

# MY MEMORIES OF THE CAFÉS OF CROWN STREET

By Dorothy Gillis

During the days of World War II, Saturday afternoon's entertainments were the Picture shows (now called the Movies). Teenagers either caught the bus from outlying areas to Wollongong or walked from home and back to the theatres. It was an affordable type of entertainment, although still a substantial amount then, and you had to earn your pennies by attending to home duties. Money was not handed to you, and also commodities such as cream and lollies and chocolates were scarce.

However the cafés managed to survive these shortages, and were the main source for ice creams and milkshakes. Centred in Crown Street Wollongong, they were the hub of activity for meeting friends, and were packed to capacity during intervals of the picture shows

If you were lucky enough to get a seat at the Crown Theatre in Keira Street (now Grace Bros.), the Black and White Café was the place for refreshments day or night. If you went to the Savoy (now David Jones carpark), the California Café was the closest, and if all else failed and you had to race down to the Civic Theatre (Town Hall), the Monterey was the closest Café.

The Cafés were the link with the picture show entertainment, due to the culture of the day. In the days 1942 to the 1950s and later, the cinema would show firstly the news of the world, usually war news, followed by American "trailers", and then the "shorts" either "The Iron Claw" or something else scary, and then interval. There would be a great scramble to rush up to the Cafés for refreshments. No food was ever allowed in the theatre, except the evening shows when lollies were carried around on trays and sold in the theatre from what I can remember. If you could afford Jaffas, we all know

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the stories of them rolling down the uncarpeted floor of the theatre and causing much disruption.

When I worked in Crown Street, Tommy Tasses' Café was a favoured place for lunches or if we worked late (Friday night shopping), we would fly across to Tommy to have pie and vegs and cake. If only we could buy those pies and cakes today! Tommy Tasses' Cafe was situated in Crown Street where now stands the Gateway. Then, the buses travelled up and down Crown Street from outlying towns, and the street was always crowded. Tommy and all the Café owners knew everyone those days, as did the theatre assistants, and it was a safe time to come to town.