

## **THE DAUGHTERS OF COURTENAY PUCKEY**

When I started secondary school in 1915 I remember the Puckey home as a gloomy looking dark brick house on the north bank of Fairy Creek across from Stuart Park, and behind the house was the framework of the remains of a windmill which we were told were part of his experiments at distilling salt from seawater.

He had a pharmacy in Crown Street, a few doors off Church Street when there were two other chemists shops in Wollongong - one being Wiseman's and the other Harris's.

He had three daughters, Mary, Selina and Grace with all of whom I attended high school. To cross Fairy Creek he and his girls had three alternatives, dry footed if the seaward end was silted up, barefooted if the tide was low and by horse and sulky at high tide.

From Stuart Park they all walked to Wollongong, to shop and school. He always wore a bowler hat and a white dress shirt having a stiff ironed front but no collar or tie and his daughters were equally untidy dressers. This also applied to his shop with shelves and glass topped counters a jumble of assorted bottles, phials, pill boxes and photographic goods.

In fact the whole family were somewhat eccentric but good scholars of the plodding variety and all the girls were bent of a medical career. Mary and Selina became doctors and Grace a pharmacist. She was in my class which studied Latin which no doubt was necessary to become a pharmacist when all doctors prescriptions were in Latin those days.

I completely lost touch with them after we all left school and in the 1920's I went to New Guinea.

Selina became a doctor and became a ship's doctor for the Burns Philp steamer "Montoro" running to New Guinea.

This ship on reaching Rabaul took on board a Customs officer who travelled around the outports where no Customs officer was stationed. One of these was Bill Marshal who eventually met and married Selina. They lived in Rabaul but eventually in the mid-thirties Bill was posted to Salumaua, where I lived. So our schooldays' acquaintanceship was renewed. Apparently during their Rabaul days Grace came up on a visit and married a chap named Keith Walker, a Govt. head clerk but they later divorced.

When war came all civilians were evacuated to Sydney where Selina took a position as medical officer at Renwick Childrens' Hospital at Summer Hill and Bill I think become a clerk in some civilian role.

At war's end they retired to the Puckey family holiday home in Blackheath. They had two offspring, young Bill and Margaret, the

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former becoming a doctor. Later in life they took a trip to Europe and Selina's husband died in Spain. As far as I know Selina is still at Blackheath but several years ago I tried to phone her only to find she had a silent number and could not be contacted.

Mary also became a doctor and for many years was medical supt. at the Rachel Forster Hospital in Redfern and died several years ago.

Of Grace I know nothing of her life as a pharmacist or if she is still living.

*Bert Weston*