



NEWSLETTER

Footscray Historical Society

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Vale Ethel Waters

On 15 December 2014, Owen Waters delivered this eulogy at his mother's funeral.

On Tuesday, 9 December last, Ethel Waters was, as usual at her desk at *Ercildoune*, responding to research enquiries. She also proudly pointed out to one of the enquirers the plaque naming that room the 'Esma Green and Ethel Waters Room'. One week later Ethel was in Western Hospital where she died. We miss her. Many members of the Footscray Historical Society attended Ethel's funeral. For those who were not able to we are grateful to Owen Waters for allowing us to print the following eulogy which he gave at the celebration of his late mother's life.

We know a lot of you have travelled from overseas and interstate and country Victoria and we really appreciate your coming to help celebrate Ethel's life. Thanks everybody.

Ethel May Davies was born on 27 March, 1923 in Tarrengower Street Yarraville in a three bedroom house that still stands today. Ethel's mother, also Ethel May, but called Ettie, gave birth to her at home with a Dr Parker in attendance. This same Dr Parker, we were to find out many years later, had also delivered a baby some four years earlier in Ararat. That baby's name was John Waters. It certainly seems destiny was to pay a part in young Ethel's life.

Ethel never liked her name. Her mother told her that she had run out of names by the time she was born and Ethel May was as good a name as any. Ethel also had an older brother, Alec, two older sisters, Phyllis and Gwen and a younger brother, Ivor. Her father was William Norman Davies, known as Norm, who worked at

ICI in Yarraville for 40 years. When Ethel was five years old, the Davies' family moved to Albion Street, West Footscray. She went to Kingsville Primary School where she spent eight happy years.



Ethel left school at the age of 12 and received a scholarship to attend the Metropolitan Business College in the city, where she learned typing and shorthand. Her first job was with Union Can in South Melbourne where she made several good friends, and she stayed happily there until she married.

Ethel was a good netballer (or basketballer as it was called back then). She was short and quick around the court, so centre was the obvious position for her. She was disappointed when her netball team had to fold during

the war years when some of the girls working at Bramac had to work on Saturday afternoons making ground sheets for the war effort.

Photo – Liana Lucca Pope "Littlefoot Cafe" FB

Ethel often went to the pictures with girlfriends and boyfriends of the time. The Grand, Barkly and Trocadero theatres were popular, as were the dances held in Yarraville at various halls. She also went ice skating at the Glaciarium in the city, where the Concert Hall now stands.

Ethel often went on day-long train trips with girlfriends from work. They would meet under the clocks at Flinders Street Station and travel out to Belgrave in the Dandenongs for walks and a picnic lunch.

Destiny was to finally play its part when the baby delivered by Dr Parker four years before Ethel, 200 kms away in Ararat, happened to grow up into the handsome bus driver who drove the Geelong Road bus that Ethel caught to work each day. She caught Jack's eye and they were to start off on a journey lasting 58 years. Ethel and Jack were married at St Monica's Church in Footscray in April 1944 and not long after Jack returned to fight in New Guinea and Borneo.

In 1947, Ethel and Jack bought land at 47 Roberts Street, West Footscray and built a house that would be our family home for 56 years. Ethel and Jack had three children, Glenys, myself and Helen. Today they have seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Ethel decided when she was in her early thirties that she should get her driver's licence. Jack would take her out for lessons on a Sunday afternoon in the old Morris Minor. As they got into the car a young Glenys would say, "You're not driving are you, Mum?" Ethel also recalled Glenys and me sitting quietly and fearfully in the back seat as she took over the controls. One day while driving back into the driveway, she hit the letter box so she decided to throw in the towel. It was nearly 20 years later when Ethel decided at age 50 that she would give it another go. Not only did the letter box remain intact, but Ethel succeeded in gaining her licence and some new-found independence along with it.

We all have memories of Ethel's lovely cooking. We had two course meals most nights. She also baked lovely cakes and sponges and, of course, roast lamb every Sunday lunch.

As Ethel was a child of the Depression years she knitted and sewed many of our clothes. We joked with her about thriftiness and dubbed her 'Economic Eth' which she always wore as a badge of honour.

When we were all finally at school Ethel decided that she would like to return to the workforce and found herself a position working for Australian Estates in the city. She really enjoyed her ten years there.

Ethel had a phenomenal memory and was a great lover of Australian History and avidly read all she could lay her hands on. She was an excellent source of oral history for us on the Depression, the war years and there was not too much she did not know about the Footscray and Yarraville areas. As you all know she was Footscray through and through and she was able to put that knowledge to good use through her volunteer work at the Footscray Historical Society at Ercildoune, where she had spent 34 years as research and records officer. She was very proud to be recognised with a room named in her honour. She was also very proud to receive a certificate from the Prime Minister at the time, Julia Gillard, congratulating her on her 90th birthday.

Ethel had always been very community-spirited and spent many years serving on various school tuck shops and the church cleaning roster among other things. She was also a member of the CWA for 25 years and was president of the Altona branch for a time. Ethel was also secretary of the Legacy War Widows Association.

Even with all these activities, Ethel still found the time to fly to Canberra to visit Helen and Mark and her loving grandchildren, Kaitlin and Nick over the years, something she really looked forward to.

As you can see Ethel lived a long, active and productive life. She was an excellent contributor to her community and we are very proud of her for that. But most important for us – she was a wonderful partner in life to our Dad, Jack, and a loving and caring mother to Glenys, Helen and myself.