

Tabourie Memories: Annette Parson

I first came to Tabourie in 1946 when I was 4 years old, with my parents Bernard and Linda Taylor and my 3 younger siblings – Michael, Peter and Margaret. We stayed at first in the cabins Illagong and Banyandah and then my parents bought our present property at Bridge St, with the intention of building a holiday cottage. This was a very long drawn out affair and during that time we camped in the old garages that used to be on the property that is now owned by the Gillies family. Jim and Glad Turner and family lived there at the time and managed the cottages in the bush. They also raised cattle with the poddy calves raised in a shed close to our house.

There was only River Rd, Bridge St, Centre St and Oak Ave with a scary old wooden bridge to cross the creek at the end of Bridge St. I remember the old bridge collapsing when some kind of heavy machinery fell off and demolished it. On foggy nights it was very difficult to find the turnoff from the highway to the village, as the “road” in was only a track.

On the corner opposite us was a big shed used for building rowing boats. This was built by the Gillies and Long families when they took over management of cottages and caravan park. The boat shed has become part of the home that is now on that site.

Mr. and Mrs. Goode had the store in Centre St and that is where we took our billycans for milk and got mail, bread and other basic supplies. The store was also the telephone exchange. The James family took over the store sometime later, perhaps in the 1950's.

At that time local farmers would turn out their dry cows into the forest until they calved. For that reason, no one needed a lawnmower. They would attach a bell to a few so that they could be found easily. For us kids they were a bit frightening, and I can remember coming back from the store with the milk etc and finding a cow “looking at me”. I hid on a verandah near the lake until it lost interest in me. Excellent bore water was used in the cabins in the bush and for the caravan park and main farmhouse. This was pumped from near the houses in what is now Beach St, until town water was connected in the 70's.

We had an hygea toilet which was fascinating to us kids, with a revolving plate and a drainage pit made of beer bottles of which there were plenty. We had kerosene lamps and fridge until Dad installed a generator and rudimentary power supply. These were widely used here at Tabourie until septic tanks were introduced. This fascinating object can be seen in the Powerhouse Collection object number 97/331/1.

I remember that we used to bury our rubbish in the ground where the Sunseeker Units would ultimately be built, then a tip of sorts was dug behind the dunes to the right of what is now the fire brigade track (fire shed track). It was a case of driving up Surf St and backing out via the parking area track – no mean feat! Periodically the rubbish was burnt.

Dad would only put enough fuel in the generator to use each evening. Once the motor gave its first splutter everyone would leap to their feet and get ready for bed before the lights went out.

We ate prawns and fish most of the time. We had a wonderful time prawning at night.

We had a tank for water and Mr Gregory divined underground water for us. That was an exercise in patience, and it was quite a few years before dad found good bore water. There are a few spearpoints buried that never produced anything. The bore water was very soft and even though the water became coca cola coloured from a subsided peat bed somewhere, we still had good water for bathing and laundry. Mr Gregory lived in a long gone house next to the highway bridge. He sold petrol and I think the old hand operated pump is still around, possibly at the museum.

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Before 1974 the sand dunes along the lake edge were bare and would move and change with prevailing winds. The main channel in the lake ran across the base of these and the sand dune would keep the channel in place with sand movement. Huge storms in 1974/75 washed the sandunes into the lake, completely changing the channel and causing a lot of siltation. When this happened there was a serious problem of the big seas washing over into the lake and into the caravan park. When the dunes were pushed up again we all helped soil conservation workers replant and then fence the area.

When the lake was allowed to reach a natural opening level it would flush all the weed, timber etc that had built up in it out to sea and the lake would be without weed until the lake closed and new growth started. When the lake opened it went with such a rush and a noise that we couldn't go near it for at least 3 days. After that the dogs and boats that had been washed out could be rescued from the island. The local fishing boats were kept over on the island so they could be used when the lake was closed or the entrance too shallow. They were pulled up towards the tree line closest to the tombola.

The lake would flood before it opened and during heavy rain periods the water would flood across the flood plain. It would then be a case of wading in and out of the house. When we moved here permanently, we raised the house 45cm and built the block up although the water never came into the place.

As time passed there were more and more houses built which provided us with other kids for company. We had absolute freedom to come and go around the village.

I met my now husband Len Parsons here in Tabourie when I was just finishing primary school. My brother and his sister were in the same class at school and recognised each other when Len and his family stayed at one of the cottages on the lake front. We had occasional contact after that until we eventually got married. In 1975 we were able to purchase the Sunseeker holiday units from Jack and Blanch Turner and move here permanently. Len started his plumbing business at the same time and my mother bought and built on Centre St to be closer to us. We have since raised 3 children here and have been blessed with several grandchildren who all live locally. It was a move for which we will always be thankful.

Len and I played a part in the reformation of the fire brigade after a very bad fire season. The shed was built mainly by volunteers. It was a very busy time and involved much fundraising. The current volunteers were very active in the 2019/2020 horror fires.