in 1940



Mortdale movie theatre



Bruce Fletcher and Esther Bates at the debutants ball  
at Rockdale Town Hall 1939



Esther and Bruce at  
the easter show



Esther's  
Debutant Ball



Esther, Beryl  
and Bruce at  
Wally's wedding  
on the  
09/07/1949



Esther and Bruce at Wally's wedding on the  
09/07/1949



Esther Bates 20yrs and  
Bruce Fletcher in Esther's  
mothers backyard in  
Oatley.



Esther Bates and  
Bruce Fletcher going  
to the Zoo, they were  
courting at the time.

I was 21 years old and as a young newly-wed I was not keen to be parted from my bride so I did not go to sea as a ships' carpenter, which is part of the training for a shipwright, but I did cover every other aspect such as boatbuilding, small wooden ships (tugs ect) loft work, steel shipbuilding (slipway fitting out ect) drawing office (small boats, small ships, cargo and naval ships). Just before our marriage Esther and her mother went looking for a flat to live and these were hard to get as the war was on. However, they found a duplex (one above the other) being built and found out that it would be completed before the 14th February, 1942. Although the rent was high - two pounds (\$4.00) a week, most houses were around one pound twenty five shillings (\$2.25). My wages at the time were about four pound (\$8.00) and Esther got two pound (\$4.00). This was at Penshurst.



One Pound



Being the first there we had the choice of top or bottom flat and we took the top but in March 1943 our first baby, Pamela May was born. The bottom flat had been occupied by an army captain who had now been sent to Melbourne and so we moved down the bottom which was less trouble getting a pram up the steps. We were there until 1956 (14yrs) and had 6 more children in that time (up to 1953).

Children	Born	Deceased
Pamela	27/03/1943	
Robert Bruce	15/08/1944	05/12/2004
Dawn Elizabeth	16/03/1946	
David Reginald	25/06/1947	24/12/2003
Valda Jean	23/10/1948	
Phillip John	31/03/1950	09/02/2009
Kay	04/03/1953	





Bruce Fletcher  
holding his first born  
Pamela 5 weeks old  
April 1943



Esther with 4 of her children, there are 7 children in the  
family. David , Valda , Esther , Dawn and Pamela



Aunty Beryl , Dawn, Uncle Ron , Robert and Pamela 1949



Bruce and Esther's children.  
Robert , Pamela and Dawn about 1951



L to R: Bruce and  
Esther's Children  
Dawn , Phillip ,  
David , Valda and  
Pamela

Aunty Beryl 20yrs ,  
Pamela 6yrs, David  
2yrs and Robert  
4yrs.

Photo Taken  
09/07/1949





Back row: Kay, Valda

Middle: Dawn , Pamela and Phillip



Bruce and  
Esther's boys.  
David , Robert  
and Phillip about  
1955



Phillip Fletcher



Robert Fletcher



David Fletcher



Pamela and  
Dawn in 1964

Aunty Beryl 30yrs  
at Pamela's 21st  
birthday





Bruce and Esther  
dressed up for  
John Kelly's  
(grandson) 21st  
party



Bruce and  
Esther Fletcher



Bruce and Esther at there daughter Dawn's wedding  
1965





Left to Right:  
Robert , Pamela  
holding cousin Peter  
Elliott, Dawn and  
cousin Anthony  
Elliott

Robert, Dawn and  
Pamela 30th April  
1952





Bruce and Esther's  
children

Back Row: Dawn ,  
Robert, Pam

Front Row: Valda,  
Phillip and David

Robert Fletcher





Back Row: Esther, Dawn, Robert , David, Bruce  
Front Row: Kay, Phillip and Valda



The Fletcher  
Family  
Robert, Dawn,  
Phillip, David, Kay  
, Valda, Pamela,  
Esther (mum),  
Bruce (dad)



Grandma Fletcher (Adeline) in Bruce's car at 78 Military Road.



Phillip 4 months old



Graham Nolan and Valda's wedding on 03/11/1973 with Esther (mum) and Bruce (dad)





Bruce with his  
daughter Valda



Dawn's wedding  
14/08/1965 with  
her parents  
Bruce and Esther



Bob Hancock and Pamela's wedding 19/03/1966

With brother's and sister's

Bruce and Esther : Mum and Dad

Kay, Robert, Pamela, Dawn, Valda, Phillip and David



Robert and Janice Scource's wedding 21/03/1968 at St Mark's church, Granville.

Phillip - Robert's brother

Evelyn - Janice's sister

Robert

Janice

Kay - Robert's sister

David - Robert's brother





Esther (mother) , Pamela 16yrs, Bruce (father) Debutant Ball  
Auburn Town Hall 1959



Esther (mother) Pamela, Bruce (father)  
Pamela's 21st Birthday taken at Granville Town Hall 26/03/1964



Photo at Dawn's wedding  
of Grandma Fletcher  
(Adeline Elizabeth Mary  
Fletcher) and Aunty Elsie  
(sister to Adeline)



David 17yrs, Esther 47yrs (mother) , Aunty Beryl 36yrs  
Warragamba Dam 09/05/1965



### The Fletcher Family

Left to Right: Valda, Phillip, Robert , Dawn, Pamela,  
Esther (mother). Kay, Bruce (father) and David.

Taken at Esther's 70th birthday in Valda's lounge room in 1988



**The Fletcher's**

**Back Row: Bruce (Dad), Esther (Mum), Dawn, Phillip, Pamela and Valda**

**Front Row: David, Warren (David's son), Kay, Dean (kay's son),**

After 3 years in the drawing office I left and went into the boat building business with my father. We already had several orders because for years we had been building boats in my grandfather's boatshed so I never did take up any sports. After a couple of years my father's health had deteriorated because of the gas and his nerves that he could not work. I took him to Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney for shock treatment and this improved him but only for a week. He was in such intense pain and as far as he could see there was no cure so he ended it all with a .22 rifle which he had bought me for my seventeenth birthday. Nothing through my whole life has hit me with such impact as my father's death in 1947. I was completely shattered. I couldn't work. I couldn't even think. We were so close and worked together as one so well and yet I used to argue with him so I began to reproach myself. Finally after a week at home I forced myself to go down to the boatshed where my father had died. We were nearing the completion of a twenty-five foot fast cruiser so I now had to concentrate on that and get it completed. Steadily I rebuilt the business up.

I obtained orders from Ship chandlers and others for the supply of rowing boat oars and sculls, and built the business up finally supplying the navy.

I still built boats as well, employing three others and a apprentice. One customer approached me one day to go into partnership with him. He had a boatship factory at Ryde with a retail store out the front and he wanted me to run the workshop which I did for a few years but finally left about 1956.



Canopy built by Bruce Fletcher at Peakhurst Factory - Only canopy made with exclusive roller shutter in 1954

Going back to 1950 I bought a five tonne truck and tried my hand at transport seeing that my friend, Stan Fisher, was already doing this and had got a contract for me with Bexley Lime and Cement carting cement in bags from the 4 cement works: Kandos, Charbon, Portland and Malden. This only lasted one year because I had an accident running off a slippery wet road near Kandos. The truck was off the road 4 months and even when I started back to work the diff housing was bent and tyres scrubbed out quickly. Nine tyres in 6 months sent me broke and I had to sell the truck. At that time the government bought in a road tax of 3 pence (3 cents) a tonne/mile and this put alot of men out of business so I only got half the new price for the truck. I then went back to my trade at Cockatoo Dock for a year during which time I obtained orders for boat oars which I made on week-ends until I had sufficient orders to start full time. When I had joined up with Ted Riley of Sportscraft at Ryde I had moved over to Granville to be closer to work. I bought an old house and did it up. When I left Sportscraft I built a garage and used this to build plywood boats until the advent of fibreglass boats forced the plywood boats out of business so I started building Clinker ski boats until the government applied a credit squeeze in 1960 and people could not afford ski boats. A friend for whom I had built a ski boat was a manufacturer of poultry sheds and equipment and he came to me and asked me if I would contract to him to erect these sheds if he supplied the material and I said "yes", but I needed a partner so I asked another friend to join me and we formed partnership. His name was Norm Eadie. We erected those sheds for many years until orders ran out.



This is a photo of Oatley bay, the shed in the background is the Boat Shed that Bruce and his father Alfred worked at building boats. The house on the left hand side was Grandma Fletcher's house (Adeline Elizabeth Mary Fletcher and Alfred). The place in the middle a young man named Bill lived there. Bill is still alive today and has told me the black hole you see is where they used to hide during the war.





Clinker built by Bruce Fletcher, with Bruce and his daughter Kay standing in front. (look carefully)



Model boat built by Bruce Fletcher, used to sit on top of a unit in the lounge room.



Oatley Bay Boat Shed  
A.H. Fletcher , this stands for Alfred and Hince (Friend)  
Fletcher



Oatley Bay 1922



Front page

In around 1957 Hunts Marine produced a catalogue of the boats they offered for sale. The pacemaker models were the ones built by Bruce Fletcher.

**HUNTS**

**PACEMAKER**

• 12 FT. and 14 FT. INBOARD RUNABOUTS



Featuring speed-optimized design-lines of hull-  
line, these are the high points in a description of  
the complete new line.

Continues of ever-popular plywood construction  
with the new superior plating design gives a fast  
response of speed in the water, depending upon  
power used.

With a Ford Perfect motor, 30 m.p.h. may be  
obtained, two others can be readily found and yet  
the whole craft is light enough to trail behind on  
a 2 hp. car.

Here are exclusive features: 17" marine plywood  
hull and deck, full frame aluminum, full-length  
engine beds, reinforced cabin interior, rounded  
prow, windshield, figured fuel tank holding all  
essential accessories, deck gear and motor lead  
over. Stanchion fuel tank, Ford throttle, instruments,  
windburning seat. Two or optional seats.

This fine craft can be supplied as a hull only or with our complete guaranteed  
installation of any selected motor.

A special suitable trailer can also be supplied.

Suggested Motors: Ford Perfect, Ford Consul, Packard Motor, Standard  
Vanguard, Holden.

Built by  
Bruce Fletcher

I received a letter from Peter Hunt on the 09/04/2014 who kindly sent me these couple of picture's for our Family to share. Peter had said that the quality of workmanship was very high and demand was strong. With the rapid growth in the use of fibreglass and aluminium boats.



In 1968 I bought a new house in Canley Vale and started up a fruit juice business and called it "Vale Distrution Co." The Company which had the machinery to squeeze the juice gave me samples in small plastic bottles in lots of 200 and Esther and I used these to get more customers. This business expanded until finally a run up the Blue Mountains catering to most of the clubs, hotel/motels, shops ect. and reached as far at Hartley. In 1969 two young men called to our place. They were members of " The church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints", commonly called "Mormons". In response to my questions they explained how the church started and for some time I had been thinking of joining a church so I joined this one and Esther also.



Bruce's 1959 Chevrolet Bel Air

This has brought joy and understanding into my life such as I have never known. In 1973, after two years investigation and deliberation, we decided to sell our house and business and buy a twenty-five foot Millard Caravan and a Toyota 4WD Landcruiser (both \$6000.00 each). By adding a freezer, clothes washer, dryer, microwave, 240 volt generator, air conditioner, television, video- recorder and portable clothes- line I made it into a mobile home. Then all the added weight required more support so I added another chassis. I also got Toyota axles made so I could use Toyota wheels and tyres, larger shackle pins etc. so that the weight increased from two tonnes to four and a half tonnes when the 3/100 ltr. water tanks were full. I had added the third tank. Later I added another 1000w generator as a big 3000w one used 10 ltrs. of petrol against 3 ltrs. for the small one over seven hours so we could switch to the small one for washing machine, TV, lights etc. all this was achieved over a period of 15 years from when we started.





Bruce and Esther Fletcher's Landcruiser



Bruce Fletcher crossing a river at Jim Jim Falls  
at Kakadu National Park

In 1973 we started to travel all over Australia and I found that we could live and travel on 6 months money out of each year and being a tradesman I got a job whenever I wanted one. Some of the places I worked at were: MRD (Main Roads) in Queensland, the Queensland Railways, building boats (trawler game fishing boat) in Queensland, motel maintenance carpenter in the Northern Territory, built houses in New South Wales and Western Australia , leaflet distribution in South Australia, picked oranges in Victoria and NSW, worked for BHP Tubemakers in Newcastle, formed up a swimming pool in NSW and worked on prefab sheds in NSW. Also built a car sales yard at Gosford, NSW. When I made the second chassis back in Sydney I got a contract from Cyclone to erect Cyclone fencing for 2 years. April, 1974 was our first trip to Queensland. We made for Airlie Beach first because we had arranged to meet a friend, Don Barrett, there. Don owned an orange orchard at Dooralong which is a few miles out of Wyong NSW. I had built a ski boat for Don 10 years previously. We met at Jack and Ivy's Caravan Park but a builder from Melbourne had bought the park. His name was Bob Jenkins and he bought three cruisers up with him and used them to take people out on day cruises from Shute Harbour. I stayed there for 3 months repairing Bob's boats then went further up Queensland to Innisfail where I worked as a boatbuilder on a prawn trawler and game fishing boat. One day a bloke asked me to tow his caravan (a 25ft. Millard same as min) up o mosman. We set out at 9am and after going 5 miles or so the bloke stopped me to say he would drive on to do some shopping in Cairns and would meet me in front of the swimming pool. Just after we passed through a little town called Babinda and as we went down a hill we turned around a curve and the van swung to the left. When I tried to straighten it again it wouldn't respond and we ran off the road to the right and down the embankment about 10ft drop. As the Toyota went over it snapped the 2-5/8" bolts which held the towbar on and allowed the car to somersault right over on its roof then back up on the wheels again but turned so as to face the road at right angles. It had also snapped the 1/2" safety chain. The van had followed and finished up 10 feet behind the car. It had both wheels on the near side missing. Fortunately neither of us were hurt - not even a scratch but both tool boxes were completely shattered and there were tools everywhere.



An ambulance took us both to hospital for a check up but we were ok. Every panel in the Toyota was dented but the bull bar I made took the full weight and prevented the radiator from being damaged inside, and the two near side wheels were off and when the owner came back 4 hours later he said the wheels had not been greased and that caused the wheels to seize and break away. I also realised that I had let the rig get too much speed up and ever since I have always used the gears going downhill. If you are going slow enough you can not get into trouble.

Fortunately that time neither of us were hurt. While the Toyota was being repaired at Cairns I got a job with Main Roads (MRD) as a formsetter. First we put the van into Stratford Van Park about 5 miles North of Cairns and the job was out on the Yorkeys Knob Road and the foreman would pick me up and drop me off after work. In November I left MRD and we went back to Sydney for christmas 1974.

My life from then on can be read in my book 'Our Travels around Australia'.



Esther and Bruce under a Boab tree 200yrs old.  
1987 Queensland trip

Memories of

**ESTHER MAY**

**FLETCHER**

(Nee Bates)

Born on 3rd June, 1918

Deceased on 3rd January, 2000



## **I was Born:**

Esther May Bates at home at St Peters NSW. I was only very small, as I was a 7mths baby. My birthday 3rd June 1918. I was very lucky to be alive, as when I was born I wasn't breathing so the Dr. Just threw me at the bottom of the bed and said to the nurse I was dead. The nurse was watching me and she thought she saw my foot move, so she raced outside and got a hot water bottle and put me on it, as I was very cold, but she forgot to put a cover on the bottle. So after a few minutes she heard a little cry and when she came to see what was happening, and she saw I was very badly burnt on the lower part of my back, and my left heel, they were very badly burnt and was right into the bone. So they wrapped me in cotton wool, I was like that for months. At 3 months the nurse decided to weigh me and I was only 3lbs cotton wool and all. I got better each day and had no troubles. I guess I was very lucky to get well and have the chance for a life. I was 23 when I married. We had 7 Children - 4 girls and 3 boys. All were healthy babies, and we had no troubles with them.



Esther May Fletcher



Esther made her  
Debutant.  
Date unknown



Esther May Bates





Sydney Peters and Esther as a bridesmaid, at Bubba (Ethal) wedding married to Stanley Peters.



Esther , Ethal May  
Bates (Mother) Child  
unkown

## **My Mother:**

My mother was born Ethel May Molloy on January 15th 1898 at Leichardt NSW. Her mother was Australian and her father was Irish. She had 5 girls and 1 boy, me being the eldest and my brother the youngest. She was a wonderful mother, she always made time to talk to us and help us in any way she could. She always kept us dressed nicely, she made our clothes. She was kind and helped anyone she could. At one stage she bought a young lady home with her baby. She had met her and was talking and found out she had no where to go so she bought her home for the night. Needless to say she stayed with us for 12 months. She ended up like one of the family. The baby was a beautiful little thing. We were all sad when she decided to leave and go to N.Z. We were all in the Junior Red Cross and when there was a concert or anything special on mum was always there to help out. When war was on she went and worked in a munition factory until war was over. Then Mum and Dad went up to Londonderry to finish their lives out. Mum died at 63 yrs. We all missed her very much. She belonged to the Richmond Fire Brigade and was always there to help out making tea and sandwiches, and even fighting the fires.

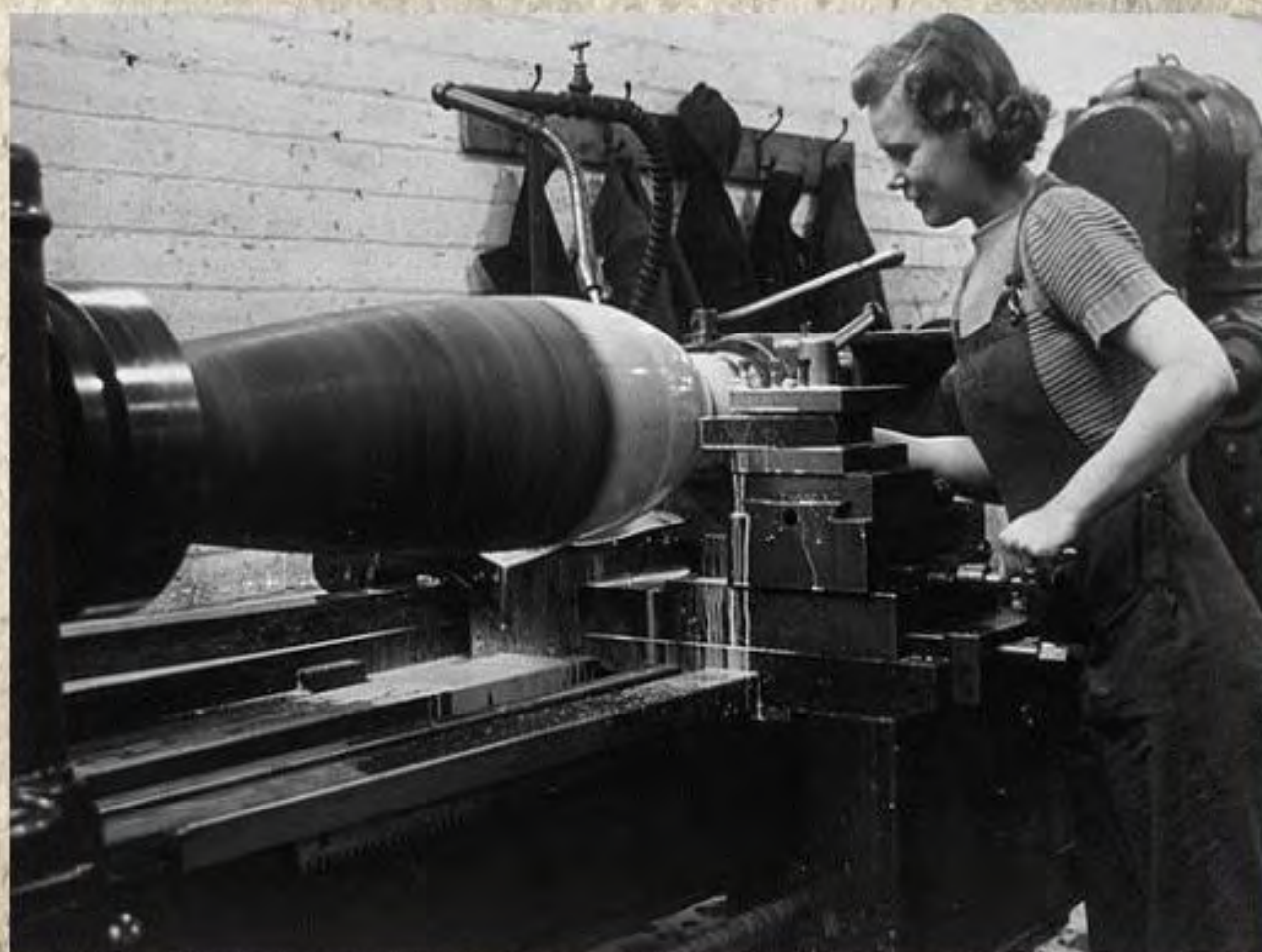




Ethal May Bates ( Esther's mother)

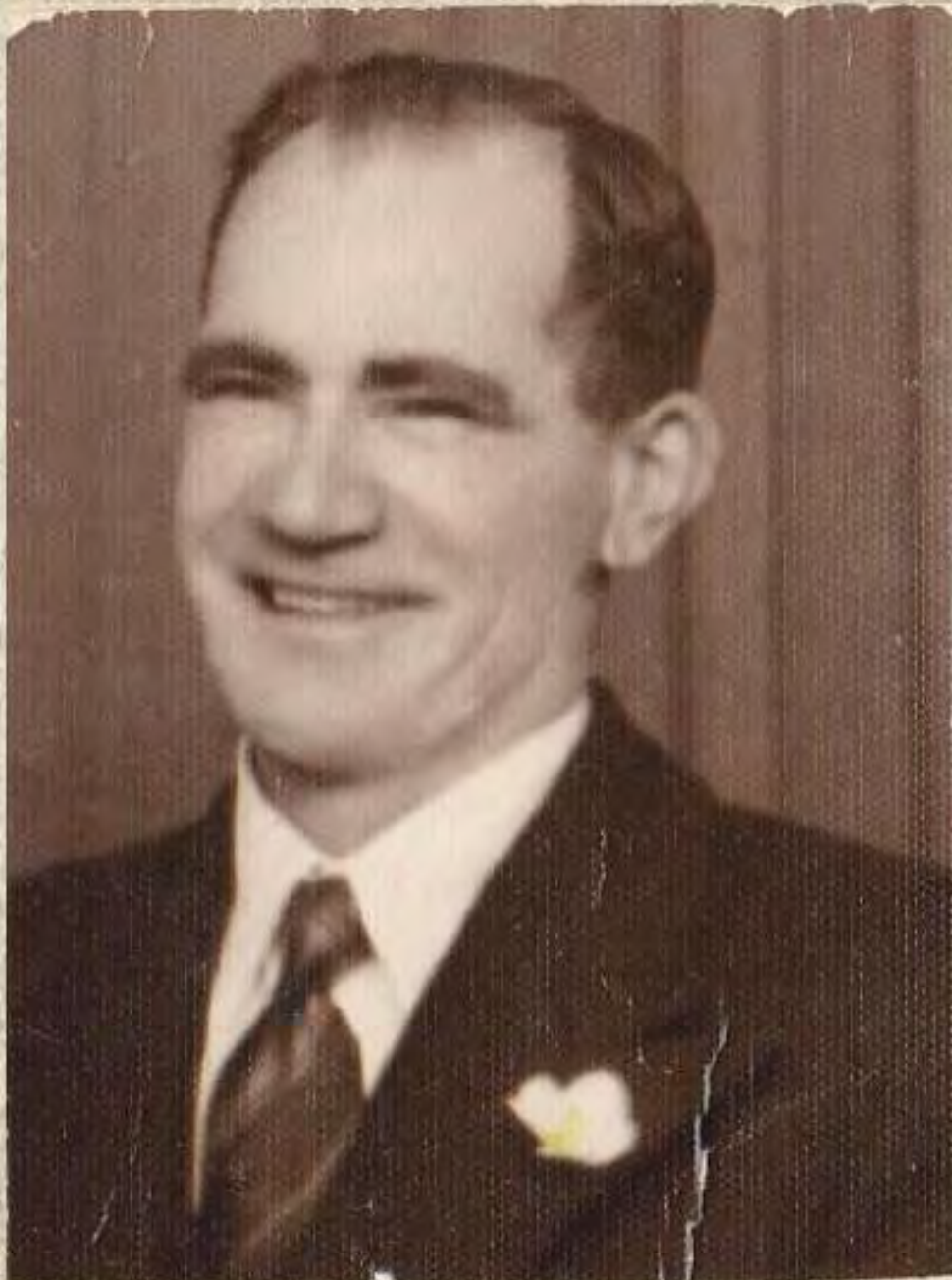


Munition factory - Making bullets and bombs



## **My Father:**

My father was named David Ashley Bates and he was born at Auburn NSW on 4th July, 1893. He had 5 brothers and 3 sisters and he was the 2nd youngest of the boys. He was a very good father, a good worker. He was a demolisher by trade but he was able to do almost anything. For relaxation he liked fishing and always took Mum and us girls with him. We moved down onto the water to live. Sunday afternoons Dad always took us out in the boat fishing and we always caught a few fish. He would help anyone around the place. Everyone knew where to come to get help or find out how to do different things. He was sadly missed by everyone when he died.



Reginald David Bates ( Esther's Father)

## My Brothers and Sisters:

I have 4 sisters and 1 brother.

Ethel , Mary , Joy , Betty and Ronald.

I was the eldest and we were all very close and all got on well together, always went everywhere together. We went to the pictures every Wednesday and Saturday nights and Mum and Dad always came with us. Mary was the spoilt one and got out of doing lots of jobs. One Sunday afternoon after lunch it was her turn to wash up. She always made some excuse to get out of doing things so this Sunday she went up into the toilet, it was outside on a big slab of rock and looked into the kitchen, and as soon as she saw we were finished she'd come down. So this Sunday Ethel said to me "when I say push, push the door open". So when she said push I did and she threw a bucket of cold water over her, it gave her a terrible shock, as she didn't expect anything like that. She never went to the toilet anymore until she did her job after that. We got into trouble for doing it but to us it was worth it. At the time she was the spoilt one, but we never had trouble with her anymore.



Left to Right: Mary  
(sister), Aunty Tiggy,  
Esther and Aunty  
Marge



Aunty Marge, Esther, Bubba (Ethal) sister, Aunty Tiggy



Left to Right:  
Unknown /  
Esther and Mary  
(sister)



Brother and Sisters  
Left to right: Cousin  
Kevin Bates, Joy,  
Betty and Ronnie

Family  
Left to Right: Joy,  
Ethal (mother),  
Reginald (father),  
Betty and Ronnie





Esther's sister, Joy and  
Jethro Elliott's  
wedding.  
St John's Church,  
Londonderry  
22nd December 1951



Esther's sister,  
Betty and Bruce  
Hagger's wedding.  
Allan Hagger Bruce's  
brother and Betty's  
sister Joy



Left to Right - Esther's sister's and brother and sister-in law

Joy - Sister

Betty - Sister

Aunty June Shean

Ethal (Bubba) - Sister

Esther

Ronnie and Dorris





**The Bates Family**

**Left to Right - Brother's and Sister's**

**Joy - Sister**

**Mary - Sister**

**Ethal (Bubba) - Sister**

**Ronnie - Brother**

**Esther**

**Betty - Sister**

## **My School Days:**

I Started school when I was 6 years old. I went to Kingsgrove school, it was only a small school, it was Kindergarten only and a new school. I enjoyed going there. Then when it was time to go to primary I went to Bexley, this was a much bigger school as it was Kindergarten and Primary in one. It took some time to get used to it, by the time I got used to it we moved to Oatley, and of course I went to Oatley school. I liked it there and the teachers were nice. School days were happy days. I went from here to Hurstville Domestic Science. I was only here for 6 months when I had to leave as my mother was very sick and I had to look after her. We were very lucky we only lived a short way from the school and I was able to go home for lunch every day.

## **Sundays:**

Sunday was always a special day for me when I was young. It was play day with my father and mother and my two sisters. It was marble day after lunch. We would go out and play three holes. It was always exciting afternoon, and the loser had to get afternoon tea, there was always something special Mum would make. If Dad lost he would always try to bribe one of us to make tea, but we wouldn't have it, so he would have to make it. Some days we would play hop scotch for a change. Sunday nights my Aunt and Uncle used to come over and the 4 adults would play cards, we used to like it when dad won, as he gave us money and we could buy our lunch on Monday. Then we moved to Oatley down on the water, so our Sunday afternoons turned into fishing, which was always an exciting afternoon. We always had a very good weekend. We looked on Sundays as a special day as we went to Sunday school in the morning and went down fishing or swimming in the afternoons.



## The Great Depression:

This was a bad time for all, my father had no work and I couldn't get work. Dad had to walk from Oatley to Cental every month to get what they called the dole because he never had money for his fare. Mum made baby clothes and tried to sell them to help out, but it was very hard. She worked hard at it but it was a battle, but they got through. We were lucky kids Mum and Dad never let us go with out anything, they tried everything to keep us from going without anything. Dad tried selling clothes props, he would go down in the bush and cut down good strong ones and at christmastime he would sell christmas bush as we had a lot of trees in our place, he was always looking for something to do, he helped everyone and he was well liked by everyone.



Linning up for the dole

## Wedding:

14th February 1942

I know it was a bleak, cold morning and drizzling rain was falling and to make things worse we were catering ourselves and we had to get everything up to the hall, which was about 1/4 hour's walk, as we didn't own a car, we had to carry things to the hall. But as luck happened at 12 o'clock it cleared up and the sun shone so it was a nice afternoon, and all went off very nicely so we were lucky after all. We had a nice flat to go to in Penshurst so we went straight there as we didn't go away until later on, so we had a nice day for our wedding after all.







Left to Right

Adeline Elizabeth Mary Fletcher - Bruce's mother

Bruce Fletcher

Esther Fletcher

Reginald David Bates - Esther's father

Ethal May Bates - Esther's mother

## During the War:

I worked in a woollen mill making singlets, shirts and underpants. We worked from 8:00am in the morning till 9:00 o'clock at night 4 days a week, and all day Saturday till 4:00pm, which made it a long week. I had a hard time when I decided to get married as manpower was in and and they wouldn't let you go, as the army work came first. After a bit of a battle I left and didn't tell them, as my boss thought I was sick. After a few months past I ran into my boss in town and she talked me into going back to work, as they were short staffed and needed some machinists, so I went back and stayed for 12 months then fell pregnant and left. Thirteen years later I went back and worked there for 12 months, it was quite nice as there were a few girls still there from when I was first there.



Woollen Mill



## **Special Friends:**

I had most wonderful friends anyone could wish for. We have been friends since school days and our parents were great friends too. I've always looked on them as my second family, no matter what went wrong with me they were always there to help. We always went to the pictures together twice a week. Bonnie, the eldest girl, was a couple of years older than me, and the other 4 girls paired off with my sisters. Bonnie has been a wonderful friend in helping me with my children, always came and helped me shopping, she either came with me or minded the children at home. I feel so sad for her now as she is not well herself, and can't get around much. She used to help me with my knitting and sewing for the children. She taught me to knit.

## **I Remember When:**

I remember when I lost Phillip in the shopping centre, One day I decided to go to Hurstville to do some shopping. I had my son with me, he was only 2 years old. We were in Woolworths and I let go of his hand to pay the girl. In that short time he roamed off and went out in the main street and crossed the busy road. I didn't know where to look first when I suddenly saw him with a Salvation lady. She had bought him an ice-cream. She was looking to see who owned him, she was on her way to the police station when I caught up with her. I guess that was the happiest time of my life. I went and bought a walking harness straight away for him.



Jane Schubert  
Grandmother to  
Esther May Fletcher

Esther's sister ,  
Joy Bates about  
10yrs old





Esther's sister  
Joy Elliott (nee Bates)



Esther Fletcher made a friend at Victoria River Downs  
(VRD) NT in 1987



Esther , Beryl Skinner (nee Fletcher) and Bruce Fletcher



Bill Yates, Aunty Beryl Skinner and Joyce Barker (nee Folster) Beryl's cousin. Bill grew up with Beryl, Bruce and Wally in Oatley. Photo Taken 19/03/2014



Belmont Cemetery, Newcastle NSW