

I was born in a small country town approximately 150 miles north of Melbourne. I am now 78½ years of age. My parents were good honest people struggling to rear a family of 6 children, one boy died at the age of 10. I was the eldest of 3 girls and there was an older brother and another the youngest of the family, we had a very happy childhood.

The small town of Wedderburn where we were all born was a good place to live in, everyone knew everyone else, we had a very good State School which we all attended : five Churches, everyone attended Church and I was a member of the Church of England choir and at the age of 14½ I was confirmed in the same Church. We had various religious activities such as Girls Friendly Society which filled in our evenings and on Sunday afternoon the favorite walk for all the young people was the spacious gardens and a band stand, and very often the town brass band would perform for all the crowd, a happy laughing community.

The years rolled by, I left school at the age of 14, I stated to take dress making lessons which did not interest me very much, so I became a waitress at one of local hotels, we had three in the town. I liked that work and received a fair wage, for those days later on I worked at one of the other hotels, doing the same work. Dancing was one of our favourite recreations. The other country people, mostly farmers would come in to our dances, and then we would drive in groups to the square dances and old time nights they would hold in their tiny hamlets, they all boasted a very big hall. We also had a good football team, and there was great rivalry in the different townships. The fans would follow their teams by buggies or gigs, drawn by beautiful horses ; and also they would run special steam trains which carried a great number of barrackers.

William John Bristowe

At about the age of 17, I met my husband to be, he was a very good footballer he played half forward, he was persuaded to play for Wedderburn and was an instant success, in fact, he was one of the few players who was paid, he also played with our local cricket team, making a name for himself as a great batsman.

He originally came from an outer suburb of Melbourne ; Murrumbidgee .

We eventually married and in no time World War 1 was upon us, and almost to the last man the whole community of young men, including my husband and elder brother joined the forces and went to Melbourne for training at Broadmeadows; and in due time was sent overseas.

They were both in the landing of Gallipoli. My husband was a transport driver and worked amongst the horses, my brother was in the Infantry.

A few months later we had a tragedy in the family, my mother died.

Then it wasn't long before I had our first daughter.

Eighteen months later we moved to Melbourne my father, two sisters and brother. My father was a wool classer and he got employment and we lived in North Melbourne for sometime, we then moved to South Yarra. My elder brother in the meantime had been returned to Australia, he had been wounded in the leg by shrapnel and was unfit for further Army service.

Another tragedy in our family. Our little daughter fell ill and died just a short time before my husband was returned home ill and unfit for war service; without ever seeing his first child; it was a very sad homecoming for him.

By the way the Returned Soldiers did not get a very good Fair go.

We set up housekeeping together and moved to Sandringham where he got employment and eleven months later our first son was born.

My husband had decided to put in an application for a soldier settlement block of land and he succeeded in getting one in a place called "Happy Valley" six miles from the town of Myrtleford. We built a house on the block expecting great things but the blocks were too small, but other returned soldiers and ourselves struggled to make a decent living. It was dairying country, we had a good herd of cows and we also tried our hands at mixed farming. During the six years we were up there we had three more sons, very close together and we were very proud of our four healthy boys.

My husband was elected Shire President of the Bright Shire Council early in the piece and he represented all the other soldier settlers, they got better roads and bridges whilst he was in office.

When the elder boy Jack was six and a half, Bill seventeen months younger, Wallace being no.3 and Eric the younger one at eighteen months, we quit the farm lucky to get out of it with a few pounds. One good thing out of the whole deal was that my husband regained good health whilst he was on the land.



With our four young sons and precious little more we returned to Melbourne. My husband got employment, he was a plasterer by trade and we lived in ~~various~~ various suburbs and eventually bought a house in Clayton which we lost during the depression. At that time things were very hard for the worker and most of the men had to go on the dole as we called it.

When our youngest son was twenty-three months old we were overjoyed when we had a little daughter, now our family was complete, we were the proud parents of five wonderful children - we named our daughter Loris Ann. As the years rolled on Jack the elder boy played around with a bit of home chemistry but Bill Wallace and Eric were very good athletes - they took after their father and played football, cricket and were all good footrunners.

Well, they had grown to young men and the 2nd World War was upon us and our four boys joined up. Wallace was in the Air Force, The other ~~two~~ three were in the Army and all three went to New Guinea. My husband was a peace officer and was stationed in Melbourne during the war years. I kept myself busy writing two and three letters a week to each son.

Eric was dangerously ill in New Guinea but happily recovered and all our boys returned safely to us and another war was ended.

Our family all married and we have fifteen grandchildren, 9 grand-daughters 6 grand-sons, we also have 10 great grandchildren and over the years expect more, our family tree is certainly growing.

Well No. 3 War started and they were sending our young men to Vietnam. Jack's son Daryl went off with many more of his age group. He returned safely after 2 years in the Army and we truly hope that this will be the end of all wars for all time, as we have 3 more young grandsons, two of Bills and one of Loris we don't want them to have to go out of our country to fight - and that all the people and countries in the world will live peacefully in future.

We now live a quiet and uneventful life in Murrumbidgee my husband's birthplace and we live in the street where he was born and as we look back over the years we think we are very fortunate; our children are all living comfortably and they are constant visitors ; and we could not wish for better grandchildren most of them with their little families, making a good ~~life~~ life for them.

My husband will be Eighty two at the end of 1973, I will be 79 the same day, We are looking forward to our 60th Wedding Anniversary on the 3rd April 1975.

... 4 ...

Here's hoping we will live to celebrate with our children, grand children,  
great grandchildren, our daughters in law and sons in laws and have one  
great family get together. ....William Bristowe died 18Dec1974