

# My Home

*Written by Gwenda Caves (Nee Torenbeek). When Gwenda was asked about life here at Myella, she wrote this poem about growing up here. The house she is talking about is now common room at Myella Farm Stay.*

This little house,  
This old brown house,  
Was built by Bert and Bill,  
A tribute to their thoroughness,  
That it is useful still.

It was built at first in Kumbia,  
A town near Kingaroy,  
Where it was home to three small girls  
And a brand new baby boy.

Board by board it was pulled apart,  
And packed firmly on a truck.  
Then the brothers set off with their  
load  
And hoped for lots of luck.

For the roads were rough in those  
Hard old days, of 1937,  
The two way bitumen roads for now  
Would have surely seemed like  
heaven.

It took the brothers just 14 days to  
Put it back together,  
As neither of them were carpenters,  
I call this some endeavour.

The walls and ceilings were left  
unlined  
Until some years thereafter,  
And the girls would entertain  
themselves  
By dancing in the rafters.

Then a fair haired baby boy was born  
Closely followed by another,  
The family had increased by now  
To three sisters and three brothers.

But we all grew, lots of work to do,  
And schools to be attended  
So all too soon (on looking back)  
Our childhood days had ended.

Now if you happen to hear sometime  
An echo of childish laughter,  
Perhaps it's coming from days gone by,  
When we children played in the  
rafters.



I was just six years old when we arrived at the site where this house stands. There was thick scrub surrounding a small clearing, in which the timber was stacked, waiting for Bill and Bert to start rebuilding the house. We had a small shed as a kitchen, and tents to sleep in. The dingoes used to come in very close and howl nearly all night every night. They were probably after Gracie, the goat we had acquired from somewhere, for our milk supply. But they didn't get her, the men saw to that.

The men got to work immediately on the house - they worked from daylight to dark and in 14 days it was ready to live in, but not lined until some years later.

The next step was to clear the scrub back further from the house. We became aware of large brown snakes in the area and they became a constant danger for years. Two or three every day in summer was not unusual and they were very aggressive. Our dog Nigger helped our mother keep them at bay.

Mum and Nigger killed all that came near the house. There were also a large number of goannas, and every now and then there was great excitement when Nigger put one up a tree. There were hundreds of wallabies here too, and lots of scrub turkeys. Bert was a good shot and if meat was in short supply, which it often was, he would get a turkey to tide us over. He used to set snares in the scrub to catch the wallabies. When Daphne and I realised what he was doing, we used to go along later and pull <sup>THE</sup> snares. So it would seem that Daphne and I were part of the first movement for the environment.

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Our first herd of dairy cows was collected and in production about a year after we arrived. Uncle Bert and Dad, with some help from their other brothers, cleared scrub to get grass paddocks ready for the cattle. We children were quite keen at first, the cattle were all named with ladies names - Hilda, Jenny, Ruby, Daisy, etc. But very soon the novelty wore off and we hated the milking - twice a day, every day. The milking machines made quite a difference when we eventually had them installed, but we would always dodge milking if we could.

Our constant worry, even in good seasons, was water shortage. We tried to establish vegetable and flower gardens, but with only limited success. During long droughts it had to be carted in cream cans, drums, or whatever containers the men could find. The droughts were often broken by very severe storms. If a storm was building up in the early afternoon, our school teacher would watch it for a while, then decide to let us go home early to beat it. But of course we never did beat any, we would be caught about half way home every time and arrive home drenched, but thankful we hadn't been struck by lightning.

For the first few years we were educated by correspondence - another tough job for our mother. It must have been a relief for her when we were big enough to ride the four miles each way to the Kokotungo school. Daphne used to double Wilma on Jill, and I used to have Alwyn on Taffy behind me. We had some awful squabbles as we rode along, and it was not uncommon for either of us to give each others horse a good whack on the rump if we got close enough to do so. We were always late for school, but we didn't get into trouble - the teachers were a little bit lenient on us and some other children, who also had a long way to go, plus jobs to do at home before school. For a time we went to school by sulky, which was a good way to travel, but fights used to break out there too, and get out of hand occasionally.

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For a number of years all of our bread was baked by our mother and the butter made in a churn. I remember people enjoying this homemade bread and butter when they came.

The goods train came out from Rockhampton three times a week, bringing mail and grocery orders from Thomas Brown and New Zealand Loan. I can remember unpacking the orders and seeing big tins of prunes and other tinned fruits and vegetables. As the roads improved and the car tyres improved too, our grocery orders mainly came from Mr Les Major in Baralaba. A bread delivery from Baralaba three times a week came as a relief for Mum. But she would still bake bread any time she wanted to. She made big fruit cakes too and iced them beautifully. For our birthdays she always made a special birthday cake and we looked forward to it for months..

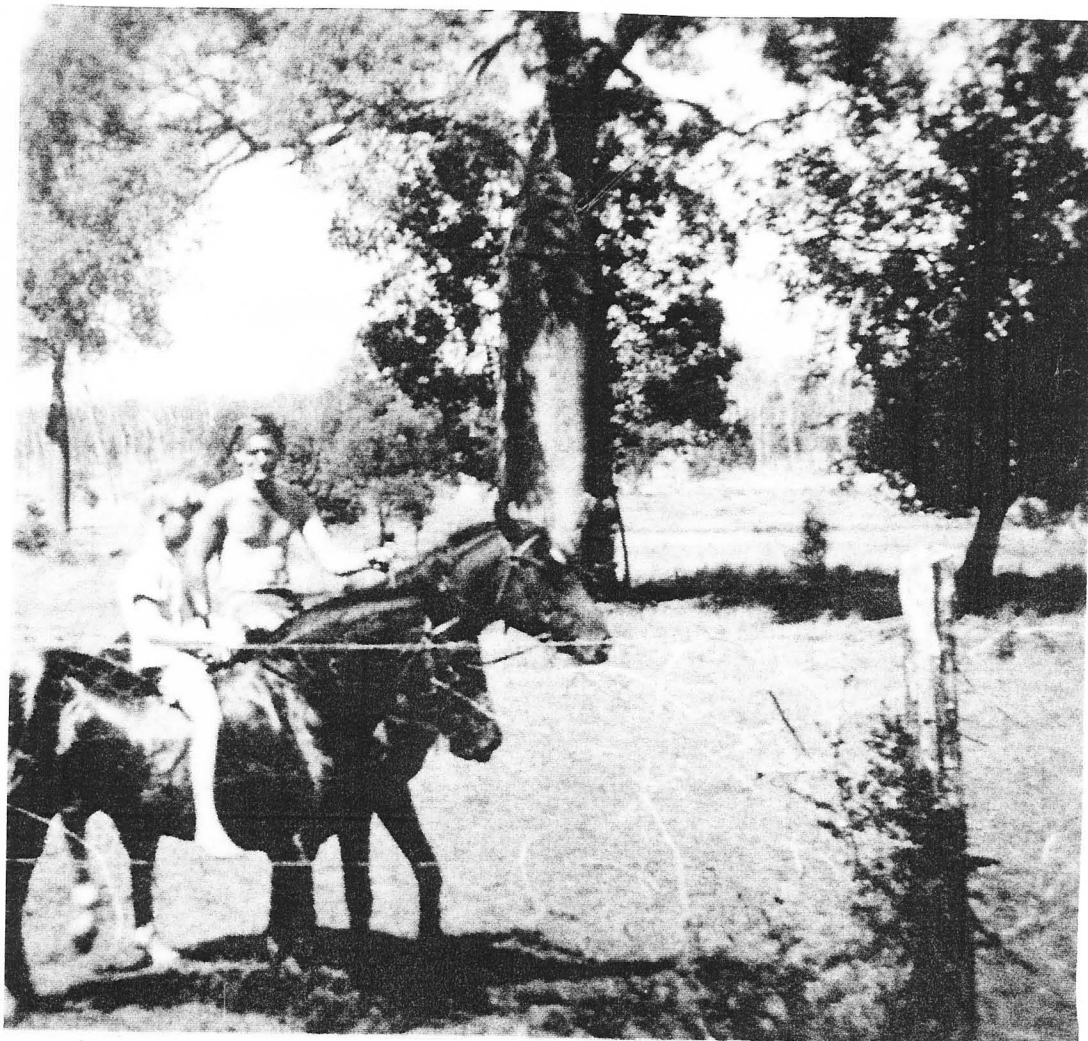
Our entertainments were simple - Dad and Dave and Martin's Corner on the radio, visits to our friends occasionally and visits from them at other times. When the C W A began in Kokotungo, a dance hall was built and the dances held there were very enjoyable. Sometimes there was an orchestra from Rockhampton, but we often made do very nicely with Reg Hutchinson playing his piano accordion. There were two or three weddings conducted there, one of them was when Uncle Bert married Cath Connolly when he came back from the war.

Before the hall was built, all the meetings, dances, church services and immunisation clinics were held at Mr and Mrs Fred Peggs place, which was just across the road from where the dance hall is. The "Bush Brothers" were the only religious contact we had. They used to come every couple of months and we looked forward to their services very much, and they were sometimes accommodated in this house.

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As a point of interest, a horse Alwyn had bred, broken in, and trained himself with his son Jeffrey, has just completed the Matilda Centenary ride between Longreach and Winton, with myself as the rider, and the old saddle from that ride belongs now to the Eather family on this property.

*Gwenda Cave 28/11/95*



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Every six months or so we had a visit from Mr Clarkson from Wowan. His van was packed tight with all sorts of nice things from buttons and cottons, men's work clothes, dress materials and food colourings and flavouring of the Rawligns Brand. We really loved his visit and he stayed overnight if he arrived late in the afternoon. He was one who enjoyed the home made bread and butter.

But I think, that over all , our horses were our main interest. They were our friends and we never got tired of them, or of riding them. There were no dangerous horses on our place, and I realise now, that this was because our Dad made sure they were safe before we ever saw them. There was a buster now and then, but mostly because of our own carelessness.

When Lester and Ralph were old enough to travel to the Baralaba school (they had correspondence lessons to begin with too) there was a school bus for them to catch at the front gate. So they weren't as dependent on horses as we older children were.

Alwyn(from a very shaky start at about 5 years of age) became a leading horse handler and he still is. He earned two Quilty Buckles in the early days of R.M.Williams and Erica Williams. He was Australasian Champion buck jump rider when he was under 20.

I have two Winton to Longreach completions and Alwyn and I are still into Endurance riding.

Lester is a leading Veterinarian in Rockhampton, and Ralph is a good all round dinkum Aussie, running his Auctioneer business in Rockhampton. Daphne, Wilma, and I were all nurses at one stage and we are now very occupied helping our husbands in their chosen businesses.

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