Doris Jean Irvine nee Lane was my maternal great-grandmother. She was the youngest living child of 9 (6 boys and 3 girls) a mother of 3, a grandmother of 7 and a great-grandmother of 14 when she passed away at the age of 90 in December of 2012.

She led a long and prosperous life, raising her 3 children with the help of her mother Clara after her first husband Lionel passed away a week after their daughter turned 2.

Doris married Lionel in February of 1940, just months before he enlisted to fight in WWII.

Doris also signed up, doing so after Lionel was captured and sent to the P.O.W camp in Changi, as a signals operator. In doing this, it made it easier for her to find out what was happening with her husband.

Less than a year after her husband camp home after the War, Doris gave birth to her first born, a boy they named Ronald. Little over a year later Doris had her second child, another boy they called Colin, and finished off their happy little family 18months later with a daughter they called Margaret.

After the loss of her husband, Doris raised her 3 children with the help of her mother Clara, and other family members. Her sisters Joyce and Alice would be around with their children and all the little ones would mingle while their parents cooked, cleaned, worked etc.

Doris was later remarried to a man named Henry Gibbs, who coincidentally was also the biological father of her daughter's husband. Yes folks, you read that right, my grandparents Margaret and Grahme were not just husband and wife, they were also step siblings as their living parents married each other after having met while their children were courting. It took me a while to work my brain around it myself so I don't blame you for being confused.

Doris and Henry married 5 months after the birth of their first grandchild (my mother Susan)

who would be the first of 7 granddaughters between 1966 and 1973, 4 daughters to Margaret and 3 to Colin.

During this time period there was also some sadness, as Doris lost her mother Clara in 1969.

Doris adored her granddaughters, there was often home videos of all 7 of the girls at the beach with their parents playing in the waves, or playing with their other cousins on the farm, horse riding, puppies, kittens etc.

Then tragedy struck again. 15 years after she married her second husband, Doris found herself a widow again in 1982. I can not remember the dates for her own health problems, but Doris had a heart condition, and had suffered at least 2 strokes by the early 1980's.

The trifecta hit the family when Doris eldest child Ronald was electrocuted so severely he almost died. As a result of this he became a triple amputee (no legs and 1 arm) and had to relearn a lot of things as the arm he lost was his dominant arm. Doris didn't care that he was covered in scars and missing limbs, she was just happy her son was alive.

5 years after Rons accident the joy started again, within 1 year Doris had become a great-grandmother twice over, to two little girls, my cousin Eden, and myself (Sarah).

The happy times kept coming after that, there was babies for Doris to dote on in the house again, and the strokes were pushed to the back of her mind.

Then Doris second child Colin was diagnosed with cancer, and it was bad. I remember being around 3 or 4, running around Granma's house playing with our pet dog Ragsy and Colin sitting there watching me and laughing before he would start coughing. That was my first experience with a family member being sick. Coling started spending more and more time either in the chair dozing while watching me as Granma would cook, or napping in bed in his room and Granma would let me help her make him coffee and toast with vegemite and cheese, and she would supervise me as i carefully walked down the hall carrying the food to Colin because vegemite and cheese on toast made me feel better so in my mind it should help him to feel better. Granma humoured me but now i think back and i can remeber the shadows in her eyes because she knew it wouldn't help like i believed.

Granma spent a lot of time raising me, Mum was busy working, as was Ma (my grandmother Margaret) so i spent a lot of time with my 2 great-uncles under Granma's watchful gaze. Then another wonderful event happened. My mums youngest sister got married in Sept 1995. Granma was so happy, that was 4 of her 7 granddaughters married, and around 5 great-granddaughters so far as well, but her happiness was cut short. Just 6 days later Colin passed away, loosing his long fight with cancer that had spread through his body, completely ravaging him. He passed 2 days before he would've been 48.

After the loss of her son, Doris threw herself into her family, and as I spent the majority of the first 22yrs of my life in her presence. She would take me to preschool, and pick me up after so my mum could work to provide for us. She had an open door policy to her family, but after Colin's death his 3 daughters drifted away from us, leaving her only myself to dote upon until my aunt started to have children in 1998.

1998 was a hard year for us, Granma was taking care of me almost constantly as mum had taken some time off to care for my stepfather, who passed away in July 98 from brain cancer that just kept coming back. I remember asking Granma where he had gone and she said he's gone to stay with Uncle Colin and that they are always with me even if i can't see them. The day we buried my stepdad Granma her first great grandson Reuben, and she couldn't get enough of us both.

4 years later we celebrated Granma's 80th birthday, and all her nieces and nephews, cousins, grandchildren, great grandchildren came and it was crazy, there was people everywhere and thankfully Granma had a 2nd toilet out the back (an outhouse with plumbing) so at least the lineup if you needed it wasn't terrible, plus all her neighbours came as well so it was a huge party. it took months to organise and it was a secret from her even though it was at her house.

Skip forward to 2007, Granma had turned 85, and we received another blow to the family. Margaret, her only daughter, had been diagnosed with cancer at 58. I had just started Yr11 at a new school as my old high school didn't offer the seniors courses i wanted, and I rang granma to check in on her which i did daily at this point. She was having trouble with her memory, and getting very forgetful, but still had lots of clarity at the same time so it was a stressful time. She told me that Ma was at the hospital the next suburb over and she couldn't get in contact with her and was worried, so I skipped out on school for the day, and walked the 6km to the hospital to see Ma. She was in the middle of a chemo treatment, so i rang Granma so she could talk to her and i could hear her relief through the phone. Ma's phone had been on silent and so she hadn't heard it and Granma thought something bad had happened. Granma said she would see us both tonight for dinner, to which Ma said ok, hung up then asked why i wasn't at school. My response was you and Granma are more important than my classes. So i spent the day at the hospital with her for her treatment, once finished we headed to Granma's where Mum and Ron both were and we all had dinner. Ma has been Cancer free for 16years now and is living her best life as a happily retired woman, and going on trips around the country seeing places shes always wanted to visit.

This was around the time i started skipping a lot of school. I wish i could say it was to take care of Granma but i was having a typical rebellious teenager moment. January of 2009 rolled around and i was living with Granma fulltime to watch her/help her. After i had effectively dropped out of school halfway through Yr11 and did nothing the following year I chose to go back to school as an 18yr old to complete my HSC, doing this around caring for Granma. She had been diagnosed with Dementia and Alzheimer's by this point.

It is absolutely horrible to watch someone suffer from either of these diseases, but to have both and for it to be the person who spent the most time raising you made it just that much worse. She started forgetting that she had taken her medication and almost overdosed multiple times til i was able to find somewhere to hide her medications that she couldn't reach, she couldn't safely cook because she couldn't lift the pots and pans etc as they were too heavy for her, she started sundowning, everytime she would wake up from a np she would think its a new day, even if she only napped for 10minutes.

The next 2.5yrs flew by, between study and taking care of Granma it passed by in a blink. July 2011 i started working overnights at the local McDonald's, as overnights paid better. Thankfully Granma was sleeping through the nights and on the odd night she didn't and would ring me the managers were completely understanding and let me talk to her long enough for her to get back to bed. I'd be home by 630 in the morning, just in time for Granma to get up, so i would make her a cup of tea and give her the morning medications. Then it got hard, she would constantly wake me up, because its daytime and she couldn't understand why i was asleep no matter how many times i told her i worked the whole night, she would forget. It was frustrating but it wasn't her fault, so i started to drink as a stress reliever (stupid move i know).

This pattern kept up for almost a year when Ron was visiting from his house 4hrs away and wound up in hospital, from jaundice and abdominal pain. It was the same news that his brother and sister both received at some point. It was cancer, and this cancer was not able to be removed, only treated to prolong life, it was a death sentence, and just luck as to how far away the finish line was. Granma didn't take the news well, all 3 of her children had suffered cancer, but as soon as she would finish the thought/sentence it was gone.

Granma started getting sicker, bad enough we had to place her into a nursing home, but as a lot of people know once that happens its downhill from there. That was exactly what happened, 6 months later on Christmas of 2012 Granma got admitted to hospital with pneumonia, and her neck had frozen so she couldn't move her head at all. She had no recognition of any of us, not even her own children, but we all went to see her.

Ma was beside herself, as not 2weeks before we had lost her husband, my grandfather Grahme.

I went to work, because its Christmas, everyone wants McDonalds for dinner for xmas, and it was actually very busy, we had a good night, but thankfully it was only a short shift so i was only rostered until 2am. Due to how busy we were i didn't get out until 230am, and was home by 245am. Just as i reached the front door i could hear the landline phone ringing, so i was rushing to get in to answer it so it wouldn't wake Ron up as his chemo treatment was taking lot out of him.

I picked up the phone, and it was the hospital saying they had tried to ring Ma and Mum but noone answered, my natural response was something along the lines of 'well yeah its 3am, i only answered cause i just got home from work'. They then preceeded to inform me that Granma had passed away about 30minutes prior in her sleep so it was peaceful, and she wasn't in any pain.

Boxing Day of 2012 we lost the matriarch of our family, Doris Jean Irvine nee Lane so i walked up the road to mums house, woke her up and told her. I called in to work for the rest of the year, as my 22nd birthday was in just 2 days and i had a funeral to organise.

We said our final farewell to Granma on 31st of December 2012, before she was buried with her husband, andher son Colin's ashes. She was survived by 1 sister Joyce who was 93 at the time of Doris passing, and her other 2 children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She may not be here physically but she will always be with me. 28.4.1922-26.12.2022