

Tabourie Memories: Cresswell Family

The power of Mother Nature and the ocean have changed the lake and the beachfront so many times over the past 70+ years from one visit to the next for our family. We have loved to holiday here for a lifetime and hopefully all our children, our grandchildren and family to follow will all love it as much as we do.

Memories from Glenn Cresswell

Glenn's family - between the Cresswell's, the Shelley's and the Hubble's they purchased quite a few blocks of land from Dave Gillies in the early 1950's. The family first camped in a tent on the block until Dad, Cyril Cresswell built a small shed and then finally he built the house. This was just three rooms, two bedrooms and a kitchen, at first and over the years he added to the size. For some years the water for the shower was heated by a chip heater and was built outside under the tank stand and it got very smoky inside if you didn't get the fire right.



Cresswell House at 9 Bridge Street Lake Tabourie

Glenn's uncle had a water spear put into the ground to an underground stream, and this let them pump water up into the water tanks. We used this water for showers as it was too cloudy to drink. When we first started to go down to Tabourie cows used to roam freely everywhere (they used to scare us kids) no-one had fences back then and there was a bullock team watering hole near the block in Bridge Street - not sure exactly where though.

Before we had septic tanks or the sewer on, pit toilets were all the go back in the 50's, 60's and even into the 70's. These were two 44 gallon drums on top of each other put into the ground. When they filled up over the years a new hole was dug 2 more drums dropped down and we just moved the whole toilet house to the new spot. Many a time the height of the pit toilet changed especially after a lot of rain. We were always on the lookout for spiders and creepy crawlies.

We didn't have a garbage collection back in the 50's and 60's and huge 3 metre deep holes were dug about 20 metres long and 10 metres wide up in the bush well up behind where the fire shed is now. Everyone used to dump their rubbish in these holes and when they were full, they were covered over and a new hole was dug. It was also up near here you could see wild pigs roaming around.

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Glenn remembers going into the old barn owned by Dave Gillies in Bridge Street (one of the first buildings in the street) and seeing it full of ice chests and camping gear which used to be hired out to the campers in the camping area during the holidays.

One of the most popular places for the kids to go and get a supply of lollies was Fred James Store, a small shop at the front of the house on the lake. We'd run straight across the road and through the paddock to Centre Street. You could always get some supplies from here.

Fond memories are of Glenn's Mum Flo cooking a huge baked Christmas dinner and then again on New Year's Day (this later became a family tradition we still enjoy) on a tiny combustion oven for the whole family.

We remember that a grader once came off the old wooden bridge that was over the creek. Although we can't remember the year. Not sure if it was the same year the sand hills were graded and Marram and Spinifex grasses were planted for soil and land conservation. That was in the early 80's, or it may have been when they were doing a new subdivision of land.

The sand hills were so high and so much fun when we were young and it is great to see them building up slowly, but I don't think they will ever be the same again. There was also quite a big sand hill over on the caravan park side as well, but it is now covered in scrub and trees and also at one stage there was a walkway from the lookout built there down to the beach.

When the lake used to be open and quite deep, going outside fishing was quite easy especially at high tide, straight out the entrance and away the fishermen would go. Fishing was a very popular pastime, as it still is and it was always a very successful morning out in the boat.



Pulling the boat across the sand

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When the lake was closed, (we didn't have tractors to pull the boats across like they have these days) and the men wanted to go out fishing they would use two big rubber rollers under the boat and as the boat moved forward the roller would pop out from under the back and usually all the kids were kept very busy by this picking it up and then they would run it forward and throw it back under the front of the boat to slowly progress across the sand to the water. It certainly was a fun team effort.

Lake Tabourie was always a good lake for catching prawns. One of the best areas was up at the Broadwater. it was a great place for prawning and also for collecting mud oysters where the water was only a couple of feet deep. We have had many a feed of beautiful prawns and oysters from there. This area was opposite the old Jolly Roger petrol station now Wairo Beach Caravan Park.

There were access trails to both Sunburn and Dermal (Termeil) beaches from Tabourie both very popular spots for fishing and prawning. These trails were pretty rough, and you needed a 4WD to use them. Glenn's Uncle John had an old jeep and they used to jump in and off they would go up through the bush to Dermal to go prawning. The kids remember getting bogged on the track a few times.



Glenn's cousins and friends with the old Jeep (their means of transport to Dermal for prawning)

Some of the exciting times down at Tabourie were when the lake was going to open after heavy rain and everyone would gather at the entrance to the lake and catch the fish that were being washed out, with whatever they could get their hands on. Prawning nets, fish nets, raincoats and even some were lucky enough to catch a fish by hand. The best we have seen the lake and when it used to stay open for longer was when it opened to the south beach between the island and the rocks, but it hasn't done that for a long time.

On a sadder note, but still part of our family story with Lake Tabourie and never to be forgotten, tragically Glenn's cousin Alan Cresswell drowned when crossing over from the island in 1966. Alan was only 9 years old.

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Memories from Barry Cresswell

Back in 1949 we all use to go to Bermagui for our Christmas holidays. There would be three families (Cresswells, Shelleys and Hubbles) do this trip and head off down the coast for the next 3 weeks. We all lived in the Fairfield area and each year this trip would take about 8 hours to do as we had to get in the queue to cross the Clyde river by ferry. As you can imagine it was not an enjoyable trip.

So, Dad and uncle John (Shelley) started looking for another closer place for the holidays and it was Tabourie that was chosen. They were looking for something a little more permanent where they could maybe purchase some land. On searching they found Dave Gillies who was a land agent and so they were able to buy land at now No.9 and No. 11 Bridge St. These blocks were covered in bush as was most of the entire land between Bridge St. and Beach St. In fact, the only house on the entire block was an old shack on the corner of Bridge and Dermal St. now belonging to Lennie Parsons.

We had tents amongst the bushes on Bridge St. So, it wasn't long before both dad and John commenced building some accommodation to make it a little more comfortable. Dad built a small fibro building about 8 by 12 foot with a fuel stove attached to the back. This was our accommodation for the next 18 months while he built the 3 room house. Uncle John built the house still at No. 11 Bridge St.



Cresswell House at 9 Bridge Street Lake Tabourie

In those days I always remember how wonderful the sand hills were at the mouth of the lake as you came out of the bushes near the now toilet block. This hill would have been 20 feet high and about 200 foot long with no vegetation at all.

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View of the sandhills from the Caravan Park



Dad - Cyril Cresswell, John Shelley, Jack Murray and Claude Hubble back in the early days.

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Memories from Helen Hunt (nee Cresswell)

From as early as the late 1950s, every Xmas and easter as far back as I can remember we always headed down to Lake Tabourie for our holidays. Our dad, Cyril Cresswell wanted to eventually retire down there as he loved it so much. Those trips were the highlight of his year. He drew up plans to jack up the old house in Bridge St and turn it into a 2-storey home, but our mum had other plans. Tabourie was too isolated for her, a holiday was fine, but she wanted to be closer to the shops and services. So, Dad relented and in 1987 they sold their much loved home in Smithfield and purchased a house in Pitman Ave, Ulladulla. It wasn't that far from Tabourie after all! Sadly in 1988 after only 12 months or so, dad passed away and mum returned to Sydney to be with us all.

We all have so many fond memories of our times at Tabourie with our cousins, the Shelley family, who lived right next door in number 11 (now owned by Helen and Gil Pickering). It was always so much fun, what lucky kids we were! I also made special lifelong friends in those early years, Raewyn Guerin's family built a house directly behind us in Beach St. We became good friends and kept in touch via letters between our Xmas get togethers. Rae was the bee's knees when it came to letter writing! Unfortunately, their house was sold but Rae and her husband Rob Norrie and children still holidayed down there each Xmas. They rented one of the flats in the "Castaways" up on the lake until they bought a block in the new subdivision on Beach St where they built their new holiday home.

One of my funny memories was of the open air picture theatre in Burrill, we'd all turn up with our pillows as the seats were made of thin canvas, hammock style seating held up by some sort of piping and the floor was just dirt. Too bad if it rained, the best seats were up the back where there was some shelter, but you had to be early for them. We saw many a good movie there and I remember it was always such a dark, scary drive back home, I don't know why, maybe because we'd just watched a creature feature! The theatre was closed in 1999.

In the 60s, dad and Uncle John (Shelley) built Doreen and Ron Keat's house across the road (now owned by Rob Modena) and also Shirley and Tommy Geraghty's house, where their daughter Shauna and Barry live today. Doreen and Shirley were sisters. They weren't flash houses but were truly loved and enjoyed by their families. I made another good friend in Shirley's daughter Glenda.

Our house at 9 Bridge St was finally renovated in 1989, nothing modern but with a few well needed comforts. My husband Roy drew up plans and with my brother Glenn replaced the roof and put in a new bathroom/laundry, internal toilet (yippee) and a new spacious second-hand kitchen and a very roomy dining area, it was now a 4 bedroom house so the more people the merrier, we thought it was great. Our brother Barry did all the electrics. We've had many New Year parties and special dinners since with family and friends.

With the kids grown now with their own families they all look forward to holidays at Tabourie, we even use a booking system! Roy's sister Sheila and her husband John moved down permanently and have never looked back, they'd been holidaying with our family since 1988 and always loved their times down there. They are living over in the "western suburbs" or so John calls it!

Sadly, our two children have moved up to the Gold Coast, so a lot of our time is spent travelling north for most holidays to spend time with the grandkids, they still reminisce about Tabourie at times. We don't get down there very often anymore but know that the house will always be there for us in the future.

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Lake opening



Walkway from the lookout in the Caravan Park down to the beach

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Memories from Roslyn Cresswell

The fun of going to Children's Special Service Mission. This was a church run group that was run for two weeks by volunteers. In the morning the group would march up and down all the rows of tents singing and we would join a long line of children heading off to the beach service held on a sand pulpit built out of sandbags. After lunch we would go to the big tent at the back of the campground and get together in small groups with a leader according to age and it was like Sunday School where we learnt about the bible. In the afternoons we would meet up again and go for walks along the beach or around the island if the tides permitted. We would have sausage sizzles on the beach or have competitions to see who was the fastest to slide down the sand hills and into the water. We would also have fun activities like Tunnel Ball, Tug of war and have sand modelling competitions. We loved the Lantern Parades the CSSM had in the park.



Lantern Parade Early 1960s

Every year it was so good to renew friendships. We have lifelong family friends from our holidays here. The local ambulance station, as a fund raiser used to run a Chocolate Wheel at night in the caravan park. They were always fun family entertainment, and we felt very lucky when we had a winning ticket. There used to be a manned ambulance shed with an officer on duty in case anyone was injured. I remember it was very busy with blue bottle stings and one year lots of campers suffered from Pelican Itch and there were many of us wandering around with calamine lotion spots all over our legs.

When the caravan park opened up a larger area at the back of the park in around 1961 or '62 we were lucky enough to camp there and had access to the lake from the front of our tent. There were no marked camp sites in amongst the trees and when it rained Dad used to dig a channel around the outside of the tent to try and keep our hessian flooring dry. My sister, our friends and I used to row our boat out into the lake just on dark to watch TV through the window of one of the houses on the lake. Of course, we couldn't hear it but we still thought it was a fun way to watch television.

The milkman used to come around in his truck, and we would run out with our billy can and he would scoop milk straight out of the milk churn for us to buy.

The ice man used to drive around as well for us to buy a big block of ice for the ice chest you could hire. No power way back then to keep our food cold.

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I remember when we camped in the caravan park in the 1950's holding my breath as you raced to the toilet - this was a huge pit toilet with lots of cubicles with holes cut in the timber for a seat.

The showers were timber structures without a roof and as cold as ice, we definitely didn't waste time there under the shower that's for sure. There was great excitement when the new amenities block was built and we would join the queues for a hot shower and a friendly chat. No one seemed to mind the wait.



Caravan Park in the early 1950's