

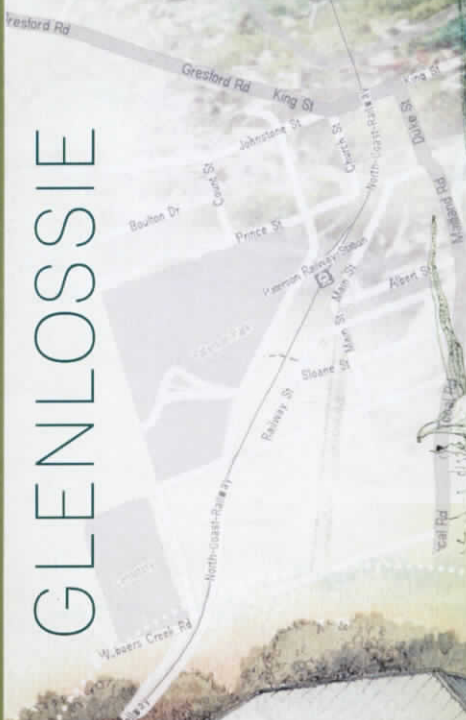


AMES
MARCH-1928

St James



*A Tribute To
Member and Friend
Mabel (Mabs) Keppie
1924-2012*



GLENLOSSIE

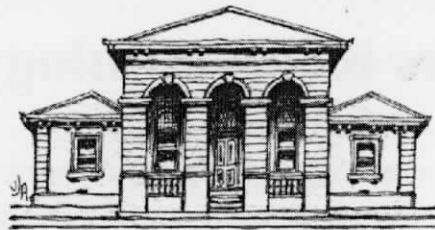


Paterson
2012

GLENLOSSIE - 1973
PATERSON - NSW

Paterson Historical Society INC
Court House Museum
Paterson NSW

2012



PATERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
First Land Grants 1821 PO Box 34 Paterson NSW 2421

President: Dr Cameron Archer

Secretary: Virginia Daniels

Treasurer: Jean Archer

A TRIBUTE TO MEMBER AND FRIEND MABEL (MABS) KEPPIE 1924 – 2012

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS TRIBUTE BOOK WERE MADE BY FRIENDS OF MABS FROM MEMORIES OF THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH HER. IT GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF A COUNTRY WOMAN AND HER INVOLVEMENT WITH A COUNTRY TOWN – PATERSON.

Edited by - Shirley Threlfo



Paterson School of Arts – 9 February 2012

**PATERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC
COURT HOUSE MUSEUM PATERSON, NSW
ISBN – 978.0.9871744.1.3**

Mabs Keppie Eulogy

9 February 2012

Dr Cameron Archer

Good afternoon

It is a privilege to be here this afternoon and say a few words about Mabs Keppie.

I have known Mabs, Bill and family for well over 30 years and have been able to see at first hand the great contribution Mabs has made to the Paterson community.

Mabel Violet Ransley was born in 1924 at Woodburn on the Richmond River on the far North coast of NSW. She was one of 10 surviving children of Ted and Mabel Ransley. Mabs had a twin brother Ted who is with us today. Mabs and Ted were only three years old when their father died and their mother had to raise the ten children at the time the eldest being 17.

One can only imagine what a tough time that must have been.

Mabs went to school at Woodburn and learnt all the skills of farming and a great love of gardening which she inherited from her mother. Times were different in those days...people worked from daylight to dusk 6 days a week and the 7th was the Sabbath when people didn't work. Mabs's mother was very religious and forbade work on Sundays. She used to tell her children:

"If they sewed clothes on Sunday, they would have to pull the stitches out with their noses in heaven"

The family lived right on the river and Mabs developed a great interest in fishing, something she continued after she came to Paterson. As well she grew up gardening and this was great pastime for her throughout her life.

After war broke out Mabs and her two sisters, Ivy and Charlotte, joined the Australian Women's Land Army and worked on farms across NSW from 1942 to 1945. It was a way the Government used to keep farms going because many of the men had gone off to war. Shirley Threlfo, close friend of Mabs, has written a book on the Australian Women's Land Army and Mabs's contribution to the war effort. It is a fitting tribute to that period of Mabs's life.

The three girls were first sent to a 66,000 acre property near Deniliquin. Mabs did all sorts of farm work with horses such as mustering, work in the shearing shed and so on. She later moved to Arrowfield in the Hunter Valley and after that to a property just to the north of Brisbane Grove, here at Paterson. She worked there for the Parish family, hand milking the cows, working draft horses, fencing, hay making and tending the vegetable garden. An extract from Mabs's diary of the time reads:

"Boss away this morning. Mrs Parish and I milked, took the milk to the road on the slide with the old horse Blossom. Cut a load of corn. Chipped melon vines. Beans are up. Cut another load of corn after tea"

After Paterson, Mabs spent a period of time at Lake Cargelligo on a wheat farm. Here her diary reads:

“Filled wheat bin, got logs. Planted out 108 lettuce plants, chipped around peas and onions. Cut a bit of wood, ploughed out rabbit burrows.”

After the war Mabs returned to Paterson with her two sisters working as a housemaid, waitress and cook at the Court House Hotel in Paterson. In 1947 Mabs and Bill were married in this church and they recently celebrated 64 years of marriage.

Bill and Mabs had four children, Geoff, Kathy, and twins Robert and Wendy; 17 grand children; and 4 great grand children. Mabs was very proud of her family and their achievements.

By marrying into the Keppie family she became part of the ongoing history of the area. By that time the Keppie family had already been settled at Paterson for well over 100 years.

Bill's cousin, Ted Coyle, sparked her interest in family history which became a life long passion... well before it became so popular and before TV shows like **Who Do You Think You Are**.

The family history interest led her to travel to Scotland to the area where the Keppie family originally came from. The family history led to local history.

Mabs and Bill were foundation members of the Paterson Historical Society and the Court House Museum. Their support and enthusiasm for the history of Paterson was second to none. Mabs had adopted Paterson as her home and she loved its history. She was an avid reader and collector of information about Paterson and it is through Mab's and Bill's effort that the Museum is what it is today.

For many years Mabs collected newspaper clippings of anything about Paterson which she then placed into the museum and these now form an outstanding record of the recent history of Paterson.

For us in the Society Mabs was been source of great inspiration but also information. Mabs was always willing to assist with research...in fact now days if people want information you just Google it on the internet. That may be OK for some situations but for us in Paterson Mabs was a better bet.

Mabs and Bill were also foundation members of Friends of Tocal and never missed a meeting, an open day or any other activity where help was required. They worked side by side in the Valley Garden for nearly 20 years making it a show piece for the district.

It was through Mab's encouragement that the fuel stove in the kitchen at Tocal Homestead was recommissioned and was once again cooking scones.

It was Mabs who in her quiet way encouraged that we do that and I think we all knew that if we got the fire going Mabs would cook the scones, and so it happened. Now every open day the scones are being cooked, something which was commenced by Mabs Keppie. Mabs was a Church Warden at St James Church at Martins Creek providing support to the parish and the congregation of St James. This meant cleaning the Church, mowing the lawns and representing parishioners at meetings within the parish.

St James had an extra attraction as well as being a place of worship. On the southern side of the Church grew a small patch of an Australian native terrestrial orchid.

These were a little green hood orchid also known as *Pterostylis curta* which flowers in June-July. No doubt she used to check them out each year, looking forward to cycles of nature which provided endless fascination and enrichment to her life.

Mabs was very knowledgeable regarding Australian native orchids. These are mysterious little plants that pop up in the bush, flower and go away all within a short period. Mabs knew when and where they were and she and Bill teamed up other orchid enthusiasts included Bill and Val Anderson and Lyn Walsh in finding the orchids when they were out in flower.

Mabs was able to assist her fellow orchid enthusiasts in locating various orchids. The search was of great interest because they were retracing the research and footsteps of a former Paterson Church of England Minister Rev Rupp, also an orchid enthusiast. Rupp had recorded about 60 species in the district. Mabs and her group found all but a few and to top it all off discovered a number of unrecorded species, their grand total was 65.

Distinguished Australian Orchid Specialist and author J J Riley visited Glen Lossie to view the discoveries. The results of this research have been recorded by Riley in his book *Orchids of Australia* including acknowledging Mabs and her group's research.

In preparing for today I learnt that Bill courted Mabs with posies of orchids from Glen Lossie so the orchid interest was not a passing fad!

I asked Lyn Walsh to give me some reflections regarding Mabs

"Mabs loved being out in the bush. She really enjoyed wandering through the bush, up creeks, along ridges looking at all the plants and finding something new as well as just sitting watching birds, animals, ants, grubs, anything that moved. Rain, hail or shine she was always ready to go for a walk in the bush and was passionate about rediscovering the orchids identified by Rupp 60 years before. Mabs had an inbuilt compass and once we had located and identified the 40 odd species of orchids on Glen Lossie (plus the others in the surrounding hills) she knew where every one of them was and when they would send out their flowers.

Mabs loved her garden, she had an English cottage garden and lots of bulbs which just came up in the lawn plus a mile of Flanders poppies and Spanish Moss on lots of shrubs.

She loved the Valley Garden at Tocal and cooking scones in the old fuel stove at Tocal Homestead.

She was an expert at making jams and relishes and anything with chilli in it. Her chilli sauces were so hot they would burn the roof of your mouth.

Whenever I made some jam etc and took to them she would tip it up to make sure I had cooked it long enough. A lot of my jam, relish and sauce recipes came from Mabs so she knew exactly how they should be. I either passed or failed and if I failed I was smilingly told to try again."

Later in life Mabs took up bowls and was a regular at Lorn Park Bowling Club, something she got great enjoyment from.

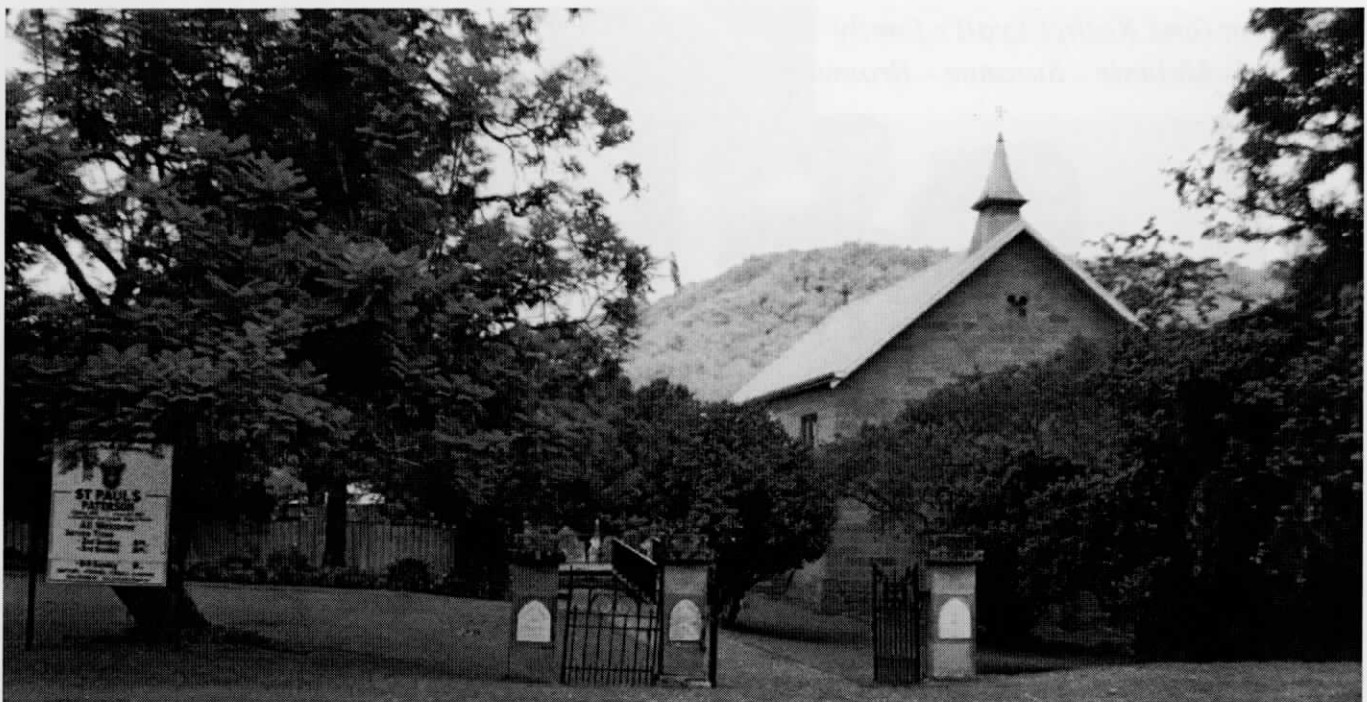
As we know Mabs was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease over 10 years ago. I have admired her determination to just get on with life despite the challenges the condition presented. She was not going to succumb to it and Mabs battled on with much determination attending Historical Society Meetings until recently.

Mabs was a very special person in many ways. To me she demonstrated many of the fine qualities that we regard as being a citizen of rural Australia.

Her quiet competence, her efficiency and her capacity for hard work doing many different jobs shows the great depth of ability Mabs had. She was willing to use these qualities through her work and as an employee and then as part of a family farm. Her enduring commitment to the church, her family and her community is an example for us all.

So while we are gathered here today mourning her passing we ought to be also quietly reflecting upon Mabs contribution to the district, family life, raising 4 children and being a loving grandmother and great grandmother. I know you must all be proud of what Mabs achieved in her long and productive life.

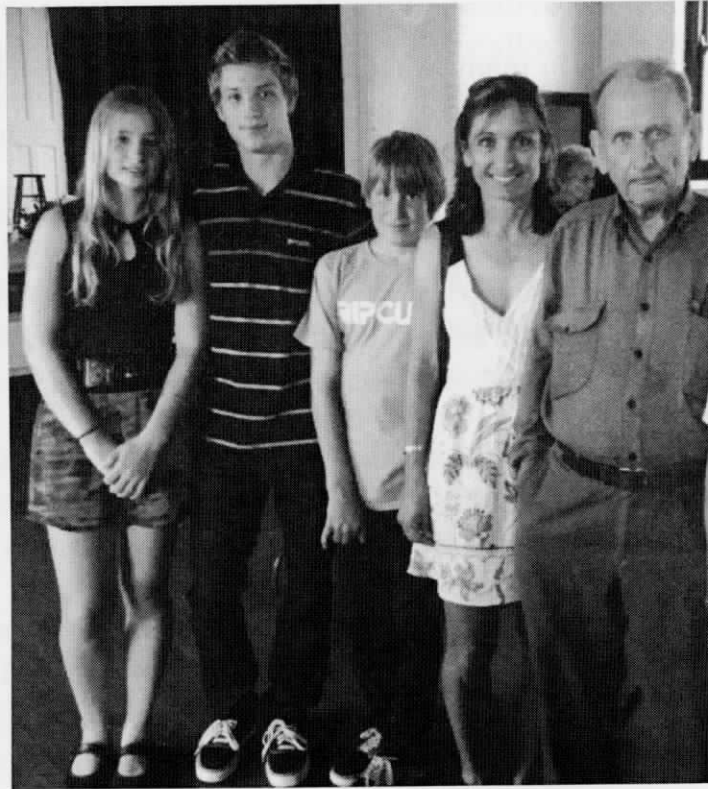
Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.



St Pauls Anglican Church - Paterson

Friends and Family of Mabs

*Ted Ransley (Twin Brother)
Lyn Madle and her three children.*



*Zolton (and Kathy) Lyall's family
Rebecca - Melanie - Suzanne - Bronwen*



Mabs Neices - Barbara and Kerrie Graham





*Wendy Keppie and sons
Joshua - Caleb - Liam*



*Paterson Historical
Society Members
Maurice and Mary Dunlop
Valma Patfield*



*Colin Sexton
Brian and Lyn Walsh*

MEMORIES OF MABS KEPPIE

Mabel (Mabs) Keppie was one of ten surviving children of Edward and Mabel Ransley and lived her early life near Woodburn on the north coast of New South Wales. Although the family were not well off and all the children helped on the small farm it was a happy childhood and the Ransley's remained a close family all their lives. Mabs and her twin brother Ted were only three years old when their father died but their mother carried on the farm, raising the children and was a big influence on Mabs and the her siblings.

Mabs' sisters and brothers left home to work and later married, some settled in Nambucca Heads but wherever they were they still visited their mother and following Mabs marriage to Bill Keppie they all visited Glen Lossie, Paterson. Mabs took her four children to visit their grandmother most years in one of the school holidays. Charlotte never married and worked at the United Protestant Children's Home (Woodlands) at Wallsend (now a retirement complex) and spent her days off with the Keppies or with her sister Betty Keevers in Newcastle.

Eldest brother George and his wife Lucy were frequent visitors as George loved fishing in the Paterson River and he and Mabs on occasions would go to the river for a few hours fishing. Betty had married a Paterson man Frank Keevers and lived in Newcastle so she and Mabs talked regularly on the phone. Mabs never complained of lacking any material things in her childhood, in fact, considered herself blessed to have been raised in a loving family who possibly had more to share than some better off children. All her life she loved reading and had read a lot as a child. Mabs and her sisters Ivy and Betty could still remember poems they had learnt as children. One of Mabs' quotes was from John O'Brien "We'll all be rooned" said Hanrahan.

However, there are many aspects of Mabs life in Paterson which some particularly her grandchildren may not be aware of. She belonged to various groups and organizations and her involvement was not a token membership but a very active participation until her illness prevented her from continuing.

MABS – THE LAND ARMY

In August, 1942 Mabs and her older sisters Ivy and Charlotte joined the Land Army during World War II. Mabs was sent to various properties in New South Wales including Paterson. At Paterson she worked on Parish's farm (part of Brisbane Grove) across the Martins Creek Road from Keppie's farm. She met Bill Keppie and they were married after the War and settled on Glen Lossie and Mabs lived there until her death.

For many years the Land Army was not recognised as part of the country's war service. They had been supplied with a uniform similar to other women's services – Mabs could still fit into her jacket and hat. After the War the girls could not join any ex-service clubs or march on Anzac Day.

However in 1985 they were recognised for their war effort and proudly marched in Sydney each year on Anzac Day. The Gresford Sub-branch of the RSL welcomed Mabs into their ranks and she marched with them from the Garage up Sloane Street to the War Memorial for the Anzac Day Dawn Service. This was a proud moment for Mabs and her family. In 1995, fifty years after the end of WWII, Mabs and the other Land Army women received a medal in recognition of their service to their country.

MABS – THE GARDENER AND TOCAL GARDEN

Mabs loved gardening probably inherited from her mother but also a passion enjoyed by most of her sisters. Her own garden at Glen Lossie was a joy to see and her plants flourished. She had considerable knowledge of flowers, shrubs and trees and where they would grow the best. She had numerous bulbs – freesias, jonquils which came up every year with their strong perfume. Whatever the weather or season Mabs had flowers from her garden to put in the church on her cleaning roster day.



When it was decided to re-establish the garden at the Tocal Homestead it was no surprise when Mabs and Bill put up their hands and volunteered to work on this project. They both loved this work, sometimes hard at first to get the garden back to what it might have been, but very rewarding.

MABS – THE SCONEMAKER AND FRIENDS OF TOCAL

Mabs and Bill were foundation members of the Friends of Tocal established following the deaths of Myrtle and Rita Curtis, the last occupants of Tocal Homestead. “The Friends” met regularly and assisted on days when the Homestead was open to the public, the Tocal Field Days and other times when volunteers were needed. It was Mabs who volunteered to make scones in the fuel stove in the old kitchen to give visitors an idea of a working kitchen. She was helped by one of “the friends” and also her sister Betty and daughter Kathy Lyall. The smell of the scones cooking apparently was tantalising and the scone tasting was very popular.

MABS – THE BUSH RAMBLER AND ORCHIDS - *Lyn Walsh*

I first met Bill and Mabs after showing some orchid photos I had just received in the mail to Jenny Mitchell (Post Mistress in Paterson). Jenny told me I should have a look at the ones in Kath Lyall’s front garden. I did, met Bill and Mabs and together with my infant son Stephen began countless walks searching for those beautiful, elusive little creatures. Val Anderson put together a list of orchids Rev HMR Rupp had located in the Paterson district in the 1930’s and so began a project which would consume us for the next 4 years and last for 10 years till the drought set in and the ground orchids remained dormant.

We started in the hills behind Glen Lossie and in a short period of time, between those hills and the tea tree scrub near the house on Glen Lossie, had 35 species located. We mainly found terrestrials... little ground orchids, some with flowers no more than 10 mm long. Eagle eyes (as Mabs called Bill) would scout around while Mabs and I were setting up the flowers to photograph. Some of the orchids within a genus were hard to differentiate but Mabs usually had them sorted out. We bought a few different books and Val photocopied some diagrams for us.

Mabs loved going bush. Anywhere and almost any time and often till the sun went down. Nothing was going to stop Mabs reaching Rupp's tally. Tick and leech season saw us loaded with aeroguard; occasionally we needed mud boots; sometimes we got saturated; often we found nothing new; sometimes we couldn't wait to get back and send specimens to The National Herbarium in Canberra for David Jones to identify or to John Riley, another orchid expert.

Mabs would often go on her own little walks in the scrub. She had all these little patches that she was watching and eventually they would pop up a bud and my phone would ring. Is it different?...is it the same? Often we would drive and walk the hills to the west of Paterson, the back paddocks of Tocal, the front paddocks of Tocal, the hills above Tumbledown Creek and behind Martins Creek, up Fishers Hill Road, Duns Creek Road, Webbers Creek Road. Where ever we were given permission and thought there may be the chance of an orchid. We found species of Dendrobium, Sarcochilus, Calochilus, Thelmitra, Genoplesium, Pterstylis, Lyperanthus, Acianthus, Eriochilus, Caladenia, Corybas, Arthrochilus, Microtis, Diurus, Dipodium, Plectorrhiza, Lipatus, Dockrillia among others and Mabs knew the scientific name for them all. We found species Rupp didn't just as Rupp found species we didn't.

Mabs love of the bush was an inspiration. Bill's knowledge of the birds in that bush was awesome.

MABS – THE LOCAL HISTORIAN AND PATERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It is with great pleasure that I contribute my feelings and memories of Mabs Keppie, "Glenlossie" Paterson and her association with the Paterson Court House Museum. Paterson Historical Society Inc was first established in 1974 under the banner of the Paterson Preservation Society very soon to become Paterson Historical Society responsible for the establishment of a local museum in the former Paterson Court House. My understanding is that both Mabs and husband Bill gave tremendous support to this new venture – the family offering and setting up a fine collection of rural artifacts on loan from Glenlossie in the former Magistrates entry room to the Museum. The Keppie Room was refurbished in further enhancing this fine collection equal to any rural Museum.

Mabs very quickly became aware of the Keppie family historic contribution to Paterson's development and marrying into the family became part of the districts ongoing history. Mabs never missed a meeting, her knowledge was quite outstanding – rarely, following a discussion or event was there not a photo, newspaper cutting or personal recollection produced. It was Mabs, with close friend, Shirley Threlfo who walked the village and suggested an Annual Town Walk which has become a highlight of Heritage Week in the Hunter Valley.

Mab's dedication to the Museum's maintenance, the building and grounds was admirable, Mabs always supplying flowers for special occasions from her extensive country garden at Glenlossie. As I wander through the Museum today there is not an exhibit or collection that has not been associated with Mabs interest and encouragement. It was extremely appropriate that Mabs and Bill Keppie were made Life Members of the Society a fitting and just reward for their services to Paterson's history.

Val Anderson, Honorary Curator, Paterson Court House Museum.

MABS – CHURCH WARDEN – ST JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH, MARTINS CREEK

The little Anglican church of St James at Martins Creek has been close to Mabs' heart and one of its carers for many years. Mabs came from a church going family (as were the Keppies) so it was only natural she would attend church when she came to Paterson. Her four children attended Sunday school and enjoyed the annual picnic and sausage sizzle catered for by Guild members including Mabs.

For some years the Guilds of the Parish Paterson, Martins Creek and Vacy sent a tea chest of gifts to St Margaret's Hospital at Oro Bay, Papua. These chests contained personal items for the staff, books, pens, pencils etc. scrapbooks and gifts for the children and homemade quilts for the hospital. Each year Mabs and her friend Alice Lewis would make a very colourful patchwork quilt to go in the tea chest. Patches were supplied by the sister of one of the Guild members and put together by the members. They were beautiful quilts and each year were on display when the Parish had their lunch to raise money for missions. In later years the Hospital requested money rather than the goods as the cost of getting them there became too great. (The Guilds operated separately until the 1990s when there was only parish guild.)

Mabs was on the church cleaning roster with neighbour Shirley Threlfo and in addition she and Bill kept the church grounds in very good order mowing and tidying up

As a church warden Mabs represented St James at the parish meetings and also at meetings held in other parishes in the Diocese. Mabs took part in the services usually with the offering. She wasn't a singer but loved the old hymns she had known as a child. She never shirked her responsibilities – if she said she would do something you knew it would be done.

MABS – EDUCATION AND MARTINS CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Following in their father's steps Bill and Mabs four children attended Martins Creek school with first Mr Paslow who taught Geoff and following him Robert (Bob) Anderson was teacher in charge for many years. Mabs was a member of the P & C Association and worked to provide the items not supplied by the Department of Education. Each month a "Tuck Shop" was available for the children. The mothers cooked sausage rolls, cakes, slices and tarts which the children would buy for 1c and 2c a piece. Each year the children travelled to Gresford Showground for the small school sports where Mabs and P & C President Winn Aspinall had a lunch stall working all morning to make salad and other rolls for sale. Although voluntary work can be tiring it is also rewarding and an opportunity to catch up with other parents.

MABS – THE BOWLER AND LORN PARK WOMENS BOWLING CLUB

Mabs' neighbours Marj Richards and Shirley Threlfo encouraged Mabs to play bowls at Lorn Park. Her sisters Betty from Newcastle and Ivy who had moved to Telarah in recent years, started with her. Each Tuesday they would play bowls and learnt to play quite well. For the sisters it was a day each week they could have together. Ivy left to play with the Telarah Club closer to her home. Betty and Mabs won the Club Pairs competition which was an achievement but although Betty still plays Mabs and Marj stopped playing after some years.



*Bowling Friends -Left to Right
Beryl Dorn - Jan Walker - Betty Richie (sister) - Wilmer Gore - Shirley Threlfo*

MABS – ARTIST AND THE COMMUNITY

Mabs and her sister Beryl and possibly others in the family were artists. Mabs' artwork can be seen in Bob Anderson's book "Pigtails Plasticine, and Pen-nibs" written about Martins Creek school. In 1976 the Paterson Hall Committee sought the assistance of Bob Anderson and Paterson musician Edith Hallinan to put on a concert to raise much needed funds for the Hall. Bob Anderson knew the people to approach to be "actors" and behind the scenes people. Mabs and Bill were happy to give backstage assistance. One job was the backdrop for some of the musical items such as "picnic in the park" which Mabs and Bill did with Mabs drawing the hills near Paterson from the Tocal angle. Most of the songs were written by Bob Anderson and he was the director of this successful event and the much loved Paterson identity Edith Hallinan was musical director. Most of the local people – young and old were involved.

Another community activity, although church orientated, was the Anglican Deb Ball. The Guilds catered for the supper at these events, and at least two sittings and sometimes three sittings were required in the supper room. Many of the local girls made their debut at these Balls. Often it was well past midnight before the ladies would finish and clean up but Mabs was there to the last.

This is only part of the life of this quiet capable country lady living the values she learnt as a child and, with her husband Bill, passing these values on to her children and grandchildren. People should remember her as an active member of many local groups, a willing helper and a good friend with encouraging words to those who needed help. The last few years were not kind to Mabs but even with her illness there were no complaints and she still retained her interest in her family and friends.



Photography

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Printing

Kent Rowe Digital Print, Newcastle
www.krdprint.com.au

