

IN MEMORIAM—RUBY STANBRIDGE:

The passing of Miss Ruby Stanbridge ends an era of a pioneer family who settled at Kentish Creek, behind Mount Keira, in the mid-1800's, and whose descendants remained there until the resumption of the settlement for the making of No. 3 Cordeaux Dam.

Ruby, a grand-daughter of the first settlers, Susannah and Thomas Stanbridge, was born on 18th July 1898 at Burwood, where her parents conducted a small business. When she was a small child her father became caretaker of a nursery connected with the Botanic Gardens; there Ruby was a very unpopular little girl, playing among the plants and shrubs and leaving her toys around. With very little playing area available, her parents decided to bring her to Kentish Creek till she grew a little older. She was placed in the care of a widowed aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter (nee Stanbridge). As time passed the two became so attached that they were never parted.

Before Ruby came to live at Kentish Creek her grandparents had been laid to rest in a corner of their property, which had passed down to three of the Stanbridge children, an unmarried son and daughter and Mrs. Carter. There were two homes for the families on different sections of the land. As Ruby grew up, she helped with the running of the property. Her elder stepbrother and a cousin resided with the family, helping with the fruit in season and coming out to work elsewhere in off-peak times. It seemed to us that Ruby had a lonely life, but she would never let you think that way. As her aunts grew old she nursed them through many sicknesses. After their passing and the folding-up of the settlement in 1929, it was a sad and lonely young woman who came out of the valley to start a new life in Wollongong.

At first she lived with relatives and went to work as a domestic by the day, though at that time, in the depression years, domestic work was hard to come by. In between times, if she heard of sickness or of help being needed in the home of a relative or friend, she would be there to give a helping hand. As time passed she went to work one day a week for Mrs. Sellers in Church Street. Eventually she was employed full-time by the Sellers family, and so moved into their home and became part of the family for some thirty years—a home and family she loved.

It was a joy to have her visit you. She loved a family gathering, where she became your fairy godmother. She had a way of slipping out and preparing your afternoon tea or supper, and likewise afterwards the washing-up would be done and everything put away in its rightful place. Ruby never lost her love for Kentish Creek. Whenever she could get anyone to go back with her to see her old home ground, it was her greatest joy. On these occasions she would attend to her grandparents' graves. Her memory was fantastic. From childhood onwards she remembered family incidents others had forgotten years ago. Her seventh birthday was always remembered as a special day—her aunt made a birthday cake and gave her a gold locket.

Ruby never longed for earthly treasures; her joy was God's creation, the bush, the birds and the wild flowers which had grown abundantly around her childhood home. Her Church, Church Mission Societies and the Museum were her main interests.

Many of her good deeds will never be known. She was reluctant to claim any credit for the good she did. Her bright and happy personality will always be remembered. A great believer in prayer, her wish that she would never become a burden to anyone in her old age was granted. She was active to the end; her last few unconscious hours were the only time in her life she had been a patient in a hospital.

And so closes the chapter of the life of a wonderful person, a loving auntie, cousin and friend—in my estimation, a saint.

—IVY MURRAY.