

**MY YEARS AT EWELL**  
BY NANCY BURTON

## EARLY FAMILY HISTORY

In 1836 the 'South Australian Company' was set up in England to sell land to prospective settlers, and as land in England was very hard to buy there were many applicants. Both sides of my forebears took up the land here. The Hamilton's, my father's family, had their land on the Sturt Creek. When they arrived they pitched their tent on the eastern side of the creek under a big gum tree, which is still there with a plaque to identify it. They soon build a house on the western side about one quarter of a mile from the creek and proceeded to dig out enormous gum trees and to plant the vines which they had bought at Cape of Good Hope on the way out. So began the saga of five generations who were born and raised on the property at Ewell and some other acres which my father had bought. Some years later they won first prize for the best kept farm in the state.

On my mother's side the Ayliffe family in England sent an agent out in 1836 to buy land for one member of the family who had disgraced them by not marrying his wife until their sixth child was born, and also because one of those six was a waster who spent his time with friends at Monte Carlo, sailing in their yachts and running up big gambling debts which the family had to pay. The agent bought 80 acres for them at what is now Panorama and 2000 acres at Eden Valley to make a living. The agent returned to England and the family was shipped out here in 1837. The agent was so enthused with the land available the he hurriedly came back to South Australia and became partners with another man, set up as land agents and did very well.

It cost the family £60,000, but anything to get rid of them I think. They did not know how to work, much less to farm, so they sold off pieces of land to augment the money that was regularly sent out from England for many years for them to live on. They brought with them two wooden two-storied houses, one for themselves and one for the servants. As there were no servants they sold one house and put up the other on the 80 acre block which is now Panorama.

I was told a story about the arrival in South Australia of this family. They were taken off the ship at Holdfast Bay and rowed ashore, and when all were assembled on the beach with their belongings the young man who had caused so much trouble with his gambling, said, in his beautiful clothes and flicking his lace wrists, "I can't stay here, there is nothing, nothing". So he persuaded his mother, whose darling he was, to bribe the captain with a chest of silver to take him back to England. When loading the chest of silver they dropped it over-board, and it must be still there! While the ship was in the Tasman Sea it encountered a severe storm and the ship was wrecked. Our young man, who was a strong swimmer from his experiences in the Mediterranean, swam ashore in Tasmania, the only survivor. For seven years he lived with the aborigines until he was rescued and came back to Adelaide. When he walked in nobody recognized him at first, a long beard, burnt a dark brown and in tatters. He got a job in the Government. I think in the law department, married and established a line of lawyers.

There were some ship loads of Irish girls being sent out as there was a great shortage of women in South Australia and the Irish girls were very poverty stricken at home. They came to work as servants but eventually married the land holders. My great great grandmother applied for one of these girls, and the one she received had become pregnant on the way out. She had her baby with my great great grandmother and stayed with the family for nine years; because she was a devout Roman Catholic she left and went to Adelaide so that her nine year old boy could be near a Catholic school and church. She was a wonderful woman and all those years she cooked, did all the housework, looked after the cows, milked them and made butter which my great great grandmother sold. She also grew and looked after a large number of fowls from which the eggs were sold, and always there were several chickens for Sunday dinner.

My great great grandmother was the daughter of a doctor who used to help her father and when she was very young go with him on his visits to the sick. When she came here doctors were few and far between and mostly in the city, which was seven miles away, so the people of Marion and surrounding districts used to call on her very often. On one occasion she was called out in the middle of the night to a man who had been thrown off his horse on Daws Road. She took some brandy, brown paper and some flat pieces of board which she kept ready as splints, and was driven to the patient. The bone was through the leg so she gave the man a good dose of brandy, set the leg and bound it with brown paper soaked in brandy. The story goes that both the man and his leg recovered.

## LIFE AT EWELL

For those who had ever experienced an instant of telepathy here is a story which my mother told me.

My parents lived in a house in the vineyard on the old Adelaide Road. My grandfather had been ill and failing for some time. My father was fairly deaf and on a winter's night when there was rain and the wind he leapt out of bed and shouted "All right Ted (his brother) I'm coming". My mother said "Ted is not there", "Oh yes, I heard him knocking at the door". Being deaf he couldn't have heard him. So he hurriedly pulled on his clothes and got the lantern and went off across the vineyard to his father's house, but he was just too late his father having died just before he got there. Ted said he was coming to get my father but the crisis increased and he did not like to leave.

My grandfather Hamilton died two years before I was born and the family, which consisted of my mother, father and four brothers moved into the original house. My father inherited the property including the mortgage and the obligation to pay his brothers their share of the value of the property, which was a heavy debt.

As soon as Pa took over management of the wine making, vineyard and fruit growing business all began to pay. By the time I was two years old he had paid off the mortgage and paid out all of his brothers their share. I was born in 1908, four years after the family had moved into the old house.

My father always wanted a daughter, according to report, and having had four boys he was very fond of me. From the time I could walk I followed him as much as possible.

One day when he was building a vat and there was raised plank around the tank, like Scaffolding, and I was up on the narrow plank beside him. He was tapping in the metal bands which hold in the staves. I was tapping too and I overbalanced and fell off. No damage was done but my screams brought out my mother who picked me up and admonished my father for letting me do dangerous things. Another thing I did regularly with him was to go to his office on Friday evenings. This was at a corner of the big winery shed and it had a hard clay floor. On Friday one of the men took the trolley all around the city and suburbs delivering wine. When he had finished the round he brought the money to my father who would proceed to count it. Every few minutes he would flick a sovereign or half sovereign onto the floor and I would have to find it. It was quite hard to see and to find them on the hard clay floor. No doubt he watched carefully where he flicked them.

We did not have a bathroom, but had a very big tub which was taken into the back bedroom for bathing. Outside the kitchen there was an area like a big room enclosed on three sides. The open side was surrounded by the walls of the house. There was an open fire place in this area with a copper in it. The household clothes washing and many other things such as jam and pickle making were done there, and the water was boiled for baths.

When we were very young, my father was called Pa and my mother Ma but later my mother was called Mater and my father was referred to as the Pater. Pa told my mother always to take a bucket of cold water into the bath before she took the buckets of boiling water from the copper. One evening she was preparing to bath my two younger brothers and me and had brought in a bucket of boiling water first which she put in the bath then went off for the next bucket full. I bounced so hard and high that I went over the edge and into the hot water. I had shoes and socks on and they had to cut them off, with the skin coming off with the socks. As if was a long way to a doctor in those days people did their own medical treatment. Pa made a wire frame to keep the bed clothes off my feet and I was in bed for quite a long time, I don't remember how long. On Friday Pa always went to town to do shopping for the property and banking. During my convalescence he would bring me home a present. When he came in the door I would be radiantly happy. Once the present was a toy sewing machine which worked, so I sat up and turned the handle and made a few stitches. When my feet were getting better Pa made me crutches out of gum tree branches and I used to go and sit on a big bench in the back enclosed verandah. On Saturday afternoons some Irishmen used to come regularly to buy a flagon of wine. One of the Irishmen talked to me and asked Pa about my feet. He told Pa to slacken lime and make me put my feet in the lime water for so long every day, and so this is what I had to do. He told Pa it would strengthen my feet so that I would not have any trouble with them. The Irishman was quite right, I didn't have any trouble with them until I was grown up and wore a beautiful pair of crocodile shoes.

Pa was deaf and I remember in the winter evenings he would sit in his rocking chair, smoke his pipe and I would sit on his knee. He would take out his watch hold it to my ear, at first close then moving it a little further away, asking me what the watch said 'tic tic tic'? There was a lot of deafness in the Hamilton family and he was testing my hearing.

We always had two cows in milk, two pigs and lots of poultry, fowls, ducks and turkeys. The milk was for the family. A large pan of milk sat on the wood stove every night for scalded cream and all the left over milk went in the mash for the pigs poultry. Once or twice a year a pig was killed for the family.

I remember one killing of the pig. There was a small shed with a copper and a long table. It was raining outside and the copper was steaming inside. The men were scraping hair off the skin of the pig. It began to rain very hard and Pa said I must go back to the house, so he took a bag and tucked in one corner to make a hood which he put over my head and sent me to run through the rain to the house. I could feel the hard rain on top of my head through the bag. When I went into the kitchen the smell of ironing was so intense that it has stayed with me. The iron was heated with hot coals on its inside. Minnie who did the ironing, came nearly every day. She lived on the edge of the vineyard. Emma lived in and she did the cooking and housework. She used to give me rides on her back pretending she was my horse. I don't know how she manages it as she was very old, but I loved her dearly.

When the various table grapes and the peaches and apricots were ready for the market, they would be picked on the afternoon before the market which opened at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. The man with the trolley and horses would leave early to travel slowly and carefully so as not to harm the fruit and be in plenty of time for the market to open.

I can remember one Sunday afternoon going with Pa and some men on the trolley to pick grapes. While they were working I sat up on the high seat and held the reins. Every time they wanted the trolley to move on Pa would call 'gid up' and then 'woo' to stop them. I thought I was doing the driving but the horses knew what to do. Also on that day he showed me how to line the boxes with paper so that the paper folded over the grapes, and how to hold a bunch on the flat of the hand so that the grapes spread out and any defective berry could be seen and cut out. I learnt to do many little things but have had no occasion to use the information.

Looking back I marvel at his patience as I would have just turned four years old. At that time when there was no electricity, gas and no water supply, the clothes washing was done in the almost enclosed verandah with big tubs put out on a wooden bench, made of a big slab of gum tree, and the copper in the open fire place with iron bars across to hold it. Hot coals heated the iron and kerosene lamps and candles provided the lighting. There was a big underground tank to collect the rain water for the house and there were wells with windmills for water in the stable yard and for everything else. The Happy Valley reservoir was finished in 1908. Soon after the water was laid on but was not connected to the house until 1916.

Another little incident I remember when I was three was when my two younger brothers went camping at Easter on the Sturt Creek (now called a river). The creek ran through the western vineyard and was about quarter of a mile from the house. It was a very beautiful creek then, not the hideous cement drain it is now. Pa took them there on Good Friday morning on a trolley with a tent and all their camping gear. By Saturday morning a storm had come up and it was pouring with rain. There was a Lucerne patch at the creek and every Saturday morning two men went over, one man to scythe the Lucerne for the horses, cows etc and the other to rake and stack it on the trolley. Well Pa went with them on this occasion to gather up the boys, their tent and bedding. I saw through the dining room window the trolley coming home with the boys and their camping gear piled on top of the load. The boys drenched with rain looking very small, cold and miserable.

Pa was friendly with a man at Plympton who had a chaff, grain, wood and machinery store and he dealt with him quite extensively. This man encouraged him to order a motor car from France, a Clement Bayard. Pa was very progressive. He already had a telephone and he had bought an engine to work the chaff cutter as well as other farm implements. He had one of the first strippers for the wheat crop in the state. The order for the car was placed in late 1912 but he was dead before it arrived.

Ma used a phaeton with a horse called Polly when she wanted to go out, but on Fridays when they both went to town they used a back to back trap because there was more room for Pa's shopping. On a Friday in June 1913 they went to town as usual and I went with them. It was very cold and it rained heavily on the way home. I remember they put me down on the floor under their legs and put a rung over me. When we arrived home Pa was feeling ill. He died of pneumonia a few days later. This was a tragedy for the family and a great disaster for my happiness. My eldest brother Eric told me many years later that the funeral was over a mile long. He was thought very highly of in Marion and the whole district attended his funeral.

Not long before he died Pa bought another 20 acres from Mr Tate of Oaklands Park. In Pa's will he had left a 20 acre block or more to each child as it was born, and he had bought this last 20 acres from me. The land had to be surveyed before the transaction went through the Lands Titles Office. My uncle was a surveyor who worked in the Lands Titles Office and he was very busy with previous work. Ma told me that the telephone was running hot with Pa's rage at the delay in the surveying.

When he went driving about the district in the trap I would go with him and as we would to past each block or land or vineyard he would ask "Whose land is that?" and I would say Eric's, Burt's, Syd's or Ian's as the case may be. When we went past the new land he would say "And whose and is that?" and we would both say together "That's Nancy's land". Well he died before it was included in his will and I didn't get the land.

I don't remember being told my father was dead but I knew from the upset in the house and the tense atmosphere. I was put to bed in one of the back rooms with my aunt who was there to support my mother. I screamed and screamed not because of my

aunt but because of the feeling of desolation and abandonment. My mother gave me a dose of Castor oil, the cure for all things.

## SCHOOL DAYS AT GLENELG

When I was five years old they decided to send me to school, so I started going daily to Miss Dow's school at Glenelg which was called 'Yoothamurra'. Miss Dow had a governess cart which she sent all around Glenelg collecting children. She said she would go to Diagonal Road for me but not all the way to where I lived as it was too far. So I had to walk about half a mile through the vineyard to meet the governess cart. On the way home in the afternoon on several occasions I lay down under an almond tree and went to sleep so that a search party had to be sent out to find me when I didn't come home. After this it was decided I should go to school as a boarder. Syd could have taken me to school in the car or my mother could have driven me in the phaeton, or Rupe could have driven me in the trap and called for me in the afternoon.

In 1918 after the Christmas school holidays came the day I was to go back to Miss Dow's, I refused to go back and made my mother ring up Miss Dow and say I would not be returning to school. It was a big fight but at last my mother did it. Then she decided to send me to Girton House, so she rang up Mrs Smith and I was installed there as a boarder until 1925, then another year as a day girl.

## RUPE

I must explain Rupe. His family came to South Australia very early but his father died on the way out and his mother arrived with six children and no money. The Hamilton family helped her, settled her in a cottage and found work for the older boys and girls. Rupe was the youngest and came to work at Ewell when he was 12. He looked after the horses, cows, fowls, chopped the wood and took it in the house, disposed of the household rubbish and drove the trolley whenever it was needed. He rode a bike to work and later took milk and anything else that Eric and Syd's household needed. After he got the pension he still came every day and did any odd job that anyone wanted. He was part of the property.

Rupe had married in the course of time. In the Christmas holidays when I was about six years old 'Mrs Rupe' asked my mother if I could go to play with her two little girls and stay the night. Off I went to the other of the big sheds, across the stable yard and then an area of vineyard. The path was well worn because my two younger brothers walked that way to Mr Hill's school on the Esplanade at Glenelg. My two elder brothers went the other way to the Misses Stanton's school on the Broadway at Glenelg, but Eric and Syd had gone on to Saints and their school had closed by the time Ian and Burt were at school age. Mr Hill's school was a preparatory for Saints. At the end of the vineyard was a barbed wire fence over which a boxthorn hedge had grown very thickly, and which surrounded 20 acres which were divided into two paddocks. A very small gap in the boxthorn had been cut at the dividing fence and the barbed wire pulled down just enough to get through. In the paddocks was "Tennants-Bull".

Mr Tennant had sheep stations in the far north but lived in a huge house on the Esplanade. The bull was always in one paddock or the other, and before you got through the fence you had to be sure which one and go on the safe side. On the other side there were yards, a stable and trough and windmill. I was very scared walking across the paddock, and then the next morning I had to do it again.

Rupe had a slight speech defect and the men used to take him off. A ration of brandy was given to him every day in his old age, and he would sleep most of the day in the stable. He continued to com till he died in his late eighties.

## BOARDING SCHOOL

Into the boarding school I went and I was very home sick. A bathroom in the boarding house had a window which I looked out in the direction of home and I would go at odd times and stand at the window looking towards home. There were two other little girls in the boarding house, Mary and Daisy. Daisy had a wonderful imagination and she instigated our play. Weather permitting we would go to the end of the cow paddock where there was a very big gum tree and w would play around the trunk of the tree after school. We would play mothers and fathers, witches and fairies, shops and teachers and children. We had no toys but we pretended. We would put the baby in the pram and push it half way around the tree; we could not go any further because the old witch sat up on the bough there and if we put a toe over the line the witch would put a terrible curse on us. Sometimes the good fairy would come and raise her wand, let us through and we could go home. If she did not come we would have to walk backwards to the other side of the tree trunk which was home and safe. If it was wet we played on the back balcony. There was a very big Moreton Bay fig tree growing in the back yard so we would put our hands through the iron grill and get the figs out of the gutter and use them for toys. The First World War had started then so we would make them into battalions of soldiers, classes of school children or families. There was a staircase off that back balcony down to the pantry and kitchen. We would take turns to creep down and steal a handful of currants or raisins (our hands were very small) as we were very hungry.

Our war effort was knitting face washers with a white thick linen and helping to pack boxes with cigarettes, soap, chocolate, the face washers and socks for the Red Cross.

I was very happy at Girton and had learnt to submit to being away from home. Once a month we had a weekend off, an exeat, and I was often asked to go home with one of the other girls so I visited a number of homes and saw how many other people lived. I t was a good experience for me but it never occurred to me to think how lucky we were to live where we did.

We always had a boarder who could play the piano and we used to gather around the piano in the evening and sing all the musical scores such as "The Maid in the Mountains", "Little Nellie Kelly" and lots of others which I have forgotten.

Between the ages of 10 and 11 had two devastating weekends. My mother rang the school and said she wanted me to stay at school for the exeat weekend. She only rang on the Friday morning and I was told at dinner time. So I was alone in the boarding house, meals alone, bed time alone. Miss Dugdale, a very refined English gentlewoman, was a school teacher who lived in the house. She had some spinal trouble and as she had trouble in walking she wore a harness which creaked and caused the girls to giggle. She was very strict and tense and most disliked her. But I liked her and she made her English classes very inspiring for me. On one of those weekend she took me to the market on Friday night. I had never been to the market before so that was good. On the other weekend she took me to an orchestral concert in the Town Hall on the Saturday night. I think it was "The barber of Seville". I just got on my pony and rode in my imagination. On the same weekend Mrs Smith went to visit some friends who lived on Greenhill Road, it was called Park Terrace then, and she took me with her. I stayed out in the garden alone and miserable while they all had their afternoon tea.

I stayed at Girton until 1926 but half way through 1925 I decided to be a day girl and left the boarding house. I was going out with boys by then in the holidays and wanted more freedom so for the rest of 1925 and all of 1926 I went to school as a day girl.

Mrs Smith, who was very ill by then and was dying of leukemia, called me into her bedroom and was very upset and very angry with me and said if I left the boarding house I would lose my prefects badge and hat band. I was more upset than she was so I ripped off my blazer badge and my hat band and I became a day girl. For a long time while Mrs Smith was ill I had been helping in the boarding house, doing the baths for all the girls, a chip heater, she would send me to town to do various pieces of business and many other things in the house for the boarders because by then there was no matron or special house mistress. I was very fond of Mrs Smith she had helped me in many ways because she told me it was a disgrace the way I was not looked after.

When I was 13 I was on the Esplanade at Glenelg one evening in the Christmas holidays with a crowd of boys and girls, and we were in a ring throwing a ball. You didn't know which way the ball was coming and you had to catch it. If you missed you were out and as the ring got smaller and smaller the last one in won. One of the boys went home and told his mother that he had seen the girl he was going to marry; it was me. So I was invited to stay with them for many weekends and parts of holidays. It was a family of eight children and I always loved staying with them on and off until I was 19. I didn't marry him!

When I was 15 I was asked by the boy who said he was going to marry me to go to the Prince Alfred School dance so it was all arranged. I would have the weekend off and go home on the Friday afternoon and the boy's parents would call for me on Friday evening and take me up to the dance and then I was to go home for the weekend. There was a storm that Thursday night and Friday morning with very heavy rain. Well at dinner time on Friday I was told that my mother had rung up and said I was not to go to the dance but to stay at school. It is hard to imagine my rage. I went over to the

chemist to ring her up but the lines were all down so I borrowed a hat and some money, mine were all upstairs and we were not allowed upstairs in the day time, and I just left and went home. The flood had made the Sturt creek overflow at the bridge on Morphett Road so I had to walk through a lot of water to get home. I walked in and raged at my mother, I called her thoughtless, unkind, stupid and she had no right to put off firm arrangements.

The phones were restored before the time to leave and the family who were to call for me got into communication with the school and my mother so I went to the dance but the distress and rage had left me exhausted so I do not remember one thing about that night it is a complete blank except for driving up the Bay Road (Anzac Highway). The road then was a narrow strip down the middle with a side track of red clay on each side. As the road was a mass of pot holes everybody used the side tracks but on the this night the side tracks were under water and if used you would be bogged so the pot holey road had to be used and I do remember bumping along and wondering if the car would fall to pieces. Apart from that I don't remember a single thing about the evening my mind was a blank, so I think I was suffering from shock because I had to go to such events to get there.

## ERIC AND SYD

Eric turned 18 in July 1914 and enlisted the day war was declared. He was so excited that he rode down the drive on his motor bike shouting "I've enlisted, I've enlisted" and waving his arms. He kept the bike in a shed and in his excitement he went straight into the back of the shed and made a hole in it.

When Eric was in the trenches in France he wrote to Syd and said 'Do not enlist, you must stay and look after the family'. By the time Syd was 18 he was running the place because the managers put in by the Executor Agency and Trustees were losing money. Eric was wounded twice and had one lung burnt with gas. He was in hospital several times but always went back to the trenches.

Late in 1913 Syd, having an adventurous and romantic nature, rang the Mater and said he was at Port Adelaide and had joined the crew of a sailing ship. The ship went around Cape Horn and had a very stormy trip. When he was in England for a few days he stayed with a cousin of my mother's and her family. He was in Antwerp when the First World War broke out and he heard that first guns fired. When the ship returned to Port Adelaide he abandoned ship, left his belongings on board because he could have been jailed for deserting, walked from Port Adelaide to Ewell and arrived home to the amazement of all. It must have been the September school holidays because Ian, Burt and I were playing in the winery and when Syd walked in we just stood with out mouths open and said 'Syd'?

From the end of the first world war in 1918 to 1926 Eric and Syd were both at home. They were both married in 1926 but until then they had great rivalries. Syd ran the winery and the vineyard and Eric sold the wine and did the business side. Selling the wine involved many trips to England, first by ship many times then once by flying boat,

and after that always by air, so he was often away. They were very attached to each other but loved to annoy each other and argue. Syd was keen on classical music and learnt the piano for a long time and used to practice. Eric liked all the latest songs and loved rag time, so when Syd was playing Beethoven Eric could put on the Black Crows or other latest records as loud as he could make the gramophone work. Later Eric bought a pianola and put it in the sitting room with the piano so when Syd practiced Eric played the pianola.

They argued about everything that was happening in the world at the time, about the local weather – whether it rained in November last year or the year before. There was talk of the atom being discovered and there were a great many arguments about that, and of course about wine. I do not remember any discussion about local politics. So when I stayed in other peoples homes they all seemed very quiet and dull after the lively scene at home.

One Sunday when we were having dinner the boys were arguing more heatedly than usual and mother said "Stop it stop it". They took no notice so she picked up the ends of the table cloth and tipped everything into the middle. There was great upheaval and she left the room sobbing. Emma gathered everything up, laid another table cloth and put on the fruit pie and custard with some plates, spoons and forks and we all went on eating. The boys were whispering "Do you think she is ill?" "No" said Eric "Its Change of Life". It was very serious to me then though I'd never heard of Change of Life, I laugh now at the recollection because the poor woman must have been driven to distraction.

Eric used to tease me and one day at dinner he was teasing me about that "Boy at Glenelg you go to see, what do you say to him?". It went on and on so I threw my fork at him. It stuck straight up in the top of his head. He put his hand up and took the fork and I saw blood on his hand so I took off at my highest speed out the front door and didn't stop running till I was in the vineyard where the rows of vines would hide me. After about an hour I quietly returned to the house and nobody ever mentioned it again.

When I was 10 or 11 I was playing in the garden one day when the boys gathered in the hard at the end of the drive. They were looking out towards the north east and I joined them. They said there was a big fire. There were great clouds of black smoke blowing our way and they said they thought the fire was Plympton. They also said would go and have look and all piled in to the Clement Bayard. When I went to get in too they looked at me and said "You can't come, you are too dirty" and they drove off. I was furious, so I rushed and got Dot and put the bridle on. But I was in too much of a hurry to put the saddle on. So off I went because Plympton was not very far. As I went up the Bay Road the smoke was always ahead and hundreds of other people in traps were all going to see the fire. I galloped the pony. It was Burfords soap factory on West Terrace. The gutters were running with hot fat and the people in surrounding houses were putting all their belongings out in the streets. The pony sweated so when I started to go home I was very sore. As I went back down the Bay Road I was raw.

I met Doreen, who had gone to see the fire all beautifully dressed in full riding habit. She saw my distress, so we got off and she took off her saddle and gave me her saddle cloth I finished the ride home a little less in agony but not much better.

One day after I left school I was asked to a dance and needed a new dress so I went to town and bought a lace dress. It was a sort of grey colour with a slight touch of pink in it. I bought it cash on delivery so when the man brought it I went out to Syd and said I wanted a cheque for nine guineas. He put on a turn and I said the man was waiting so he made out the cheque. Later he came storming in and said "Show me this expensive dress". I brought it out and put it on the dining room table and he said 'Good God it is mousie coloured and you are mousie coloured". So I never liked that dress after that.

At one stage Syd became interested in electricity. I do not know how he made his electrical gadgets but I remember he electrified the door of a little shed where he worked. One of the Irishmen who came on Saturdays came to the door of this shed with his flagon of wine in his hand. He opened the door and the shock made him drop his flagon. There was much gleeful chuckling from Syd and much swearing from the Irish. Of course he had to be given another flagon.

The three little bedrooms at the southern side of the house were built sometime about 1845 to accommodate a growing family and the rooms were disintegrating, so Syd decided they would have to be pulled down and rebuilt with the addition of a bathroom. This was towards the end of 1916. While the building was in progress the Mater took a house on the Esplanade at Glenelg.

When Eric married Doreen in 1925 he had a house for them built in 'my' land. One day I was taken by Doreen to look at the partially built house and she said "Of course this is your land and Eric knows he will have to pay you for it". He never did.

## MRS CHAMBERS

Mrs Chambers was our nearest neighbour. She had two grandchildren living with her, Doreen and Charles. She was a very grand old lady who rustled about the house in long black silk. She ruled with a rod of iron and when angry, with the stock whip with which she was very adept. the whole household referred to her as "Old Mary", not to her face of course. Doreen was four years older than I and Charles two years older. Doreen and Charles each had a Shetland pony and they also had a beautifully made goat cart with shiny harness. Two goats were used to pull the goat cart, one in front of the other. We carried branches of gum leaves and if the goats wouldn't go we used the gum leaves to tickle them under the tails then they would put on a big spurt of speed. In the school holidays I would go through the fence and walk across the paddock, about quarter of a mile, and go to spend the days with Doreen and Charles. I was taught to ride on the smaller Shetland; they would put me on him in the haystack yard and Mr Gardiner, the factotum on the place, George, who did the rough work, and the Black Boy. They put me on the pony with no saddle or bridle and all stood around and made the pony run. When I fell off it was onto a large amount of spilled hay. They did this over and over again until I could stay on when he cantered or trotted

around. Then they put the saddle and bridle on and I was taken riding with Doreen and Charles. The Black Boy was a man but was always called Black Boy. He worked in the house and anywhere he was needed. Topsy, who was black, was half aboriginal and half Chinese. She was a wonderful cook and managed the house. She also managed the children, Mister (Gardiner), George and Black Boy and was with Mrs Chambers for very many years until Mrs Chambers died.

The result of all this was that Mrs Chambers went out to the sale yards when there was a mob of horses down from the north and selected a pony for me which they took home, broke in and delivered her to me when I had just turned seven. The pony was called Dot and from then on Dot and I spent all the school holidays together. I rode over to Mrs Chambers and spent much time with Doreen and Charles. Later I went to Glenelg and started giving rides on Dot on the beach. I made friends with the Glenelg children and would be taken home by various of the girls to lunch and the evening meal and would only go home to sleep. Sometimes I would be asked to stay the night with one of the families of the girls on which occasions I would take off the saddle and bridle and give Dot a smack on the rump and say go home. The next day I would ring up Syd and get him to come for me and the saddle and bridle.

Mrs Chambers took the Mater to buy a buggy and she selected for her a beautiful four wheeled rubber tyred hooded buggy with very nice harness to fit Dot so that it was just right for her. The Mater was terrified of horses so that from then on I drove her wherever she wanted to go.

Mrs Chambers had a sister who owned and lived on a property at Cape Jervis and she used to go there to stay in the May school holidays. I went with them three times, the first time when I was nine. The first time we went right through in a day, it was 70 miles. Doreen, Charles and I were on our ponies, Mrs Chambers in the back to back trap with 'Mister' in front with her and the Black Boy and Topsy in the back seat with all the luggage. We children and the Black Boy had to walk up Sellicks Hill, it was the old Sellicks Hill then, to save the ponies as it was very steep. Black Boy filled his pockets with what we called poisonous apples. They were little yellow round spiky berries which grew on the sides of the road, then when we were all riding again he would throw them at us, and he was good shot too. We would try to dodge them, amid lots of silent giggles so that Old Mary would not know. Once we were riding alongside the trap on the side track and Old Mary flicked the whip on to my hands because I was not holding the reins properly.

The next time I went with them we stayed the night at the old Myponga Hotel and we had to take our ponies. Mister and Black Boy took the two horses across the road to the dam to drink. I was very upset when Dot refused to drink because I knew she must be thirsty.

The third time I went with them we stayed at a farm house I Delamere which was only about five miles from Mrs McEacheran's homestead.

From the time I was very young, and long before I had Dot, I used to walk over to play with Doreen & Charles. I used to cut across a paddock in front of their house but on one occasion it was planted with a wheat or oats crop and started out through the crop. I happened to disturb a gecko so I tried to catch it. It ran this way and that, so did I. The crop was over my head and by chasing the lizard I became disorientated and became lost. After I didn't turn up at Mrs Chambers or at home they had to search for me. My bawling soon led them to me but they weren't too pleased at having to trample some of the crop.

After my father died Old Mary took the Mater up to the city and persuaded her to put the property in the hands of the Executor Trustee and Agency Co, which was a blessing for the family as, although Syd and Eric ran the business, it was always under financial direction of the Trustee Co. According to Pa's will the Estate would be wound up when I was 21. At a deed poll and have everyone, the boys even my uncles, sign the 20 acres Pa had bought for me over to me, but she wouldn't do it and so I didn't get my land.

If it hadn't been for Old Mary I wouldn't have had the pony or the saddle and bridle or the nice rubber tyred buggy which all gave me so much pleasure in my growing up years.

#### CARS AND AEROPLANES

When I was about 12 the family bought a Morris Oxford, a single seater snub nosed little car which Syd taught me to drive. After two lessons I decided to take the scar out myself one day. The shed where it was kept was very narrow so I backed out carefully and looking backwards I turned the wheel to avoid running into the fence in the yard, but I turned the wheel too soon and crashed the front mud guard into the side of the shed. I was not popular. From then on I drove the series of cars the family had whenever I could get hold of one. When I had left school I heard the family talking one day about the driving licences they had to renew and I then discovered I should have had a licence for the last two years! Nobody told me.

In 1925 my two eldest brothers bought an aeroplane, a Moth, and I did quite a number of trips with Syd, once to Albury where my brother Burt had a property, once to Melbourne and once to Siam station 80 miles out of Port Augusta to my cousin. I also did a lot of trick flying with Syd – leap frogging over the jetties from Semaphore to Marino on hot days when the water was thick with bathers. He would also loop the loop and do side slips just for the fun of it! Coming back from Albury there was strong north wind and the plane bucked and pitched and I was very sick. There was nowhere to be sick and it was horrible. There were no laws and regulations at that time as there were very few aeroplanes.

I was married when I was 22 and lived happily ever after.

THE END  
NANCY BURTON (NEE HAMILTON) 17.8.96