

Brandaree Tabourie: Thomas Family

MEMORIES OF BRANDAREE, LAKE TABOURIE – By Shirley Chittick (nee Thomas) whose family lived there from 1929 to 1936

The Thomas family had links to the Lake Tabourie area from the late 19th century. On 2 September 1895 my great uncle, Edward Thomas, purchased 600 acres from Ephraim Mison of East Milton at what is now Lot 2 DP755972 off Lemon Tree Creek Road.

On 4 January 1929, my father Cecil Thomas (Edward's nephew) married Molly McBride and they moved to this Brandaree property to begin their married lives. My mother called the property "Shalimar" but it was always known as Brandaree by locals.

Another uncle, John Thomas (1861 – 1953) purchased 40 acres (Portion 69) at Lake Tabourie in 1908. This land comprised the peninsula between Saltwater Creek and Lake Tabourie on which much of the village stands today. The Thomas family retained ownership of this parcel of land until 1923. I was born at the hospital in Nowra (on 1/5/1930) and my brother, Ian was born (17/4/1932) at Milton hospital.

My family lived at Brandaree until 1936 when we moved to Oakvale, Albion Park for me to start school at Marshall Mount School.

These are some of my memories of our time at Lake Tabourie: There was a shed (which we called the garage) on the property which I believe was the original building on the land before our time there. It had large, thick slab walls and a bark roof which was held down by two battens. On its back verandah, Dad kept a barrel with all his cutting tools – axes, brush hooks etc - and my brother, aged about four, decided to jump into it one day and sliced his foot open. You can see this shed in the background of some of the photos attached.

I believe the house in which we lived, which was adjacent to the shed, was built by my father although probably with help from others. It was a simple house with four main rooms – the sitting room and kitchen on the right hand side of the hallway and two bedrooms on the left side. It had a verandah that went around three sides of the house and, later, two sections of this verandah were enclosed to create another sleep out bedroom and a breakfast room. The laundry was a closed in section of the back verandah and there were two tanks at the back for water collection. I remember I created two imaginary friends - Neil and Diff - who each lived under one of the tank stands. Dad also built a food storage pit on the southern side of the house (which kept cooler). He lined the pit with bricks and it was covered with a wooden lid. This was used to keep perishable food cool before refrigeration.

It was a small farm and my memory is that not all of it was cleared land. We raised pigs and had some dairy cows. These supplied milk for the family and to feed the pigs and we sold milk and cream to those at the Lake Tabourie campgrounds. We also had a vegetable patch (pumpkins, potatoes, broad beans etc) and grew some small crops such as corn and maize. Dad also cut and gathered wattle bark on the property, dried it and put it in bundles which he took to sell to the tannery on Millards Creek in Ulladulla.

I remember Dad would take the pigs into market in the back of our Model T Ford. He had probably modified this car into a utility format as it had a tray and sides at the back. There were wooden bars with holes drilled in them above the sides on the tray and a net was tied through these holes to secure the pigs in the back. We also used this vehicle to take milk and cream in cans to the Tabourie camping area during the summer holidays when people would come to camp there. The cans both had taps at the bottom and there were holes in the tailgate of the vehicle through which they poked out.

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Our property was on the right hand side of the highway (then a dirt road called the Southern Road) between the bridge over Tabourie Creek and Lemon Tree Creek Road (although there wasn't a road there then) From our bush track, Lemon Tree Creek was a distance off to our right (probably several miles) and certainly not in sight. When we came out of our track, we turned left onto the main road and after crossing the bridge, we turned right and right again and followed a bush track to the camping area. I remember going with Dad when he took the milk and cream down there to sell in January when many Sydney people would come to camp in their big, elaborate tents. People would bring their billy cans or jugs to get the milk and Dad had a quart pot he would use to measure out the milk and a smaller (pint?) pot to measure out the cream.

Sometimes goannas would come out of the bush and steal the hen eggs. Dad managed to kill one once and Ian and I were given the job of towing it with a rope up into the bush, which we did. We went back there some days later to see it and found it very smelly.

George Matthews was a timber cutter from Milton who used to come out and get timber on our property for the mills. He came in on our track and then turned across the top corner of the clearing into the bush again. Sometimes as he came back out, Mum would wave a cup at him and he'd leave his truck and come down for a cuppa. After we left the property, I believe he moved our house into Milton. Eventually when Woolworths bought the area for their supermarket, this building was on the edge of their carpark and became a mechanical workshop. I remember Dad and I visiting it there once, but no trace of it remains today.

About once a month, we would go into Milton for supplies. I am not sure of the name of the store – possibly Fultons? I remember there was a long wooden counter and a stool for customers to sit on while the store owner measured out the bags of sugar and flour etc. If we were good children, at the end the storekeeper would bring out the big square Arnotts biscuit tin and we got to choose one biscuit to have – a very special treat during those Depression years.

A family called Mison lived in the Flatrock area and their children would ride their ponies down to our farm sometimes to play. We also became good friends with the Fletcher family, who came to camp at Tabourie from Sydney. Mr Perc Fletcher was a chemist at Arncliffe and would come down with his wife, Rita; daughter Beth and Rita's father, Mr Giles. Our family remained friends with them for many years even after we moved away from Lake Tabourie. I also remember that Miss Lucy King would visit the farm driving her horse and sulky. Miss King (1902 – 1979) was the daughter of John and Annie King and was a founding member of the Milton Ulladulla and District Historical Society. They had a farm at Kings Point which remained in the family until 1957.



Thomas home – Brandaree, Lake Tabourie

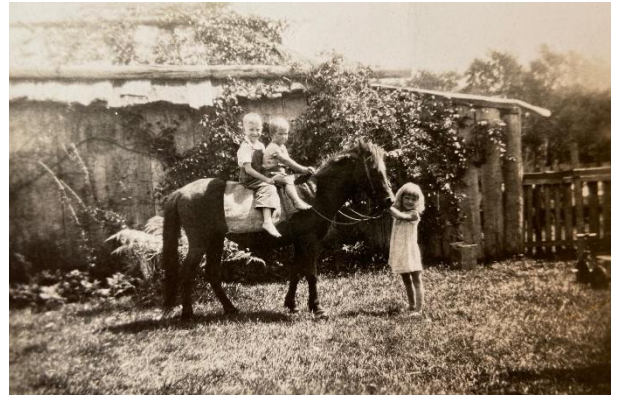


Grandfather, Harry Thomas with Shirley Thomas

Brandaree Tabourie: Thomas Family



Molly Thomas bathing Shirley on verandah



Shirley and Ian Thomas with friend in garden



Thomas and Fletcher families at Brandaree



Thomas and Fletcher families at Brandaree



At left: Cecil Thomas with
Shirley and Ian, Brandaree
Tabourie with scythe used to
cut forage