
The Withy Family

In 1906, my Grandfather brought the family on holiday to Glenbrook. They stayed in Gonsalve's House in Green Street (it is actually marked on early maps). It started a great love for Glenbrook and in 1907 Grandfather built the family a holiday house of their own in Leslie Street – No. 8 then – 26 now – an affectionately known as Glennie House. The block was very large covering present day numbers 24, 26, 28 and 30. The house was a weatherboard in construction and cost 125 pounds. It's a wonder it's still standing as in 1957 during the bad bushfires of that year the large turpentine trees near the verandah caught on fire and no one was there to fight it.

For many years the family lived 6 months of the year in Mosman and 6 months in Glenbrook. When younger my Father attended Glenbrook School and later on travelled each day to Sydney. In the evening, Grandfather would meet him and his brother Rodney at the NE corner of the park with a lantern – he knew when to leave home to meet them because the front windows of the house would rattle when the train came through the tunnel.

In the early days the 'powers that be' decided to chop down the large gum trees in the park "because playing fields shouldn't have trees". It is said Grandfather chained himself to one, in protest. The trees were not chopped down and most remain today.

Grandfather, Alfred E. Withy was a Clerk of the Peace – that is, he recorded proceedings in Court cases in shorthand – somewhere along the line he was involved in the case of Frank Butler (who murdered Lee Weller in Glenbrook, but that is another story). That was before the family came to live in Glenbrook (1897) but Grandfather had the bullet that killed Lee Weller, for many years, at least up to the early 1950's when he decided to give it to the Police for their museum. It was and still is I believe, kept in a small purple velvet box.

During the construction of the new Glenbrook Railway Tunnel there was a rail line across from the old line to just above the new tunnel to carry construction materials. My Father, as a young boy, used to sometimes ride with the engine driver of the train on this line. It was from my Father that I first learned of the Navvies Camps in the area (near the Bluff).

During WW2 (Jan. 1941) a twin engined RAAF plane crashed near the corner of Lucasville Road and Clifton Avenue. My Father (Geoff Withy) who was on leave from the Solomon Islands at the time heard the crash and was one of the first on the scene. He along with several others, was interviewed by a reporter from the Daily Telegraph.

(continued overleaf)