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A scrapbook of stories, memories, photographs and documents supplied by some of the people who called Koonorigan home for at least part of their lives.



In the pages of this book Koonorigan is spelt with either 2 'o's or 3 'o's according to how it was spelt at the time. It is now officially spelt **Koonorigan**.

Cover photo ...  
Toge Graham with his  
draught horses.

© Michael Smith 2004

## Clearing the 'Big Scrub'

In the early 1900s timber provided a source of ready income for the settlers. The establishment of a sawmill on the eastern bank of Terania Creek in 1906 by Edwin Roach began a new era for the settlers. Timber was bought for cash as it stood. Teak, rosewood, cudgeri, longjack, blue fig, pine, beech, ironbark and many other timbers were cut and hauled by bullock team to the mill. One tree, a teak measuring 94 feet to the first limb and with a 27 feet girth at the butt, was felled on J.D. Bray's property.

The method of scrub felling as related by John James Taylor who came to The Channon in 1903: 'We went through with a brush hook first to get rid of the rubbish. Usually we contracted for 50 to 100 acres – it took a couple of months to fell 50 acres and we were paid at the rate of 25/- per acre. We only got 20/- if it was already brushed.

Brushing was sometimes sublet at about 5/- to 6/- an acre. A good man could brush about an acre a day. We camped on the job in 10 x 12 tents, ate damper, corned beef and potatoes. Pigeons and wild turkey were good eating too. We used a Kelly or Plumb axe but we never used a saw. We worked singly on trees and sometimes in pairs if the trees were big – using a left and right-handed cutter. Most of the menfolk shared their felling of scrub and pit-sawing, giving day for day in the work, also in corn planting and harvesting.

Those settlers with families assisted each other to erect a dwelling to house their families by pit-sawing beechwood logs into 6"x1" feather edge boards



Povey Jackson at Koonorigan 1919

for the walls using 3"x2" for studs and 3"x3" for plates and in some cases light forest poles for rafters and silky oak shingles for the roof coverings.'

*The following history was written as part of the celebration of the 'Koonorigan Public School Golden Jubilee' in 1961.*

The little district of Konorigan lies on what is named on a Parish map of 1912 as 'Konorigan Range'. It rises from the low land of Goolmangar, by way of a steep ascent to the main ridge that leads eventually to the Nightcap Range, which is the watershed of the Richmond-Tweed River systems.

It is difficult to say who were the first white men to penetrate here, because these hills were all part of the real 'Big Scrub', and heavy standing scrub it remained until well into the 1800s.

Thus, the cutters of cedar and pine, teak and beech were undoubtedly the first to enter this particularly steep part of the Big Scrub in the 19th century, and bullock tracks wound into and upwards along its ridges, drawing its logs to several 'shooting' places where they were 'shot' or skidded down to lower levels. Two or three vestiges of such 'shoots' can still be seen, e.g. where the logs came down to Coffee Camp to be hauled away by the teams.



Bill Gordon ploughing sweet potatoes

There is a story, which no doubt has a solid factual foundation, that one such heap of logs waiting at the top of the 'shoot' was the subject of some dispute – the cutters claiming that they had not received their proper pay, the owner holding out against their claim. Anyhow nobody won, for the logs were burnt – accidentally, of course. Thereafter the place was known for years as 'Burnt Cedar Shoot'. But when at length the Postal Department sought a suitable name for the district the name 'Koonorigan' was submitted, this being the aboriginal nomenclature meaning 'Sweet Springs' from the abundant supply of fresh spring water found there – then and now. The double 'o' was subsequently dropped and the name 'Konorigan' became the accepted one.

Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, though the country was still standing scrub, large areas were thrown open for selection and with the coming of the farmer settlers that followed, the real history of Konorigan can be said to begin.

It is then that we find names familiar to the Richmond River figuring in the settlement – that of Mr. P. O. Jackson, for instance. He is shown as having selected in 1904, then came Mr. J. McIntyre in 1906, closely followed by John Seccombe and others.

By 1910 most of the blocks had been balloted for and a young community began to knit itself together. Soon it sought some social amenities and it was right here that the people of Konorigan began to show those traits of self-help and a neighbourly unity that characterise them to the present day.

They wanted a school for their children but found the Department of Public Instruction moved much too slowly to suit them, so - they did it themselves. They built the first school. They gave the necessary land rent free for as long as it might be required for school purposes, and in March 1911 the school was opened.

## Dairy farmers 1928-1941 remember

Washing was done in round tubs on a bench, under a peach tree until a laundry was built years later. Water was carried to tubs in buckets. There was no electricity until 1933. We had a gas light in the kitchen which had to be pumped up, and one in the bedroom.

Once each year we held a dance in aid of Lismore Base Hospital and it was very well attended.

Each year the school district put on a display in The Channon Flower Show, Koonorigan won each year even though a Tuntable Creek farmer dug holes with a post hole borer and filled the hole with cow manure to grow carrots, turnips, etc, for display. They sure grew big, but he was told by the judge that they were judged as table vegetables not cow vegetables.

The teacher, Mr. Hitchcock, boarded at the Ryan home. The School won prizes in Lismore Musical Festival and the competition at The Channon for the choir. Even though all the children had to be put in the choir, some were told not to make too much



The Jacksons 1913

noise. The Choir was conducted by Mr. Hitchcock and was called a mechanical spider by some people.

We grew sweet potatoes in the 1930s to help out but only received 10/- for a corn-bag full in Sydney.

Koonorigan had an A and B grade tennis team and played competition tennis against Coffee Camp, Goolmangar, Jiggi, Blakebrook, Keerong, etc. The games were played on Saturdays, then round our table by schoolie and my eldest brother; the first couple of days, why we lost and the next couple of days what to do next time, but it was usually everyone else that lost the game, not them.

Ministers stayed at our home for the night after church because the road was too bad and the distance too far to Nimbin.

Koonorigan produced two school inspectors, a couple of councillors in Lismore, Charlie Mustard and Walter Seccombe. The latter was Terania Shire President for years, he broke the record. He was also Chairman of Norco for years and was tragically killed in a tractor accident.

The Hall was built in 1935 and first used for a Kitchen tea for Hazel Haynes and Laurie Ryan.

Cordwood was cut and carted to The Channon Butter Factory by the Ryan family, lots of it cut near the tennis court below the School.

School children rode up to Koonorigan from The Channon and Pinchin's Lane because the teacher at Koonorigan was better than the one they had.

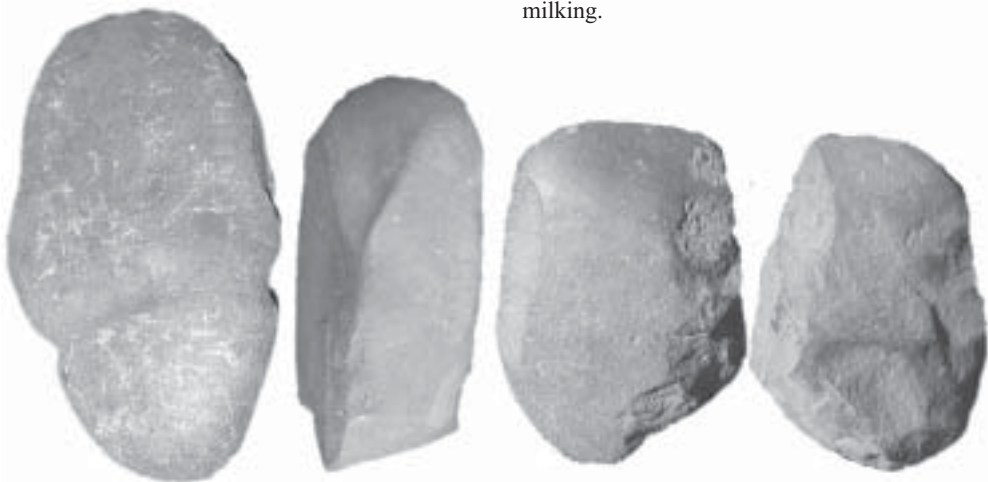


This photograph is from Richmond River Historical Society Inc. showing William Young Gordon in 1905 on a brush turkey nest at Koonorigan.

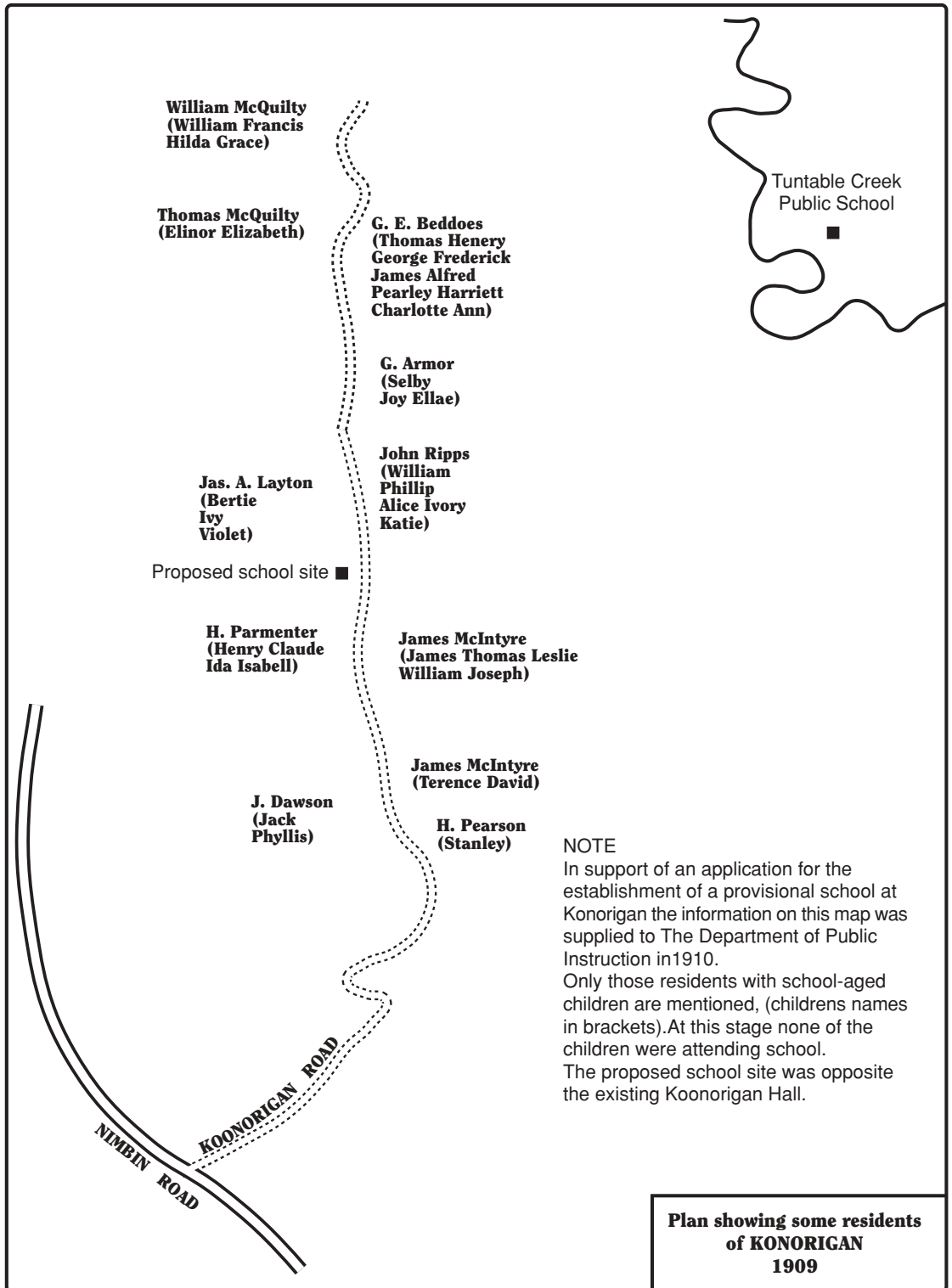
## Ivy M Ryan

When Jack Eather went to Koonorigan in 1932 as a young farmer with his parents, milking 45 jersey cows, there were 20 dairy farmers all producing cream for butter manufacture. Today, a few raise cattle and the rest of the farms have converted to other products e.g. bananas, macadamia nuts, and some are divided into hobby farms.

Of the 'old time' dairy farmers, some were on rented farms but owning their own 'going concerns', others were share farmers but the majority were owner farmers. The price of butter was 10 pence per pound at the time, but a few months later it had fallen to 6 pence. A few farmers grew small crops such as sweet potatoes, peas and beans to supplement their incomes. Jack Eather and others worked for 1 shilling an hour to make ends meet. All the milking was done by hand as there was no electricity for machines. Men who employed share farmers liked them to have a large family so that the children could help with the milking.



Aboriginal stone axeheads found in Koonorigan, ground cutting edge uppermost.



Most share farmers were paid 8 shillings in the pound. So times were hard in those Depression years.

The cream carrier was an important member of the community. On his return trip from Lismore he brought goods ordered from the Factory for the farmers and often did other shopping for them. His truck was always ready to transport groups to functions around the district and would convey the school children to sport meetings. Some children obtained a daily ride to school. One of the cream carriers was Sid Irvine, a very popular man. He was a fine cricketer and had the distinction of bowling the young Don Bradman for a duck when the latter played in the Kippax team against the 'North Coast Eleven'. Sid was invited to go to Sydney to play cricket but declined for personal reasons.

The road at that time was only lightly metalled from the foot of the hill to Gordon's Road. The remainder was just an unformed dirt track. Farmers were frequently bogged. One such occasion Jack Eather was returning home in the wee small hours from a ball at Goolmangar, dressed in his best suit, when the car became bogged. While he was attempting a rescue, it suddenly lurched forward and he fell flat on his face in the mud.

That was the last straw for him. Knowing that the residents were always ready to help themselves, he convened a meeting to see what they could do to improve the so-called 'road'. Mr. Seccombe President of Terania Shire arranged to hire a Council truck. The Koonorigan men dug metal with pick and shovel from near the boundary of Eathers. With horse drawn ploughs several farmers formed the road from there to Gordon's Road. The metal was spread and the large chunks broken up with napping hammers. Even with this 'new' road, problems often occurred after heavy rain near the spring below the 'Devil's



Cecil Osbourne's bullock team.

Elbow'. Some years later, with the same spirit of self-help, the residents led by Mr. Seccombe approached the Shire with an offer to pay a special rate for 10 years if the Council would agree to bitumen seal the road. A quarry was formed at Seccombe's to obtain metal.

The present Community Centre was formerly the local provisional school. After the new School was built the old building was taken over by the people as their social centre, but it was a sorry sight. There was no glass in the windows and the door had fallen off, with the floor in poor condition. However, functions continued to be held until one night when several people had gathered at Seccombe's to listen to the 'phantom' cricket broadcast. A talk followed and it was suggested that possibly something could be done to improve the social centre. A meeting was called and 10 farmers agreed to put in 5 pounds each and these men were the Debenture holders. A quote was obtained from a carpenter who was living in the barn at Bennett's place (now Braidwood's). He offered to do the work for 20 pounds, and the rest of the money provided the timber etc. It was a great occasion when the 'official opening' took place. The lights were carbide gas. There was no water tank so a 4 gallon drum was used to fetch water from the house opposite for boiling up for the supper.

As the years went by the so-called Hall needed to be enlarged, so a stage and dressing room were added, also a verandah and a larger supper room. The Friday night Euchre Tournaments were much looked forward to by the local people and some came from other nearby centres to play.

Any girl who was to be married was given a Kitchen Tea by the community and anyone reaching the age



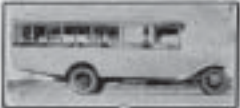
Cecil Osbourne

Butter £596-19-4	Pigs 42 pigs £132-7-5	Pigs Bought. 34 pigs £38-9-0 12 stores from cart for 2 cows 1 Hog.
Cattle sold 6 = £32	at Present	15. own rearing 11 Bought £6-0-0 2 sold 10 id. 1 W.O.G. 7-2 condemned 29
" Dick 1	7 Head	
Total.		
Cattle, cows 54		HORSES.
Heifers 10		2 Draught horses
Yearlings & calves 12		1 " Mare
Stalls 2		1 light Fidy.
Bullocks 4		
52		half hides 35-3/8-5 Freight on Cream £17-7-6 Blacksmith £11-10-6
Shire rates £40. 11. 11		3 hands at £1.10.0 per week from 1st July 1926 till 30th June 1927 board for
Fire Insurance 14. 0. 0		3 hands for same period 30/- per week.
Fire Insurance 3. 16. 8		1 hand for 5 weeks at £1.10.0 per week also board at £1.10.0 for 5 weeks.
Payment to brown on Farm. £21. 0. 0		18 trips to Lismore at 10/- per trip with pigs.
Workers Compensation Insurance £7. 16. 0		
Various items bought for working Farm £89. 4. 3.		

Expenditure and income for the Pattersons in the financial year 1926-27.

North Coast Motor and Coach Factory  
 Plot 79 NORTH LISMORE  
 Mr. R. Patterson.  
 The Channon.  
 Dr. to WILLIAM RILEY & SON  
 COACH AND MOTOR BODY BUILDERS, GENERAL BLACKSMITHS AND WHEELWRIGHTS UNDERTAKERS  
 All Kinds of Work in the Trade done with Neatness and Dispatch.

10 1 Bullock axle 10/-



of 21 was given a birthday party. At one time a Concert Party was formed and great rehearsal evenings were held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cox, the latter providing the music for the items. The first Concert proved so successful that the Party was invited to present their show at surrounding local halls.

One of the first Departmental teachers at the new School was Mr. Hitchcock. He remained at the School for 17 years until he married and had to leave as there was no accommodation for a married teacher. He was renowned for his choir, which won the Trophy Cup for a One-teacher School Choir at the Lismore Musical Festival on several occasions. During his time 20 children from The Channon used to ride up to Koonorigan School as the parents were dissatisfied with the teacher there. There wasn't enough grass in the horse paddock, so during school hours the gate was opened to allow the horses to feed in the schoolyard, which became as bare as the road.

Single men teachers were appointed to the School after Mr. Hitchcock left, but at the end of the war a married man with a wife and child arrived. Another child was 'on the way' and the only board available was inadequate. So the locals, feeling sorry for him, joined together to work out a way of providing a place for him and his family to live. Twelve residents acted as guarantors and borrowed money from the bank to build a house. When the School was finally closed some 25 years later the school house became an asset to the community. When it was sold the money was used to improve the Hall, build a tennis court, etc. It is a far cry from the old provisional school building and a credit to the local people.

During the War a Civic Fund was set up and functions held to provide comforts for the boys from the district who had enlisted. A piano had been purchased some years previously and usually someone had to go to The Channon or Coffee Camp to bring a lady to play for the dances. Sometimes Mr. Strong from Blakebrook used to come and play all evening for 1 pound. Mr. George Graham would occasionally be engaged to provide music with a concertina.

Mrs. Swift, from Coffee Camp, declined to play any more after her son was taken prisoner-of-war in Singapore. Fortunately he returned.



Charles Mustard bringing empty cream cans back from The Channon Factory.

For several years a C.W.A. group functioned at Koonorigan and money was raised to help several worthy causes. The group also raised money to extend the supper room at the Hall and to build a barbecue in memory of the late Mr. Walter Seccombe in recognition of his community work.

During the dairy farm days a special carrier for pigs came from The Channon. Farmers usually 'drove' their cattle to market by horse. Jack Eather often started off with 2 or 3 of his own and finished up being asked along the road to include neighbouring farmers' cattle and would finally have 8 or 9.

## Sweeney

William James & Ada Mary Sweeney, farmers 1909-1929, came to Konorigan from the Condobolin district in southern NSW. Mr. Sweeney had selected a block there about the turn of the 20th century and met and married his wife in the early 1900s. After a series of bad seasons in their area he acted on the suggestion of his sister (Mrs. M. L. Sackett), then living in Lismore, to come and have a look at the North Coast region. Liking what he saw, he decided to make a move and rented a farm here at Konorigan (Maxwell's). After returning to Condobolin to dispose of his property there, he then proceeded to transport the family possessions to Konorigan by means of a two horse wagon with an aged uncle of his wife for company, the journey via Armidale, Nymboida, Grafton, etc. and taking approximately six weeks. His wife Ada, who was then awaiting the birth of their fourth child, had remained behind in Cootamundra until he (Alan) duly arrived and some weeks later made the journey by train, boat, etc. bringing her four youngsters with her to rejoin her husband on the newly rented farm at Konorigan. In these days of fast, comfortable transport, paved roads, etc., one tends to gloss over journeys such as these, however they must have been quite a handful in those days.

After several years on this farm (hard work like everyone else), he had the chance to buy a place of his own (Cameron's), a mile or so to the east on the road to The Channon, where the family (now numbering seven) lived, worked, went to school, etc., for the next four or five years.



Rob Mustard boils the billy, with his dog Peter

Mr. Sweeney then decided on another move, selling the farm to Mr. Mustard, and bought the butcher's shop in The Channon where they lived for approximately three years before moving once again back to Konorigan, building a new house on the property on Konorigan Road just south of the Cox's road junction, opposite what is today known as 'Heather Brae'.

## Letters 1926

*Following are extracts from letters recieved by a Koonorigan resident from family and friends in 1926.*

"We had a rotten trip down to Sydney. After Grafton there were 11 and 12 in the compartment ("dog-boxes", I call them) and Joyce was the only girl all the rest were men and boys. Still we made the best of it as we had some jovial company. I roused the ire of one grouchy occupant of the carriage by opening a bottle of lemonade on him. The top came off the bottle and the contents squirted in all directions.



William Mustard 1910

Two gentlemen in the corner continually expressed the desire through the night to have a bottle of beer and a bag of prawns.”

“Yesterday was Anniversary Day and Annie, Joyce and I went to Manly. This afternoon I intend to go into the City to see a man descend from an aeroplane at a height of 400 ft. in a parachute. This man, Lieut. Q’Viller intends to make a parachute descent from a height of 10,000 ft. into the sea at Bondi tomorrow and is going to demonstrate a novel method of surfing with the parachute, weather permitting.”

“I am pleased to hear you have bought a wireless set and I do hope you get the greatest possible enjoyment out of it. The youth with whom I am sharing a room made a very cheap set lately. He had two pairs of headphones, a crystal set cost him 6/6 and two batteries 5/6; thus he made a wireless set at a cost of 12/-. Any night we can hear programmes from Farmers (2FC) and Broadcasters (2BG). Of course, we cannot hear any long distance stations like Melbourne or Brisbane.”

“I had an adventure last weekend. Went to Lismore last Friday and left Bonnie and the sulky at the Lismore Hotel, and stayed at Talbots. At 9 a.m. on Saturday I received a phone ring from Tuncester. Bonnie had escaped from the stables with the harness on and got out as far as T. They took the harness off and put her in a paddock. The next thing she’d jumped the fence and set off for Casino. She evidently went along the Casino road as far as Leycester and



The Cox family grew pumpkins for pig food. Back row ?? Front row Keith, Alice and Doris Cox.

1

THIS IS OUR ONLY RECEIPT AND MUST BE PRESENTED WHEN PAYMENT IS MADE.

CLARENCE RIVER COUNTY COUNCIL  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1938

ACCOUNT No. 26/1938

K & MISS D PATRICKSON  
THE CHANDON

**ELECTRICITY ACCOUNT**

THIS ACCOUNT MUST BE PAID WITHIN 14 DAYS FROM DATE, OTHERWISE YOUR SUPPLY IS LIABLE TO BE DISCONTINUED.

DATE 18/11/1938

READING	READING		MULTIPLIER	UNITS CONSUMED		CHARGE	APPEARS	TOTAL OWING
	PRESENT	PREVIOUS		LAST	RATE			
482	320		4x3	194 D	7.00	1 10 5		
20	16			538 HW	4.00	1 15 0		
62	42			SC		16 0		
1182	644						*****	4 8 30

**CODE**

L. Lighting  
D. Domestic Power  
P. Industrial Power  
HE. Meter Rent  
W. Window Lighting  
SC. Service Charge  
K. Surcharges

PAYMENT OF THIS Account may be made by Cash at the Council's Office, GAFFNEY and COFF'S HAMMERS, or at the Office of the Bankers of SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ALBANY, MACKAY, or the Bank of SYDNEY, HULLMANN, ADELAIDE, or other Bankers, YARLATA.

CHEQUES, BANKY ORGANS or POSTAL NOTES should be made payable to the CLARENCE RIVER COUNTY COUNCIL.

CHEQUES should be crossed "NOT NEGOTIABLE"

Payment of this account may be made BY CHECK at Council's HEAD OFFICE, GAFFNEY, or any of the Council's OFFICES above FREE OF CHARGE.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS MUST BE NOTIFIED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL IMMEDIATELY.

# FEDERAL INCOME TAX

Based on Income derived in the Year ended 30th June, 1924.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

IN ALL COMMUNICATIONS

ASSESSMENT No. **F/62464**

QUOTE THIS NUMBER.



All Letters, &c., should be addressed "The Deputy Commissioner of Taxation," Warwick Building, Hamilton Street, Sydney.

## Notice of Assessment.

To **George Paterson, Esq.,**  
The Channon,  
Via LISMORE.

In accordance with the provisions of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1922-1924*, I have assessed the amount of Federal Income Tax payable by you in respect of your taxable income for the period above set out, as under:—

Amount of Taxable Income.	Rate.	Amount of Tax.		
	Pence in the £	£	s.	d.
From Personal Exertion ... £ 54	5,4182	1	4	5
From Property ... .. £ .....				
Rebate of Tax ... ..				
Additional Tax, Late Lodgment ...				
Do do Omitted Income...				
Total Amount of Tax payable ... £		1	4	5

The amount of General Exemption allowed in this assessment is £ 287  
For method of computing this allowance see explanation below.

Year of Income.	Taxable Income.
1920-21 ...	£ .....
1921-22 ...	£ nil
1922-23 ...	£ 688
1923-24 ...	£ 54
TOTAL ...	£ 742
AVERAGE ...	£ 247

The rate of tax is based upon the average income set out opposite.

**W. H. WHIDDON,**  
Deputy Commissioner of Taxation.

Dated at Sydney,  
20th March, 1925.

**This Tax may be paid without fine up to 19th May, 1925.**

All cheques, drafts, or postal notes forwarded in payment of Income Tax should be made payable to the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation, be crossed, and marked "Not Negotiable."

N.B.—The special form for use when forwarding Income Tax, which is transmitted with this notice, should be produced or forwarded, or the Assessment Number quoted, as above, when payment is being made. Hours of payment—9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

**Objection may be lodged against this Assessment** within forty-two days after service by post of this notice, but notwithstanding any objection or appeal, the full amount of the tax must be paid within the time stated on the face hereof.

Forms of notices of objection may be obtained on application to the Deputy Commissioner, Warwick Building, Hamilton Street, Sydney.

The Paterson farm stretched from Cox Road Koonorigan to Tunttable Creek at The Channon.

crossed over to Rock Valley from there because at about 10.30 she arrived at Oakeys. I was rather in a fix. However Ashton Woolley brought me out in his car after he shut his shop. The sulky is still in Lismore and the harness arrived home this morning.”

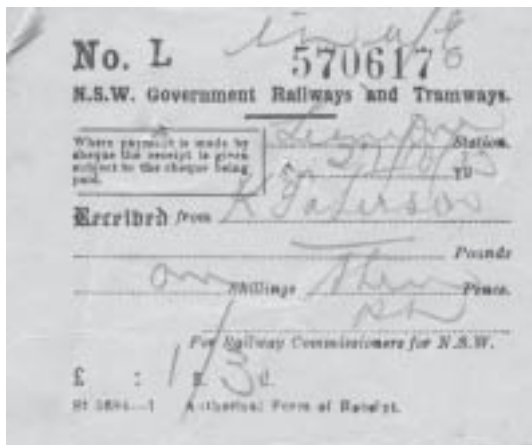
“We still play matches here, but are pretty lukewarm. There are too many blessed rows and rumours of rows in the club for anyone to be very fussy. However we manage to have a fairly decent time out of it so the rows don’t concern us very much. Of course I’m always very discreetly neutral I’m more interested in other affairs.”

“We ran a Fancy Dress Ball last night and had a great crowd. We made over \$10 after all expenses were paid.

I just saw some of the Rappville ladies going over to the tennis court. I really don’t know how they can play after the dance last night. Of course some of the girls don’t get many dances and of course they’re not tired next day, but I’m always dead beat the next day.”

“I bought a warm coat last time I was in Lismore \$4.4.0. It’s been worth it already though it was a big wrench to take that amount out of my purse all at one go though.”

“Our tennis club is proving rather a lively institution. Everyone is fairly wound up and just waiting for someone to start a big bust up. A few people have already sizzled over. Our captain resigned and then withdrew his resignation. One lady (?) swore at another lady (?) on the court one day. I never miss tennis. In fact I attend with sickening regularity in the hopes of seeing some fun.



Train ticket to Lismore, 1933

I’m dead unlucky though, and I’m sure the real flare up will come when I’m away sometime.”

“Winter is coming closer isn’t it. I’ve started to wear a warm petticoat already and nearly live in that sleeveless jumper of yours.

Jim didn’t get home till nearly one o’clock on Friday morning. I didn’t worry till after ten as I knew the roads were bad, but by 12 I was frantic so I got a lantern and went over through the swamp to Jame’s place and told Artie that my husband was lost and would he please come and look for him. He said “certainly” and got dressed and brought me home on a worse track than the one I went over on, the grass was just about over my head and I was up to my knees in water most of the way. I had a pony in the yard and caught him, and just as Artie got down to the lagoon, I head the cart coming, and all my anxieties fell away into nothing.

375 DEPARTMENT OF THE VALUER GENERAL, N.S.W. - NOTICE OF VALUATION

VALUATION DISTRICT OF BERANIA

NAME OF OWNER: PATERSON, MRS. JANE ELIZABETH EST. LATE

ADDRESS: THE CHAMBER.

PROPERTY: HOUSE

VALUATION: 2094.25.00

DATE OF VALUATION: 9.4.34

15 AUG 1934

VALUATION YEAR	VALUATION	VALUATION	VALUATION	VALUATION	VALUATION
9.4.34	112		2094.25.00	2090	4300 216

I made a cup of tea, then went to bed at 2 in the morning as we got up at 3.30 the morning before you can just imagine the state I was in next day, and then next evening I got worried as the sun was just going down and Jim hadn't brought the cows up from the river bank. It transpired that we nearly had a drowning fatality down our bank. We have a big chap (like that Olsen man in Kyogle) over 6 ft tall, fencing for us. It is 6 miles to his home over Erichs bridge, and only 2 over our creek so he decided to ride across. Jim told him it was risky after the flood, but he said "That if our cows could cross he could too" so he rode in, with his dinner bag with four mace rings on his back and his axe tied onto his belt. The first step in and the horse and rider disappeared. When they came to the surface, the man grabbed hold of the horses head and down they went again. He nearly drowned the horse then let go. Jim got a stick out to him which he grabbed and it broke and he went under again. Then Jim raced down the bank a few yards and caught hold of a tree with one arm and caught the man with the other. The man couldn't swim and never even tried to strike out to save himself, he absolutely did his block and if Jim hadn't been there he would have drowned, to tell you how frightened he was, he had hold of his hat in one hand all the time, so how could he try to get out. He had to rest for 1/2 an hour before he could walk and he didn't come back on Sat. so he must be fairly crook on it."

"I don't think I'll go to any more dances out here. They are so countrified, the men in grey suits or gabadine trousers and grey coats. There weren't more than a dozen men dressed decently. An invitation



Pat and Alma Jackson 1930

affair and they advertised it "All spinisters cordially invited" and a lot of the under world of Casino arrived on the scene like the lowest of Kyogle. Of course the Dyraaba bachelors were delighted. "Casino girls" and all the little chaps of the town in their Eton bags and double breasted coats with their beautiful topics of conversation, I know I was sitting next to them. The hall was crowded, nearly 300 people there and Greens orchestra from Casino. My legs were black and blue for a week after, they have no idea of time but dash madly all over the floor."

**THE CHANNON AND DUNOON**

February 1935

M Paterson Recd

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*The Tea of Flavor*

Feb	7	35 Bager 12/9 50 Flour 7/6	1	0	3			
		1 in Kerosene 4/ 1 D Brush 2/	10					
		2 Bus Tea 5/2 1 Vestas 8d	5	10				
		1 Envelopes 3d 2 Anchavette 2/6	2	9				
		1 PMU Sauce 1/4 1 Sand Soap 4d	1	8				
		2 Max Cheese 1/8	1	8				
	14	2 G B Soap 2/ 1 P B Powder 1/11 1/2	3	11 1/2		2	2	2
		1 Cornflour 8d 1 Dr Apricots 1/	1	8				
	21	1 Caustic Soda 1/3 1 P M U Sauce 1/4	2	7				
		1 Bus Tea 2/7 1/2 C Porter 1/ 3 Rice 1/	4	7				
		1 Jam 10d Honey 1/	1	10				14 7 1/2
	28	1 Honey 3/6 Axe Handle 2/ Junket 5d	6	3				
		Rope 1/3 1 Max Cheese 10d	2	5				
						2	3	5 1 1/2

“I’m a great worker, I am. I milked 30 cows, separated (Engine), fed the calves and pigs, washed up dairy, caught a horse in exactly 3 hours.”

“The only improvement we’ve had lately is the instalation of the Electric Light, last week. I’ve got 5 lights on. There are still 3 bedrooms without. The lights cost 30/- each and 1 pound application fee. We - Muriel and I were hanging off about a big Miller lamps for the long room and then suddenly we got the whole 5. It just happened that Ron paid up some back board (since Easter) so instead of squandering it on little things (like food) we gave it to Dad to put into the lights. Of course Dad paid the Shire fee and the remainder from our part and to keep the lights switched off when no one’s in a room. Its a bit too brilliant if you are sick, as I was last week.”



The Browns take a ride on the slide

At that time the schoolteacher boarded with the Browns. Beryl remembers the school children were often taken for an excursion down to Goolmangar Creek (Dickies Crossing) for a swim.

Very few people had transport in those days, and so they made their own local entertainment. There was tennis; everyone had to wear whites. Other social activities included a Crib (Cribbage) Club, as well as a *Dad and Dave* concert, and a dance every 2 weeks in the Koonorigan Hall. Locals provided music at these events (fiddle, accordion and piano). Dances in the Koonorigan Hall were not just fun, but an opportunity for the single members of the community to meet each other. In 1942 Beryl was playing the piano at a dance in the Koonorigan Hall when Bill Graham approached her. Bill, who grew up on a dairy farm down the road, was in his army uniform, on 2 weeks leave. He asked Beryl to dance when she got a chance. She said she could get Mrs. Swift to fill in. Bill was away for two more years, but when he came back in 1944 they married.

## Brown

Beryl Brown went to school in Koonorigan and grew up in a house, now gone, located on what is now the Dunbar’s property on the eastern side of Koonorigan Road. The front part of the house was also used as the Koonorigan Post Office. Beryl remembers it being used as a Post Office from the 1920s until she left the area in 1946. The Post Office was also the telephone exchange, the old fashioned manual type: a panel of plugs, wires and switches. Calls lasted 3 minutes, unless you were ‘extending’. This 24 hours a day job was Beryl’s. It was also her duty to pick up the mail from a coach at the intersection of Koonorigan Road and Nimbin Road. To do this she would ride a horse down the Koonorigan cutting at 7.30 am. One horse she rode had a bad experience with a passenger coach and would not go near it. When this horse was used the mail had to be left on a fence post and picked up from there. Around this time (1943) there were 22 dairy farms in Koonorigan and each family collected their mail from the Post Office.

Beryl’s parents also ran a 100-acre dairy farm, and it was her job to help with the milking. The cream was picked up by Sid Irving and taken to The Channon. In those days butter sold for 3 pence a pound. Beryl was one of 7 children; she also picked beans on Jack McIntyre and Bruce Duncan’s farm for one shilling an hour.



The Brown family lived in this house which was also the Koonorigan Post Office

## Beddoes

G.E. Beddoes was one of the first settlers in Koonorigan. He raised 5 children, Thomas, George, James, Pearl and Charlotte, on his dairy farm in Cox Road. His son, Thomas Beddoes, eventually took over the farm. One of Thomas's children was Gordon Beddoes. In 1948 a girl from Coffee Camp, Ivy, rode her horse up the hill, overland, to attend a dance in the Koonorigan Hall. Gordon Beddoes noticed her and after several years of courting they married. Parents were fairly strict in those days, so to spend time with Ivy, Gordon would ride his horse down a track near the School to Coffee Camp and play cards with the whole family. They did not get much time alone. Ivy was from a large family, there were 12-16 people living in the house. She left school when she was thirteen and a half. Her parents owned a dairy farm and grew bananas. Ivy was paid two shillings per fortnight to milk the neighbour's cows. With so many in the family money was tight. For Christmas they might get some material for pyjamas or a pair of shoes, but you would get nothing on your birthday. There was plenty of fun to be had, tennis on the weekend, and a dance every week at either Koonorigan, Coffee Camp, Goolmangar, The Channon, Nimbin or Tuntable Falls. Ivy would go to the pictures at Lismore or Nimbin once or twice a month, whenever her parents would let her go.

After Gordon and Ivy married they moved onto a farm in Koonorigan, growing bananas, peas and beans, and working off the farm. In the 1970s some Koonorigan women could not find transport to The Channon to attend the monthly meetings of the Country Women's Association so they started a Koonorigan branch. Ivy was a member and she remembers attending meetings and organizing dances and picnic days. The women made cakes to sell to raise money for the school. The Koonorigan CWA only lasted 4 years. At that time many dairy farms were closing and farming women had to seek work in the towns to make ends meet.



Gordon Beddoes courted Ivy on this horse.



Tom Beddoes 1914



Beddoes bails and homestead on Cox Road Koonorigan in 1949

## Haynes

Vera Haynes was 11 months old when her parents, Earnest and Gladys, brought her to Koonorigan. They were to be share farmers on Walter Seccombe's farm, next to the Jacksons. For the next 20 years they hand milked 60-80 cows, keeping two fifths of the profits, although they generally made nothing in the months of May, June and July. The other children in the family were Elsie, Irene, Grace, Alice, Millie, Will, Betty, Heather and Alan. When she was aged 5 Vera had to cut up chips for the fire and round up the calves. By the time she was 7 she was milking cows and kept doing so until she was 20. All the oldest girls milked, carried around the 10 gallon milk cans and helped dad feed the pigs. Vera remembers it as a happy, but busy time. Rising at 4am with her father she packed her own lunch and, after milking the cows, she would race off to school. After school she would run home to help with the second milking. Any spare time was spent bagging sweet potatoes, scattering feed for the cows and brushing scrub. For power there were 2 draught horses and one riding horse. Like all the other children in Koonorigan the 10 Haynes children went barefoot, except for Sunday school and going to town. Once per month a big grocery order was delivered from town with such things as potatoes and dried peas. Rabbits were caught for tucker and skins. Vera left school at 15 and as there was no way of getting in to Lismore she did a year of correspondence. Some of her sisters made their debut at Goolmangar. After dances in the Koonorigan Hall she remembers having to walk home in the dark. During the war years the ladies of Koonorigan were taught to make camouflage nets. (The Red Cross came and taught the local women and school children to knit cotton washers during the first world war). For recreation the family would play cricket in the yard before sundown, or the children would play 'catch me'. If you wanted to get away from everyone you would climb a tree. Around 1940 Jack Thompson would drive his van from Nimbin and pull up outside the Koonorigan School at lunchtime, selling ice cream, frankfurts (cheerios) and other treats. Bruce Duncan, former MLA for Lismore also recalls this: 'I remember the Nimbin traders in the thirties and early forties supplied meat, groceries and smallgoods to Koonorigan. Jack Thompson sold smallgoods from his vehicle and his stops at the Koonorigan School were always welcome. The opportunity for a break from the classroom to buy a penny or a threepenny ice cream in a cone was a special treat.'



Cecil Osbourne taking the cream up to the gate on the slide



Norman Seccombe, Anne Patterson, Colin Seccombe and Millie Paterson

## Essery

Ray and Norma Essery came with their 7 children to Koonorigan in 1961. Just in time too as the Koonorigan School was considering closing down due to lack of student numbers. Five of their children were of school age. For the next 13 years the family milked 65 cows and kept 80-100 pigs. This was the same farm that the Haynes lived on, later to be known as 'Cricklewood'. They also put in 4 acres of bananas. Between milkings they cut bananas on a Wednesday, packed them on Thursday (30 cases) and sent them away on the carrier on Friday. Clive Winkler was the carrier and his truck also carted the cream, pigs and cattle for the area. The bananas grew well but transport costs and low prices eventually made it unprofitable.

Growing bananas often proved to be a heart-stopping experience with brown snakes in the litter and pythons curled up around the bunches. One night it snowed at Koonorigan and Nimbin. Next morning Ray found 5 of his cows huddled together dead under a tree, presumably having died of cold. He boiled them up in an old 44 gallon drum and fed them to the pigs, who loved it. The Esserys kept ducks in a pen but soon noticed that one was taken every night. Ray put some strychnine on a piece of steak and left it in the pen overnight. Next morning he found a huge wedge tailed eagle dead. Aged 57 Ray sold the farm at a time when most people were getting out of milking. He said the farm was too steep and too dirty (weeds).

Norm and Judy Hodgeson bought the farm in 1974, the year of the big flood in Lismore. They changed from dairying to beef cattle. As with most other people who did this in Koonorigan, it was eventually necessary for one of the partners to work off the farm. Judy was a teacher for 14 years. In the 1990s greater diversity crept into Koonorigan as various people planted macadamia nuts, coffee, custard apples, paw paw and lemon myrtle. The steepest half of the Hodgeson's farm was planted to timber production.



Keith, Judy and Douglas Cox in 1947

James McDonald Cox took up land in Coffee Camp in 1909. The 700acre property ran right up the hill to what is now known as Cox Road, Koonorigan. In those years a settler could select land on condition that the land had to be cleared and a crop harvested within 2 years. Starting at the bottom of the hill, trees would be cut most of the way through. A big tree felled at the top of the hill would bring the whole lot down. A team of local 'Hindus' would scramble among the fallen timber and dig holes to put corn seed in. Very soon a crop could be harvested and the government satisfied. It was then the farmers job to burn the timber and grub out the stumps and roots. The Hindus lived around the spring on Cox's property, planting mangoes there, and performing their specialised task for all the settlers in the area. James' wife Alice (Lanagan) suffered from asthma and it was decided that a house up in Koonorigan would be better for her health. The family, including the 2 children Keith Lanagan and Doris McDonald, moved to 'Yurunga' in 1921. The house cost 309 pounds and 6 shillings to build. Alice did not suffer from asthma again. They brought their road with them. The road to their house in Coffee Camp was known as Cox Road. The road to their new house in Koonorigan was also called Cox Road. This became confusing as they were close together but not connected so the one in Coffee Camp was renamed Swift Road. James died in 1932 and the Coffee Camp half of the farm had to be sold to pay probate. Keith Cox (1903 – 1974) took over the dairy. He and his wife Iris Jane (Graham) also grew corn and pumpkins to feed the pigs. Iris was always known as Judy Cox. The lower half of the farm was used for breeding Gurnsey cattle.



The Cox homestead in 1921

One morning in 1955, after a lot of rain, the Cox's cows did not come up for their milking. After a search they were found on a patch of ground 400 metres across that had slipped 2 metres down the hill. The sides were too steep for them to climb out.

A neighbour who had bought the land next to the spring had a problem with Crofton weed and bought 20 goats to do the clearing. The Cox's cows had never seen goats before and they went crazy. It took a week for them to settle back into their routine. Wild dogs eventually ate all the goats.

Douglas Graham Cox was born in 1945 the only child of Keith and Judy. At the morning milking it was usual to take any children that were too young to leave alone in the house down to the dairy where they would sleep in a box while the cows were milked. One such morning Douglas crawled out of his temporary bed and headed for the pump. Luck was with him that day because Barney, the dog, was on guard to drag him back from the exposed belts, flywheel and hot metal. Douglass did not start school until he was 6, he had to wait till he was big enough to catch and saddle his horses, Jack and Tim. Even so he had to get on the tank stand to mount. He remembers the teachers Don Wallace, Stan Rixon and Athol Fairley. The boy he sat next to in school would chew his pencil, which annoyed Douglas. He brought a hot chilli pepper from home and squeezed the juice onto the school pencils. It was not long before most of the class were crying. Douglas thought it was best to start crying too. He got away with this, in fact he never got the cane and he only saw it used 3 times in 6 years.

By the time he was 10 he was brushing lantana and branding and castrating the cattle.



When it was time to go to high school he would ride his bicycle to the end of Cox Road and catch the bus, which took an hour to travel to Lismore via Pinchins Lane and Blakebrook. On the way home he might pinch one of Wallace Jackson's sweet potatoes and eat it raw, with a handful of peas that he similarly acquired. Douglas left high school in 1962 and went to work. He boarded in Lismore during the week and came home on weekends. In 1966 the Cox's left Koonorigan after selling the farm to Graham Smith for \$6000.



Tennis at the Osbournes, back John McIntyre, Bruce Duncan, ? front Patty McIntyre, Grace Haynes and Stan Rixon.

## Osbourne

Cecil Osbourne married Frances Osbourne and had two children, John and Nancy. The family lived at 'Clearvue' at the end of Cox Road, Koonorigan. Dairy farmers, they milked 100 cows and kept 300 pigs on 132 acres. In the early days the cream was taken to The Channon butter factory. The cream cart made 19 stops along Koonorigan. When the factory closed down in 1946 the cream was taken daily to Lismore. Cecil had a bullock team which he used to cart timber between Tuntable Creek and The Channon. The farm also grew pineapples, beans, peas and bananas. In the 1940s Lismore was a 2 hour sulky ride. Later on, when cars were more common, they had to put chains on to get up the Koonorigan Cutting. Cattle were walked to Lismore for sale, and the pigs were taken in a cart. The Osbournes had a tennis court next to the house, up until about 1968. When tennis was played at night the lights could be seen as far away as Clunes ('Clearvue' is 300 metres above sea level). When tennis competitions were held teams would come from Lismore, The Channon, Goolmangar, Nimbin, Coffee Camp and Whian Whian. After the game the players would come in the house for supper. At times there were two other tennis courts in Koonorigan. As children both John and Nancy rode a horse to school. Nancy went to school until she was 12, and remembers going by car down Pinchin Lane for a swim with the class and teacher Don Wallace. On Melbourne Cup Day all the pupils at Koonorigan School were allowed to cross the road to the teacher's residence to listen to the Melbourne Cup on the radio.



Cecil and Nancy Osbourne



Cecil Osbourne



'Clearvue' the Osbourne's house and tennis court



Back row Jim Sheddon, Cecil Osbourne, John Osbourne.  
Front row Midge Patterson, Francis Osbourne, ?



Mary Mustard in the dark dress



Nancy Osbourne

## Small

Elizabeth Small came to Koonorigan with her husband to take up dairy farming in 1918. At the time the other families who were already in Koonorigan were Sweeny, Cox, Seccombe and Watt. The farm they moved on to was rented from the Seccombes, and was located next to where the Koonorigan Hall is today. Twice each day 50 cows were milked by hand. Elizabeth acted as midwife in Koonorigan, she had 14 children of her own. During the First World War the Red Cross came to Koonorigan to teach the locals how to knit cotton washers for the war effort (during the Second World War they were taught to make nets). One of Elizabeth's children, Heather, was born the day peace was declared. What followed was a 3 day, 3 night party, between milkings.

Maggie Small. Elizabeth's tenth child was Maggie, who was 13 years old when the family moved to Koonorigan in 1918. Maggie was chosen to turn the key to open the new school in 1920. She later went back to school as sewing teacher. Maggie married her neighbour, becoming a Turner and moved on to a farm on the other side of Koonorigan Hall. They had 5 children and spent 42 years living in Koonorigan.



Elizabeth Small 1918

## Turner

Joyce Turner was one of Maggie Turner's children, born in 1934. She remembers once a year the school inspector's visit. There was always advanced warning, and much worrying. The children were expected to sit up straight and be attentive when the teacher was holding lessons, all the while being watched by the inspector. Nobody wore shoes to school, there was no disgrace, they were just not needed. At lunch time tennis was played in the court near the school. There was a visiting library in the form of a wooden box full of books that could be borrowed. When all the books had been read they were taken away by the Education Department and a new box would arrive. The Koonorigan school had a little silver stove to keep students warm in the winter, and a piano. One year there was no teacher, so there was no schooling.

In the summer months, Don Wallace, the Koonorigan school teacher, would take the pupils down to Dickies Crossing on Goolmangar Creek for a swim after school. As many as possible, about a dozen, would cram into his car for the trip. Those who could not fit in would get to go next time. Don would teach everyone to swim, they would be gone for about 2 hours. The Turners lived just a few houses from the school. Nevertheless, when John McIntyre, the cream carrier turned up every second day the Turner children would pile on board with all their other class-mates for



Lizzie and Maggie Small, the first two students to attend the new Koonorigan School in 1920, photographed in 2001.

a free ride to school. It was a matter of principle.

Before a dance was to be held in the Koonorigan Hall, sawdust and kerosene were put on the floor and the children were allowed to slide around to spread it. It gave the timber the right slippery surface for dancing. If children came to a dance they were not allowed outside. Men would stash bottles of beer in the lantana across the road and sneak out for a drink. A billy was boiled in a tin shed outside, for refreshments.

In those days, you were not allowed to see your parents drinking beer. Children of all ages were allowed to dance, except at a 'Ball', when children were not allowed to attend at all. Bob Mustard had a movie camera and projector and would show movies in the hall.

Albert Mallett brought a vegetable truck up to Koonorigan at regular but not predictable intervals. Another man came selling fish. Bread and meat were left in the cream box (brought up from The Channon by the cream carrier. Lloyd Beddoes brought the groceries.

Lorraine Turner remembers family life in the 1940s and '50s as being safe and happy. Those days, in Koonorigan, there was no domestic violence, no drunkenness, and drugs were unheard of. Children would spend their spare time playing cricket, tennis, rounders, visit friends and climb trees. Their father was strict, children had to go outside when the grown ups were talking. Children would have chores to do like stencilling the potato bags, sweep the bails, milk, chop wood, light the stove, get lunches, set the table and wash dad's stiff old work clothes on a scrubbing board. Children were not allowed to watch when a pig was being killed, nor were they allowed to talk when the news was on the radio. Jack Eather was a water diviner, he found water on the Turner's farm using a forked willow stick.



Tom Turner

## Jackson

Prior to 1903 the area around Koonorigan was known as Burnt Cedar. In 1906 a list of people who voted at The Channon included two people who lived at Konorigan (spelt with 2 "o"s in those days). They were George Edward Harvey Jackson and Povey Oswald Jackson, both farmers. In the 1940s there were 22 families in Koonorigan, all dairy farmers. In those days a church minister would come from Nimbin to hold a service in the Hall, about once per month.



Koonorigan School 1940

The three main religions of the time, Church of England, Methodist and Presbyterian, held separate services and Sunday School.

Brothers George and Povy Jackson were the first dairy farmers in Koonorigan. One of Povy's sons Wallace Jackson married Phyllis and they eventually took over the farm. Wallace was the last dairy farmer in Koonorigan, the last cow going through the bails in 1990. Milking was a twice daily activity, Phyllis and Wallace shared the work. The wind-up alarm would go off at a quarter to four in the morning. An unhurried cup of tea was had, then Wallace would leave to round up the cows in the dark. He would get the chip heater going to flush out the milkers. He would then prepare and assemble the separator and feed the pigs. Phyllis would milk the cows and hose down. Wallace would wash up and take the cream cans across to the gate on a slide. The slide was pulled by a horse, or in later years it was put on the tractor. By 9am it was time for breakfast and seeing the



Alma Jackson with Wallace.



Pat and Alma Jackson 1930

children off to school. The whole procedure was repeated at 3pm, and every day of the year for the next 47 years. Only the cream was sold, the rest of the milk was fed to the pigs. About once per month all the cattle had to be dipped for ticks. On those days milking would be finished earlier. The milkers would be held in a yard, the non-milkers and the bull had to be rounded up. You then had to wait your turn, there were likely to be hundreds of cattle waiting to be dipped. Wallace was happy to go last and the dip was just across the road from their front gate. If you were really unlucky a car would come along just as they were crossing the road and spook the lot, scattering them all the way down to The Channon. They shared the dip (called 'The Rails') with 4 other farms. Between milkings there were other cash crops to raise, bananas, sweet potatoes, peas, beans (he paid local children to pick them), peanuts and chickens for meat and eggs. The Jacksons would have 500 cockerels delivered for fattening, and when they were grown they were collected and paid for. Farms were regularly inspected for rabbits. Some tick days you would bring along live rabbits to be injected with myxomatosis and were issued with 1080 poison. Over the years the Jacksons lost 3 horses to snake bite, bitten on the lips when feeding.



Phyllis, Wallace and Wendi Jackson 1944. In the background standing in front of the barn where he lived is one of the three Italian Prisoners Of War that worked on the Jackson's farm.

## Italian POW's

During the Second World War some Italian prisoners of war (POW) who were considered a low security risk were allowed out of detention to work on farms. Wallace Jackson of Koonorigan was notified that he had been allocated 2 POWs. When he went to the railway station to pick them up he found that there were three waiting for him. Two of them claimed to be brothers and the third a cousin. Wallace formed the opinion that they were just friends who wanted to stick together. He took them back to his dairy farm where they were housed in a barn. The POWs soon built a cookhouse and settled down for a two-year stay. Their main job was clearing lantana; there were no sprays in those days. Wallace (who they called 'mistair') paid each prisoner one pound a week and provided accommodation and meals. The Italian government also chipped in two shillings and sixpence per week and a supply of tobacco. A source of spaghetti was found in Lismore, and a flagon of wine was issued each week. The bread baker came 3 times a week. The Italians ate their bread in chunks. Phyllis Jackson, married to Wallace only a few years, remembers getting in big tins of tomatoes that were kept in the fridge and doled out. Geoff Jackson was born when the POWs were there. They said that they hoped the baby was going to be a girl because if it were a boy he would have to go to war.

A canteen truck from the Control Centre in Lismore visited the POWs every few weeks, so they could spend their money on a few personal necessities. The Australian army visited once a month to provide clothes and boots. Joe, whose real name was Giuseppe, soon realised that if he asked the local farmers for their worn out boots he could trade them in, as his own, and get a new pair. He then sold them back to the farmers. The POWs had Sunday off and were free to leave the farm. At such times they had to wear a uniform that was dyed magenta.

Joe would often go off on horseback to visit other POWs. Another farm along Cox Road was the Osbourne's, and they had one Italian POW who lived in the house, and ate with the family. Joe would sometimes ride down to Coffee Camp to visit some Italians there. He was caught in action in the Middle East and after the war Joe wrote to the Jacksons expressing his wish to visit Australia again.



Italian POW Guiceppi (Joe) rides off to visit his mates on a Sunday.



Italian POWs Agostino, (unknown) holding Wendi Jackson, and Joe. The two on the right were believed to be brothers.



Back row Wallace and Kellas Jackson. Front row Italian POWs holding Wendi Jackson, 1944.



all. mio caro  
 amato marito  
 c'ero il mio caro  
 ricordo  
 ricordandoti con  
 grande affetto  
 tue affe, me  
 moglie Giovanni  
 e tua figlia  
 Sabatinella che  
 sempre ti pensa  
 baci cari cari  
 Pannarano 18 luglio

Wallace Jackson wondered if his POWs had family back in Italy, so he asked them and was shown these 2 photographs.

On the reverse of one photograph was a message in Italian which said ...

"To my darling husband. I remember you, my love. I remember you with great affection. Your darling wife Giovannina. And your child, Sabatinella is always thinking of you. Love and Kisses, Pannarano 18 July."

The Turners had an Italian POW during the Second World War. His name was Rocco Spinelli and when the government supply truck came around he would give his lollies to the children. Rocco started off living in a shed but in time he moved into the house with the family. He would take off on Saturday night and report for duty by Monday morning. The children remember having a swing in a wattle tree and Rocco would swing them really high.

Walter Seccombe got 3 Italian POWs who were caught in Tunisia but hated being drafted into the army. Walter's son Norman grew up with them as a child and remembers them as nice blokes, polite, sang beautifully and were good workers.

## Alma Graham

They did not milk the cows but helped with fencing and clearing lantana. They seemed happy and were glad not to be fighting. They were housed in a shed and did their own cooking, the food being supplied and an allowance paid. They always managed to get hold of wine (or make it). They were remote souls, they talked about home (northern part of Italy), two of their names were Mario and Tony. They were not expected to work hard. One of these POWs would make rings for the local ladies by filing down a two-shilling piece. Bracelets were also made from three-penny bits. John McIntyre was the local cream and livestock carrier at the time and he would borrow Seccombe's POW's to help load bags of wheat which he picked up in Lismore and delivered to various Koonorigan farmers to be used for pig food. The trucks were too small in those days and the job would require 3 return trips.

The Brown's farm had the services of 2 Italian prisoners of war in 1942. They worked in the banana plantation for 18 months. They were thought of as good workers and no trouble. The POWs lived in a 2 room separate house. Beryl's mother cooked their meals, which were taken to the POWs' house to be eaten. In those days light was by hurricane lamp, mains power did not arrive in Koonorigan until about 1934.

Earnest Haynes got one Italian POW, Hugo. The story was that back in Italy Mussolini forced men to join the army. These reluctant soldiers, once in service surrendered to the Australian troops and were sent to Australia as prisoners of war. Hugo lived in a barn and ate with the family. He was there for about 2 years, helping with the milking, feeding the pigs and working the paddocks. For the Haynes it was useful to have another man around the house, as the 6 oldest children were all girls. Hugo was not expected to work very hard and he was free to visit the other POWs after work and have a good time. Whatever they got up to, he never came home drunk.

Alma Graham grew up on a dairy farm and was used to hard work. As a 15 year old she got a job with the Osbournes at The Channon in 1941, at a pound per week. Alma's next job was in Nimbin. At that time she lived in Tuncester and rode her bicycle to Nimbin, which took one hour each way. She had a job at Sheather's Store carrying 70 pound bags of sugar and 28 pound bags of potatoes into spring carts. After 18 months she found the job too hard. When she was 20 years old she met her husband, Stewart Graham, at a dance in Lismore. They moved on to a farm at the bottom of the Koonorigan cutting, near Nimbin Road. They hand milked 60 cows, later when they acquired more land they milked 80 cows, but had machinery by then. The children, and some food, were taken down to the bails and put in a box during milking. Three times per week the cream cans were dragged by a draught horse, on a slide, to Nimbin Road. There they were taken by Norco or Foley Brothers. With luck a monthly cheque for about 20 pounds would arrive for the cream. Some months they would get nothing because the cream was downgraded, perhaps one of the cows had mastitis. The separated milk was fed to 200 pigs. One year there was 3 acres of tomatoes to look after, until wilt wiped them out (they never got a cheque for the tomatoes). They grew peas and beans commercially on 2 acres, the produce ending up in the Sydney markets. Alma remembers that everything was hard work. The Grahams lived in an unlined 2 room house with their 3 children. The ceiling was also unlined and the rain came through the weatherboards. Washing, both people and clothes, was done in a basin in a nearby shed, there was no bath. Light was by Aladdin lamp until power was put on about 1960. The fridge was an ice box (deliveries once per week). This was replaced by a kero fridge in 1950. Alma remembers playing tennis at the Osbournes, and has fond memories of Francis Osbourne's sponge cakes. Tennis was held between milkings but she didn't often



Off to the beach, Duncan's house in the background.

go because she was 'too bugged'. Other social occasions she remembers were 'kitchen teas' at the hall, and 'garden parties' for the Methodist church. In the 1970s the dairy industry changed from cream to whole milk. This involved expensive changes to the farm, a stainless steel tank and good all-weather access to the dairy. The Grahams changed to the easier, but less profitable activity of beef cattle.



Wallace Jackson taking sweet potatoes to market in 1955.

The Koonorigan cutting was pure mud in those days. On tick day all the cattle had to be walked up the cutting to the dip, chopping up the road even more. Day and night cars would get bogged and come to her farm for help. Alma or Stewart would then harness Prince the draught horse to pull them out. Later they used a grey Fergie tractor to do this job. For the Grahams dip day was every 5 weeks. The cows were gathered at 3am and taken to Olley's dip at the top of the hill. They would be back by 8am, the early start was because it was too hot to go any later. There were up to 500 cattle to be treated with arsenic or DDT at the dip. It was necessary on tick day for everyone to keep their gate shut, or the cattle would make short work of their garden.

Alma remembers a bad drought in about 1960, the worst in memory. There were rabbits and burrows everywhere. The cattle had little to eat and were being hand fed. Landowners met with the Council Inspector to work out how to get rid of the rabbits. The idea was to gather Scotch Thistle roots, wash them, cut them up small and lace them with strychnine. Unlike today these weeds were not so common on farms, so Alma had to go down to Goolmangar Creek to dig some up. The cattle were locked up and the baits were placed around the farm. Next morning there were dead rabbits everywhere. Despite being careful about collecting any leftovers, one of Alma's cows was lost to poisoning.



The last of the Jacksons pigs in 1990

## McIntyre

John Campbell McIntyre, was born 1933 and grew up in Koonorigan with his brother Graham and sisters Patty and Vicki. They helped their parents milk 65 cows twice daily. John's father, also called John, leased 10 acres of their farm to some Italians who grew bananas, peas, beans and paw paw. During the war years the McIntyre's refrigerator was an empty kerosene tin, buried in wet sand inside half a 44-gallon drum, kept under the steps. That arrangement was just enough to keep the butter from becoming runny. Meat was kept in a meat safe, a fly-proof tin box hung to catch the breezes and designed to exclude flies. John senior had a cream and stock run, first to The Channon and then to Lismore. John junior learned to drive his fathers truck when he was 12. In those days everyone had to work and loading bananas was not considered too difficult for a 12 year old. John was also shooting rabbits at that age. Rabbits were everywhere, they were shot for their skins and for food. By the time he was 17 he was driving the truck full time. Cream was picked up on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and Saturday also in the summer. Tuesday he would carry pigs, and take bananas to the rail. Thursday he would carry cattle. It was a tradition for school children to hitch a ride to school on the cream truck. On those days there would be more kids than cream cans. A cream can weighed 50 kilograms when full. Cream cans were left in a box at the gate, except for Keith Cox who met the carrier at the bottom of a steep hill near the end of Cox Road. His cans would be wheeled down in a steel wheelbarrow which held 3 cream cans. Most places left a note for the cream carrier to bring supplies of groceries and animal feed. These requests would appear once or twice per week. John only charged freight for the heavy stuff (feed). In wet weather it was necessary to put chains on to get up the Koonorigan cutting. At Christmas time the farmers would leave out a piece of cake or a bottle of cordial for the cream carrier. Just after the second world war there were 19 farms in Koonorigan, and only 3 had cars.

If they wanted to go to the beach, they would pool their petrol and travel to Brunswick Heads. John McIntyre left Koonorigan in 1952 for national service. In those days he says you could leave your wallet on a gate post and nobody would touch it. You could go into anyone's house and have a drink of water even if they were not home.



Wallace Jackson, Jack McIntyre and Kelly Swift



Mary Mustard 1929.

## Mustard

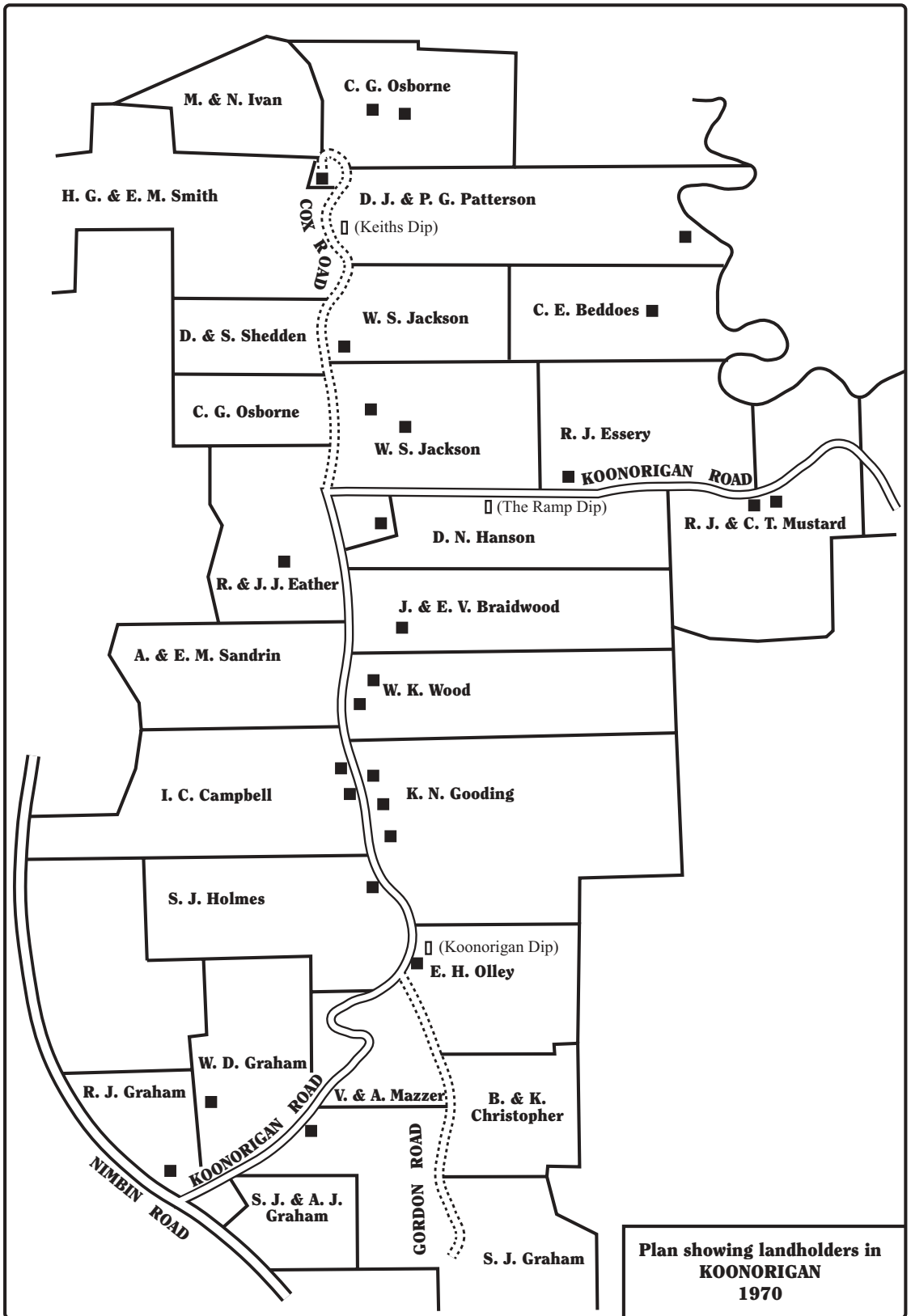
Robert Mustard (born 1900) came to Koonorigan in 1914 with his brothers and sister to take up dairy farming. In time he married Jean, and together they raised 4 children, Margaret, Heather, Robert and Maisie. Like everyone in Koonorigan at that time, the Mustards milked twice daily until the milk quota system was introduced in about 1970. In 1934 the average return to the farmer for cream was 8 pounds 7 shillings per month. The Mustards made their own bread and butter, butchered their own pork and grew just about everything else they ate. As children Heather and Margaret noticed that their father would save razor blades and this had something to do with the pigs. Intrigued, they hid among some bags in the ceiling of the pig pen. At the sight of the first pig being castrated they screamed "dad we're up here", and bolted.

In the 1950s Heather remembers there was a good social life in Koonorigan with school plays, housie and dances. The local band was Doris, Keith and Douglas Cox and Mr. Patterson. Norma Essery



Jean Mustard 1934

would sing. Each year there was a Christmas pageant in the hall with carol singing. The children would put on a play (and try to guess who it was dressed up as santa clause). When the Mustard girls were 15 they could go to dances in Lismore at the Rivera and Appolo. In about 1962 the Mustards got the first television on the hill. Most of Koonorigan came to watch it on the lawn. Kellis Jackson was a bachelor who lived in a small cottage half way between the school and where the Mustards lived. He was a kind and generous man, who made it a point of feeding any of the school children who passed buy. Waiting for



**Plan showing landholders in  
KOONORIGAN  
1970**

them would be milkshakes, peanuts, bananas, mangoes or chips. Kellis went to every church service no matter what denomination.

It would seem that children, even when well fed, were always hungry. Bessie Seccombe had a big mandarin tree but she was not inclined to give them away, so a few of the children would talk to her at the house, as a diversion, while some others would visit the tree. Hippies moved in the 1970s and after a big flood locals found drugs sprouting up along Tuntable Creek. Heather Mustard remembers skiing down the hills on palm fronds.

The four Mustard children travelled to school by horse, cream carrier and bicycle. Their horse, Jock, would have three or more children on his back but would feel lazy some days and not look forward to the journey. So at the bottom of the first rise, and only a quarter of the way to school, he would turn around and head back home. This was when dad would come out and wave a stick at the horse. Jock would turn around and take his charges to Koonorigan School. Jock had a bad habit of breaking open, and drinking, the third-of-a-pint milk bottles left out for the children. Jock got banned. This led to one acre being set aside next to the school as a horse paddock. Some of the horses ridden to school had as many as 5 children on their back.

Robert Mustard had two Clydesdales he used to pull the slide, which would have on it cream, fodder or fence posts. Like everyone else in Koonorigan they seldom bought clothes, but would make them after buying material from a travelling salesman. Heather remembers wearing a dress with a rope petticoat to a dance at The Channon. She rode her horse down and during the night someone had put white paint on all the horses and people had a difficult time deciding who owned which horse in the dark. The only time they wore shoes was for the school inspector, Sunday school and to the Lismore Show. They never remember being sick and the only medicine they used was kerosene for nits. As was usual in the country, the children left home at about 17 to find work or further their education.

## Macadamia farm

Robert Mustard (junior), born 1946, has lived in Koonorigan all his life and is known as the mayor of Koonorigan', (Alma Graham is known as the 'Mayoress'). When Bill Wood's farm came up for sale a syndicate of doctors bought it to turn it into a macadamia farm. Robert attended the clearing sale and bought some of the cattle.



Robert Mustard 1934.



Margaret Mustard, Douglas Cox, Robert and Heather Mustard dressed for the Lismore Show.

## Bill Wood

He drove them along the road to the family farm, but next morning the cows were missing. They had broken through the fence and made their way back to their old farm. While rounding them up again he was approached by a group of men who told him they were the new owners. They asked him if he had a tractor, which he did, and if he would like the job of pulling up all the internal fencing. Thirty years later Robert is still working on the 320 acre macadamia farm known as '86 Holdings', which has 160 acres under nuts. He went on to plant 10,500 trees and build the dam. There are 2 full-time workers, and two more are put on at harvest time. Macadamia nuts are now harvested mechanically, but before that it took 25 workers to get in the crop of 300 tonnes worth one million dollars. The nuts were processed at Dunoon for 20 years and at Brooklet for 4 years. Now the crop is sent to Alstonville for drying to 10% moisture content before being exported to China, still in the shell.

Bill Wood was born in 1945 and spent the next nine years growing up in Koonorigan. His father, Thomas Boyd Wood had 200 acres where the nut farm is today. When Koonorigan Road was sealed the residents had to pay their share.

Bill remembers at that time the excitement of a ride to school on the grader. He returned to the farm in 1969 and tried his best to survive in the dairying industry. He had a share farmer, McLaren, to milk the cows while he worked in Lismore to earn money to modernise the dairy.

After 5 years he gave it up as a lost cause, selling it to "86 Holdings". According to Bill Wood Koonorigan was too hilly, had too many weeds, was too labour intensive and the soil was only just adequate for dairy farming.



Bill Wood took this photograph in 1974. The Koonorigan School is centre, lower third. Koonorigan Hall is centre, top third. In 2003 the land in the top left hand corner is planted to macadamia nuts.

## Seccombe

Norm Seccombe was born in 1929 and grew up in Koonorigan. His father, Walter Seccombe selected the property of 170 acres and cleared it. Walter was a councillor in Terania Shire from 1931 to 1956 and president for six terms. (In 1977 Terania Shire was dissolved and Koonorigan became part of Lismore City Council.) Walter was elected to the board of Norco in 1941 and was chairman from 1953 to 1962 (that year he was killed when a tractor he was driving overturned).

As a child Norm remembers riding the draught horse "Maxi" 400 metres to the dairy. He would tie a knot in the mane to climb up and ride it bareback. School holidays were spent grubbing lantana on steep slopes. There were carnivals at The Channon where locals would ride their horses to compete. In a Flag Race there were 2 barrels 50 metres apart and a rider had to pick up a flag from one barrel and drop it in the other until all six flags were accounted for. A Bending Race was a horseback slalom. Even 8 year olds had a Camp Draught competition. In those days a few local women gave birth to their children in the Koonorigan Cutting after their horse and sulky got bogged on the way to hospital.

There was a lot of living done in the Koonorigan Hall, euchre parties, 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, the women seemed to always be cooking for some do. Women did not drink but the men usually had a keg in the back of the cream truck. At the dances there were babies in cots, and between dances the children would slide around on the kero and sawdust mixture to keep the floor as slippery as possible. There were always some falls. Norm left the area in 1945 but even today he can still remember the food which he describes as superb, it was a matter of pride, from sponge cakes to cheese/tomato/and/sao.

Walter Seccombe saved someone's life. A local Italian family had left a baby alone to play, Walter found it tickling a death adder and picked the child up and carried it away before it was bitten. Sometimes during the war a fighter plane would come over the hill and frighten the horses, causing chaos. The Seccombes occasionally found aboriginal stone axes around the farm, but they were not valued then. Walter broke in his own horses but as he got older he did not look forward to the falls. He decided to get someone else to do it; the Munce family at the top of the cutting used to break in a lot of horses. When he was told "I know what it is like when you get too old", Walter got cranky, took the horse home and did it himself.



John Seccombe



Bessie Seccombe

## Vidler

Bill Albert Vidler lived in Koonorigan between the years 1946 and 1956 and raised 13 children. The family lived and worked on Bill Gordons farm as share farmers. Bill's brother was killed on a horse, a fact not forgotten by one of his children, Lottie who got on old white 'Polly' and fell off the other side. She never tried to ride a horse again.

The 8 girls made their own dolls out of clothes pegs or by wrapping up a bottle. Their mother made all the children's clothes. Their pants were made from flour bags, some had 'Anchor' on the back and the others had 'Gillespies'. Like all the other children in Koonorigan, they walked barefoot to school when they could not get a lift on the cream truck. Their mother would give them a flogging if they were not home in time, she had jobs for them to do. Some days one of their schoolmates, Nev Brown, would rush home and grab his stockwhip and not let anyone past. They had to go back to school and ask the teacher, Don Wallace, to calm him down. Lottie left school aged 10 after only 3 years of schooling. The Vidlers remember childhood as fun. They would climb into a 44 gallon drum, or an old tyre, and roll down the hill. They would often walk to the Beddows, who were related, to play. Meat was rabbit, trapped by the 4 oldest children, and all vegetables were grown. One of the Vidler children was coming home from high school in the dark and noticed something white on the road. She picked it up and brought it home to show mum, who exploded. It was a bandy bandy snake. One of Lottie's younger brothers was 'lost'. After a big search he was found asleep under the slide.



Reg and Keith Vidler.



Les Turner looks on while Don Wallace awards the 'Billy Boiling' cup to Ray Vidler.



The Vidlers, back row, George, Cliff, Claris, Phyllis, Jessie James, May Vidler and Patty James. Middle, Ray, Fay, Jean, Helen and Marie. Sitting, Keith and Reg.

## Don Wallace

Don Wallace - a much loved school teacher at Koonorigan remembers.... "When I first arrived in Lismore, I travelled from the South Lismore Railway Station out to Koonorigan on a "cream truck". Wallace Jackson was one of the first residents whom I met in the area and over the years we became bosom friends. The school was closed when I first came and had numerous teachers during the years (9 in the space of 3 to 4 years).

I first came as a fairly "raw" teacher, with 55 children at the school, the school should have qualified for a teacher of a much higher standard, however, once I meet the children I grew to love them and found the work most challenging.

The parents of the children told me that if I stayed they would build me a house. This was during the time that rations were in force - everything was rationed - food, clothing and timber. However off they went to town and met with a builder who built the house in only 15 days. This gave us great delight as my wife and baby daughter were living in one room in the house that was also the Post Office. There was no electricity connected to the house but that didn't stop Wallace Jackson, who found some wire and an electrician and managed to have the power connected that same afternoon. That's the sort of co-operation that this village gave to my wife and myself.

When it was time for my baby's christening I mentioned to our neighbour, Jack Eather that we would like something to drink - he said not to worry but to bring a chaff bag across after he had finished milking. So with the chaff bag, off we set to Coffee Camp where he knew some Italians who had a few bottles hidden amongst the lantana - a good night was had by all.

On Saturdays we started to play tennis at Koonorigan and I was very proud to say that I played tennis with the Koonorigan team. The team became quite famous as we went around the district on the back of the cream truck.

At that time the school went to Year 6 only, thereby restricting the children's education as they stayed on at the school until they reached school leaving age.

The Koonorigan community once again worked together and bought an old truck that was converted into a school bus to take the children into Lismore so they could attend high School.

As an idea of the co-operation in the village, my house was an open door as was every house in the area in those days."

## Jack Eather

### *Some of Jack Eather's stories.*

**Heartbreak.** Jack was the owner of the dairy farm behind the school, and he married the school teacher Kathleen. He was a very popular man and he was renowned for his practical jokes and story telling. On one occasion a young man on the ridge had a row with his girlfriend, and she wouldn't speak to him. He was so upset about it that he disappeared and no one knew where he had gone. The hall was the focal point of activities, there were dances, cards, darts etc. So on the day that the ladies were to meet for their afternoon game of cards, Jack went to the hall early in the morning with a dummy dressed like the young man and hung him from the rafters. When the ladies arrived they all screamed and one fainted. The young man eventually turned up and made it up with his sweetheart. But it was some time before the ladies forgave Jack.

**The watermelon.** One of the farmers on the ridge was renowned as a grower of watermelons. When it was time to harvest the watermelons Jack visited him and said, "You know, I'm growing a few melons myself this year. When you are passing on your way to Lismore next Thursday call in and try mine." "Right, I will, Jack" said the neighbour.

So on the Wednesday night Jack went over to the neighbour's farm and stole a water melon. In the morning the farmer called in, "Now lets try some of your melon Jack". Jack went to fridge and produced a plateful of slices. His neighbour tried a slice, tasted it carefully and said "Um, not bad but not as good as mine".



Don Wallace, country schoolteacher, from the film of the same name.



It looks as though everyone in Koonorigan turned up to the Lambourne farewell in 1964.

Joe Downs grew good watermelons. When Jack Eather was a frisky teenager he suggested to two local girls that they visit Joe's watermelons that night to steal a few. Someone warned Joe, who was waiting with a rifle to scare the poachers off. That night Joe jumped up, cried out "who's there", and fired off a few shots. Birdie fainted and everyone thought she had been shot.

**The lost bullocks.** When one of the boys completed his time at school, he got a job helping a contractor clear lantana on the farm now owned by Paulo Sandrin. One paddock of forty acres was particularly bad. The contractor used two carthorses with a long chain between them, and they tore the lantana out of the ground.

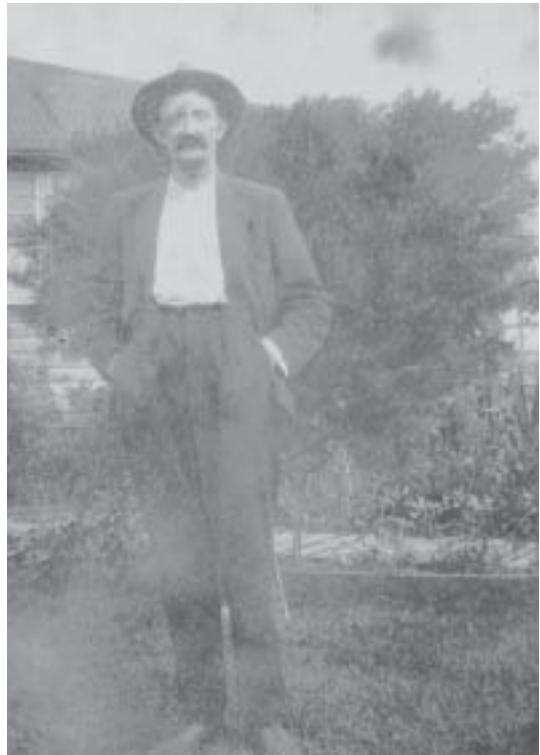
When at last they got to the bottom of the paddock they found ten huge steers practically bald from living in the tall lantana for so long. They drove them up to the farm yard and the farmer said, "Oh is that where they were I haven't seen them for years".

**The boxing ring.** There were occasions years ago when arguments would occur between neighbours for various reasons. Bad fences causing cattle to stray onto a neighbour's land etc. If the matter couldn't be resolved peacefully then one would say, "Right we'll settle it in the ring on Saturday morning". The ring was a square of banana grass, probably where Alma's house is now on the corner of Gordon's Road. Whether it was serious or not I cannot say. Perhaps it was an excuse to have a chat with a few neighbours and a beer or two, while they witnessed a light hearted couple of rounds.

**The stump.** There was a large stump among the bananas on the Cox's property which they wanted to get rid of. So they dug around it and packed it with explosives. On detonation the stump rose up like the space shuttle and landed on Cox Road near the intersection with Koonorigan Road. They had to get a bulldozer to get rid of it. The explosion levelled half an acre of bananas and showered the neighbours with rocks and sticks.

## Heather Small

School life: I remember starting the school day hoisting the flag and singing 'God Save the Queen'. Lessons would begin with either reciting the 'times table' or a spelling bee said out loud. I remember Brian Eather was in the same year as me, of course he was always the better student. There were only two in the class. Other students in the same room but different years were Annette Rixon, Douglas Cox, Norman, John, Mary and Bernard Eather, Gail Rollman, Robert and Heather Mustard, Geoffrey, Peter and Wendi Jackson, and the Woods two children.



Angelo Dejuliano lived on Gordon Road in the 1940's.

We enjoyed sport - cricket, rounders and tennis. There was a tennis court at the school which was used quite a bit. A man came to the school and coached tennis. We had competition tennis on Saturday against The Channon, Dunoon, Whian Whian and Numulgi.

Friday afternoon would be gardening afternoon. We all got outside in the fresh air and weeded, planted and dug. It was a fun afternoon. We often went outside to draw and paint scenery.

Empire Day was a fun day, we had a formal morning singing and reciting in front of parents, had a picnic lunch and in the afternoon there were fun activities such as three legged race, eating toffee apples tied to a string with hands behind back, relay races and boil-the-billy competition.

Toilets were a bit of a downer, they were pits in the ground over near the horse paddock.

Zone sports were held at Blakebrook. We competed against schools in that area, then the best went on to Lismore to compete for selection for Sydney.

On Saturday mornings we would ride a horse to the post office to get the mail. Other days the mail would come by cream truck.

We had a good life on the farm, milking twice a day. Mum and Dad didn't have much time to do other things. Going to town to Lismore was a big occasion, generally of a Friday. When the milking was being done, if we weren't milking, I and my friend Annette would walk around the fence at the yards, see who

could walk around without falling off. Have a feed of mulberries when in season or figs or oranges which were all near the cow bales. A bush nut tree was over the hill and we would go over there, crack nuts and eat them, it was a huge tree. We would have cracker night in the cow bales once a year. Our cousins Dulcie and Athol Turner and family would come over and we would all have a go letting off crackers. I don't think anyone was ever injured. It was great fun.

Sunday school was on Sunday afternoon, once a month. I think it was held in the hall. We often had dances on a Friday night in the Hall.

## Empire Day

Empire Day (Queen Victoria's birthday) on 24 May had been a long-established day of celebration in Britain and the Empire. The first Australian observance of the day was in 1905. For more than fifty years Australians celebrated Empire Day, until the late 1950s. Empire Day in Koonorigan was celebrated, between milkings, with a three legged race, apple bobbing, 'boat rowing', ball games, egg-and-spoon, relay, corn sack race and competitions of every type.

Whoever won the billy-boiling competition could claim the title 'Hero of the Hill'. Most of the competitors in this competition were children but a few adults would join in. They were all supplied with the same type of billy, a large fruit tin half full of water. On the word 'go' the contestants would rush over to one of the identical piles of wood, build the fire and light it (using paper was not allowed).

Koonorigan School P&C put in money to buy crackers.



Jack Eather



Empire Day Games in Koonorigan



Birdie and Bonnie Gordon slug it out in a pillow fight

There was chaos if everyone lit their own crackers so in time it was agreed that there would be one igniter. One memorable evening, with the good citizens of Koonorigan assembled for the cracker night display, the school teacher John Comeford decided to instruct the children in the safe use of firecrackers. A flame was accidentally dropped into the box of crackers and in no time there were roman candles, sky rockets and jumping jacks going off everywhere. The fit bolted for cover and the elderly were helped into the hall for safety. Some people would save the 'jumping jacks' and toss them, lit, into the hall when the dances were on.



Sports Day in Koonorigan  
May Graham, Beryl Brown, Norma Swift,  
Evyonne Swift and Mrs. Gordon.



Peter Jackson 1955.



Judy Cox holding  
Wendi Jackson 1944.

## Growing up in Koonorigan

The teacher, Clive Barry, closed down the Koonorigan School in 1976. There were only 9 pupils left. Soon after Mary Green turned up with 7 boys.

By the time Rebecca Gosling arrived in Koonorigan in 1984 as a 7 year old there were a dozen children making the one hour bus journey to school in Lismore. She waited for the 7.40am school bus with her older brother and sister at the gate. The weather was often cold and wet so she would crawl into the letterbox to keep warm. The bus would pick up children all through Koonorigan and along Pinchins Lane, except for about one day per year when the road was flooded. You did not have to go to school that day and a good time could be had riding the rapids in the creek running through their property. Rebecca spent 10 years travelling on the bus, little kids sat in the front. The big kids sat in the back, their lives seemed more interesting. The children would spend their time holding hands, teasing each other, playing kids games, 'slaps', 'I spy', anything to fill in an hour. Often it was so engrossing that they did not want to get off the bus. Other times there would be fights. The down side of so much travel was that there was less time to do homework, and if there was an after-school activity then her parents would have to take her home. In those days, living in the country, up near Nimbin, there was a perception that magic mushrooms and marijuana were grown on every farm. Life was a little different for rural children, there were more chores to do after school, Rebecca had to feed the dog and the ducks and brush the donkey.



John and Nancy Osbourne.



Some of the Vidler children.



Keith Vidler 1951.



Ian Sutton with the Osbournes.



John Springall.



Robert Mustard at 'Bonnie Brae'.



Nancy Osbourne.



John Springall in Tuntable creek.



Maisie and Robert Mustard.



Geoff Jackson  
and Doug Cox.



Warwick Shirley 1950



Wendi Jackson 1950.



Doug and Keith Cox at the dairy in 1948.



Reg and Keith Vidler with Tom Beddoe's girls, about to go for a swim in Tuntable Creek.



One of the 'springs' of Koonorigan.



Purnell milking on the Jacksons farm.

## The Koonorigan Hall

In 1934 a meeting was held "to consider ways and means of enlarging the present building". At that time Koonorigan, with some twenty families living there, was using the former provisional school building as a hall. It had been built by the community in 1911 on land adjacent to the present hall and was used as a hall after the opening of the new school in 1920. However it fell into disrepair and by 1934 was considered unsafe for public use.

As evidence of this, the annual Christmas Tree function in 1934 was held in the rather large kitchen at the Duncan family home. The next year the cracker night which traditionally followed the Empire Day picnic at the school, was held at the Duncan dairy, with the bonfire in the front yard. Needless to say the problems encountered while encouraging the normally placid jersey cows into the bails the next morning, due to the lingering smell of fireworks, ensured the event was a once only affair.

At the meeting on October 30, 1934, the ten who agreed to become debenture holders to the amount of £514 each were appointed to form the committee to finance the erection of a new hall. They were Mrs B.L. Seccombe and Messrs W.W Seccombe, W. Gordon, R. Duncan, A. Downs, S.E. Hitchcock, J. Eather, A. Mustard, F. Ryan and J.T. Bennett. On the 13th November 1934, Mr W. Seccombe was elected president of the committee, Mr W Gordon vice president, Mr S.E. Hitchcock Secretary, and Mr F. Ryan Treasurer.

An agreement to lease the land on which the hall was to be constructed was entered into with the owner, Mrs J.M. Hawken, the daughter of Mr A. Seccombe, who had made the land available for the provisional building. The agreement with Mrs Hawken said in part that "The lessees agree to pay 10/- per annum on the first day of January each year". Several plans and the proposed cost of a new building were submitted at the November meeting and it was decided to erect a building at an estimated cost of £6214. It was to be 28' x 28', have lattice ceiling, with a small porch and a room in which to prepare supper.

It was resolved to purchase the timber for the building from Mr H. Knight, Sawmiller, Jiggi, and to call tenders for its construction once the timber was on the site. The lowest tender was from Mr G. Akers for £1411. It was then decided to line the building, he was paid a total of £194 for his work. Half of the flooring in the hall was taken from the former school building.

The hall was opened with a ball held on June 18, 1935. At a meeting in September 1935, it was decided to purchase a piano at a cost of £15.

In 1971 the hall committee moved to establish a shelter and barbecue adjacent to the hall as a memorial to the late W. W Seccombe. It was to express the appreciation of his work for the community through

his association with the hall and the School and his contribution at regional level to Local Government and the Norco Co-op Limited.

It was opened on July 8, 1972, and in 1973 an extension was made to the supper room. When the school closed in 1975 the house was rented for a period, but later sold, with the money from the sale going to the hall.

In 1934 a number of meetings were held to organise fund-raising activities aimed at raising money for enlarging the Koonorigan Hall. What follows are extracts from those meetings, showing how a small community in those days went about raising money.

A social euchre and dance night to be held on 8 Nov. to aid Hall funds. J Downs act as MC. A £1 note be raffled, tickets 1 for sixpence, 3 for 1/-. All absentee landowners and all land owners on Koonorigan who are not debenture holders be asked for a donation £1. As a result of the requests for donations £3-1-0 had been received and a further £3 promised.

Moved that we have a ball for the opening night. Mr. Gordon offered his piano for the night and Mr. F Ryan offered to bring it up and return it. An orchestra of two instruments to be engaged, dances be one and one. J Downs to act as MC. Admission to be 2/-, ladies who provide to be free. Chocolates to be bought for 7/6, raffle tickets to be sold at one for sixpence, 3 for 1/-.

Moved that we hold a social dance and euchre in aid of Hall funds to be held Wed 7 Aug 1935. Charges be as follows: Admission 2/-, cards free. Chocolate waltz: 1 for sixpence, 3 for 1/-, box of chocolates 3/11 be purchased for waltz. Ladies who provide free. 10/- note to be raffled, tickets 1 for sixpence, 3 for 1/-.

Donations: Mrs. Bennett, tea. J Eather, milk. Miss Brown sugar

Mrs Brown Ladies' Euchre. S E Hitchcock Gents' Euchre. Mrs. Bennett Children's waltz, threepence a ticket. Donation of 10/6 from Gilbert Walker & Co., Auctioneers, Lismore. The sum of £1 was received from the card club.



## Koonorigan State School

The original school building, which was erected on land donated by Mr. Arthur Seccombe, was opened in 1911. It was several hundred yards from the present building and was paid for by local residents. More recently additions were made and it is now the Koonorigan Hall.

The newer building was opened in 1920 and extended in 1926.

Mr. Tom Beddoes, another original pupil, was one of a family of five who went to the school. He said that before 1911 he went to Tuntable Creek school and the only advantage about that was "that we missed out on the milking because it was dark by the time we walked the two-and-a-half miles home".

The original Koonorigan School was opened in 1911 as a provisional school, and was later moved to where the Hall stands to-day having been extended in 1926. The school became a Public School in 1919 and closed in 1975.

Those who answered "Present, Miss" to the first teacher, Miss M. Geering (1911-1912) were as follows (in alphabetical order):

AMOUR, Ivy & Selby  
 BARNES, Frank & Keith  
 BEDDOES, George, James, Pearl & Tom  
 BETTENS, Henry, Ivy & Walter  
 DOWNS, Amos & William  
 LAYTON, Bert, Ivy & Violet  
 McINTYRE, James  
 PACKHAM, Ron  
 SWEENEY, Frank  
 WATT, James

So it would appear that 20 children from 10 different families attended the first school in the original building erected by the residents. The list of teachers has been reliably garnered from official records:

It began with a Miss Geering, 1911-12.

Mr N.E. Delore, 1913, followed by

Mr S. G. Graham, 1914 to July 1916. We are now in the years of the first World War, and there appears to have been a number of temporary teachers in quick succession. Some recalled are....

Mrs M. Ross - a short time only, then

Miss H. Norman, who found her husband out



Lunch time at Koonorigan School  
 taken from the 1952 film 'The Country Schoolteacher'.

there and is now Mrs. Geo. Meredith. Then followed the teacher who is perhaps remembered best of all.

Mr S.E. Hitchcock was appointed in 1920. Mr Hitchcock also married here, his wife being Miss Louie James, and Mr Hitchcock remained teacher and citizen of Konorigan for nearly twenty years, until the year 1939, and then the great Second World War was on us. Again there were shortages of teachers and six teachers came within the space of three years. Some went into the fighting forces, and Konorigan teachers paid the full price with their lives.

Mr Stan Simpson, 1939 - enlisted in 1941 and was shot down over France two years later and killed.

Mr F.W. Roberts who followed Mr Simpson, left to join the Navy in the same year 1941. He too was lost, with his ship, at sea. He also had married at Konorigan, his wife, so soon widowed, was Miss Elva Rice.

Mr W.A. Souters, also left in 1942 to join the army. Thus all three fighting services have been strongly represented.

Mr J. Fredericks, the next teacher, was appointed on relief from Numulgi Public School.

Mr J. Miller followed from July 1942 to Feb. 1943.

Miss K. O'Donoghue, a lady who also found romance at Konorigan, and is now Mrs Jack Eather.

Miss Tabor came next, and remained until May 1945.

Mr D. Wallace, 1945-53

Mr S. Rickson, 1954-57.

Mr A. Fairleigh 1958



Koonorigan School

Wendi Jackson

By 1923 the Department of Education had built the new school on its present site higher up the hillside on the other side of the road. There was an enrolment of 38 and it was reported by an inspector that the accommodation was strained.

Later, around 1926, the school was enlarged. The community of Konorigan has time and again shown priceless unity that is so close-knit and purposeful – a strong neighbourliness and the strength of self-reliance – possibly bequeathed to them by their pioneering fathers and wholly admirable in its achievements. It showed itself again when their school needed a weather shed – or when the community decided one was required. They set to work and built one, just as they had built their first school. This was back in 1929. Later on, the community felt that their school teacher needed a residence in order to offset the too frequent change of teachers. They received the inevitable reply from the authorities – ‘insufficient funds available’. So in true Konorigan fashion they called a meeting. There and then it was decided that the Konorigan teacher should have a residence. There and then they collected , 108 pounds and obtained 12 guarantors for a further 809 pounds and they built the residence in 1946.

At least they were able to smile at the wording of the Inspector’s Report “the Department notes with gratitude this great effort”. So now the residents are happy, the teacher is happy, and Konorigan School celebrates its Golden Jubilee with the pleasure and pride appropriate to a school that was selected in 1952 by the Commonwealth Government’s Documentary Film Unit for the filming of ‘The School on the Hill’. This little film shows a one teacher school at work, and was screened as far away as the USA.

Of school Inspectors, the earliest official report is that of the late Mr Insp. N.F. Fraser (commonly known as “Sandy” Fraser) in February 1923. By this time the Department of Education had built the school on its present site, higher up the hillside. There was an enrolment of 38 and Inspector Fraser reported that the accommodation was strained.

Later, in 1926, Mr Inspector H.N. Barlex reported that the school was to be enlarged. This was done. At one time the enrolment figure rose to 51 with the advent of many pupils from The Channon.

District School Inspector, 18th March, 1900

Away up west from Lismore 13 miles away there is a place called Konorigan, a new settlement high up on table lands; a little community, neither Church or School, the Settlers approached Mc.... long ago; and he told them they would need a School of their own; Coffee Camp - and the Channon Creek had Schools fairly close to them yet, conditions prevented them from attending either; Konorigan was offered a subsidised School conditionally that the settlers built a room and boarded the teacher. Since then children of school age have nearly doubled; Still we have not enough to warrant your Department building yet; we have about 14 children now with room for fully double that but as no facilities exist, family men will not go up there.

Now what I want to know is; can we hasten matters. We are willing to build a Hall 20 – 30 feet for Public uses, church, Public meeting and Socials; principally to be used as a School room; would you allow School teaching in such a building? We consider a Hall, will supply the needs of the Public best, as it would continue to be of use after a Public



Clarrie Haynes, Tom Beddoes  
and Keith Cox



Athol Turner

Heather Mustard

Geoff Jackson



Robert and Heather Mustard

School had been established later on for we are sure an average of 30 children would be attending within five years.

There was some talk about a school being erected at a place so called Coffee Camp which is absolutely no good to us as you cannot expect the children to climb such hills as these.

Coffee Camp about 2 1/2 miles in a straight line but about 3 1/2 miles by steep bridle-track.

Tuntable Creek about 2 miles in a straight line, but nearly 4 miles by the nearest practicable track.

**MOUNTAIN PIONEERS' DIFFICULTIES  
(By Our Own Special Representative)**

The land laws of New South Wales are harder upon the man anxious to open up the State than anywhere else in the Commonwealth; and, as if this were not enough, the other Governmental Departments appear to look upon the man on the land as a person quite unworthy of any favorable consideration. This state of affairs is almost universal throughout all the country districts but the present article will only deal with those fine settlers who have gone to reside on the mountain tops above Goolmangar Valley, at that settlement known officially as Konorigan. These plucky people went forth on to the hilltops to battle with the scrub.

For years the Government made no attempt to assist these settlers; not even by making a bridle-track for them to get to and from the areas the Crown was pleased to lease them, and expect the red-tape regulations of the Act to be conformed with.

After weary waiting a road has been made, and consequently close settlement and capable work has followed. Families have settled, and now there are

almost a score of children ready for education, and no provision is made for them. It is well known that the calls upon the Department of Public Instruction for school buildings are very numerous, and that under present regulations it is impossible to meet the demands. But, is it not possible to unearth some master mind, either in or out of the Department, who could formulate a scheme whereby children in newly-settled districts could be provided with tuition?

It seems as if the whole State of New South Wales was bound with egotistical red tape, for at least in the Departments of Public Lands and Public Instruction the heads appear to think they have nothing to learn and consequently these Departments are conducted upon anything but liberal and up-to-date lines. Repeated applications have been made by these Konorigan parents for some sort of arrangement for State tuition for their children. The stereo-typed reply that the Minister does not see his way to comply with the request has come forward. The fault here lies, as usual, in there being no practical people at the head of affairs. A map is referred to (laid out flatly on a well polished table), and it is found that there is a public school some two miles distant. This is enough; no enquiries as to the contour of the country within the area comprised in those two mile are made, and the mere fact that the distance is "a trifle of two miles" is given as a good reason that no arrangements for the Konorigan settlers' children are necessary

But, such a two miles. I doubt if one of the whole staff of dudes in the city offices of the Department of Public Instruction could be found game to negotiate that two miles. A trained athlete would find it a hard climb, and still little children are expected by the responsible heads of a Government



The Mustard children put a crust of bread on the ground to help mount their horse.

Department to attend that school in accordance with the provisions of the Act. If the State is too poor to provide the battler 'on the land' with proper comforts in return for his rent, work and enterprise, why are there not some sort of arrangements made to give him help? There are surely other ways of providing the children in unsettled districts with educational advantages than by the erection of those handsome (?) stereotyped buildings which one sees in the country districts of New South Wales. What about itinerant teachers allowance for a building, pending the time the Government can afford to build one of those splendid structures of theirs?

**Respecting accommodation for teacher,**

Anivestry Grange, Konorigan via Lismore Jan 14th, 1911. Mr. Noble, Dear Sir,

In reference to the teacher for Konorigan School. We would be glad to provide comfortable board and lodgings at a reasonable charge quite close to school (at Mr Jackson's farm) nice home, piano and organ, also plunge and shower bath. Can go to meet train or boat if notified in time. Trusting to hear in reference to the matter I am, Yours truly (Mrs) A Packham.

**Chief Inspector,** I visited Konorigan on Monday 26th inst., 31 children are at present enrolled and 29 were present at inspection; the majority of these are young children, only one was 14 years of age.

There is every prospect of increased settlement, as many of the holdings are fairly large (200 and 300 ac. blocks), these will later on, be subdivided.

The present building is much too small and the residents cannot in fairness, be asked to enlarge it, as there is now every prospect of permanency.

A very suitable site is under offer at 10 pounds per acre (owner's letter attached) a very reasonable price. On the opposite side of the road 30 pounds per acre is being asked for similar land.

I recommend that the Department acquire an area of 2 acres at 10 pounds per ac. as offered by Mr. Gardner, and that steps be taken to erect a School to afford accommodation for 35 to 40 pupils. 27/2/12 L. Henry, Inspector.

**W.A.Quill Esq.** Parliament House, Sydney.

Dear Sir, I have been requested by the residents of Koonorigan to seek your aid re. School matters.

The reasons, no teacher, no accommodation (just on the spot) but at the village. The Channon there is a boarding house, distance 2 1/2 miles from Koonorigan, so there is no excuse as far as board is concerned. We would deem it a great favour if you would do your level best in the matter, as there are 30 children running wild here for the last 4 months. I think you will agree that it is a serious matter, also we would like you to urge the Department on with the new school building tenders have been called and accepted. The building in use at present was built by the residents. It does not nearly meet the case now in the summer time it is more like an oven than a school house. Inspector Dunlop.

**Koonorigan School Song**

*(Sung to 'Around her neck she wore a yellow ribbon')*

At half past nine we start our daily lessons.  
It may be sums or reading or singing songs of merry times.

And if you ask us why the heck we do it?  
(chorus)

We are children of Koonorigan. Far far away.  
Far away - far away - far away - far away.  
We are children of Koonorigan. Far far away.

At half past 3 we close our books and end our daily lessons

And say farewell to all our jolly playmates.  
And if you ask us why the heck we do it  
Chorus ...



The teacher Don Wallace taught all the children to swim. This normally occurred at Dickies Crossing on Goolmangar Creek. This sequence for the film was shot at Tuntable Creek.

The Dept of Education in the U.S.A. heard about our one-teacher schools. So they sent some teachers and a cameraman to investigate. They eventually decided that the Koonorigan School was very picturesque and so they would film our school to take back to the States. In those days the road was not sealed, many children either walked or rode a pony to school

One family (Mustard) had three children who attended school, and they all rode on the one pony. The pony grazed in the three quarter of an acre paddock surrounding the school. At lunchtime the children saved crusts from their sandwiches. When it was time to return home the three children would take it in turns to place their crusts on the ground in front of the pony. When the pony bent down to eat the crusts, they would step across its neck, and when the pony had eaten the crusts, it would raise its head and the child would slide down its neck onto its back, and so on until they were all aboard and they would ride home.

When the schoolmaster saw the cameraman filming the children mounting their horse, he said "don't film that your people won't be interested". The cameraman said, "They sure will, they'll think it's fantastic".

## New Arrivals

**Times change, people move on and others come to take their place. Koonorigan itself changes and the people change under Koonorigan's influence. Here are some stories from recent arrivals.**

**Nell** (Petronella DeGier) arrived in Koonorigan in 1989 to live on 5 acres with her husband Ton. Nell liked to live her life guided by her guru Sri Satya Sai Baba. She wrote to him in India and was advised to seek a humble house with a nice view and a bit of land. Three different people said she should go to Nimbin, because she was eccentric and that is where she belonged. She looked at a lot of properties, but the place was not right, she did not get the right sign. The estate agent showing her around said there was a property at Koonorigan that she should have a look at. Driving up the hill to Koonorigan, she got the right feeling. A big black bird, a currawong, flew silently beside the car, at window level, all the way up the hill. At the top of the drive into the property she saw the view and knew this was it. The big rock, (Nimbin Rock), lifted her out of the car, put her in the middle of the drive, and yelled in her head 'fix it'. For Nell this was the first of many psychic experiences. The house was in a bad state and had no electricity. With tree plantings and improvements she changed the energy on the land. On her piece of Koonorigan paradise she practices reiki and spiritual healing. Nell is also appreciative of the

spirit of community she found and the supportive nature of her neighbours.



**John Smyrell** has grazed his cattle on 90, mostly steep, acres since 1981. In the winter of 2003 he was mustering cattle to sell off the calves. This necessitated driving his Toyota 4 wheel drive down a steep road into a mossy, ferny gully, on the side of the hill that the sun seldom reaches. Traction was lost, a wheel mounted the cutting and the Toyota flipped on its side. Seventy three year old John was lucky it did not keep rolling a further 50 metres down the hill. He climbed out, then climbed back in to turn off the ignition. John then made a mobile phone call to his neighbour to meet him on the walk back up the hill, in case he was not up to the journey. Next morning a big four-wheel-drive tractor from the macadamia farm righted the truck and towed it to safety.

**Wallace's tractor** by Maxx Maxted.

The water that flows in Koonorigan came to us from the sky, or we filled up at Coronation Park, toting a ten-gallon container back and forth. I'll talk in old money because it's easier. When I bought the twelve acre block on Koonorigan Road the fact of water shortage didn't phase me. 'We'll collect it.' we said, but the gravity of the situation did not immediately strike me until my wife gave birth to a healthy but increasingly grubby boy whose first word was 'Tractor.' The tractor in question belonged to Wallace Steer Jackson.

Water was collected in a thousand gallon tank on the side of the house, but during a dry spell in 1979 we ran out of rainwater. The grubby boy needed cleaning all the time, it seemed. We tried leaving clothes off him in milder weather but he insisted on proper standards of hygiene. We had erected a long-drop po down the path from the single room house we had built, but it wasn't enough. He wanted a proper bath 'like nanna's bath' and could no longer be



One of the characters of the hill, Wallace Jackson deals with a python at the bails.

persuaded that sitting in his blue blow-up pool until he wrinkled would get him nearly clean enough.

When I arrived in '79 with a pregnant wife, fresh from painting sets on television, and used to thinking "this is the way you build a house, just slap a few bits together and paint it to match". Wallace took it upon himself to help me out on the finer points of living in a small community. In other words, he liked to have a lend of me as often as he could.

It didn't take long for the locals to see that I had more enthusiasm than wisdom and I was as green as I was cabbage looking.

Wallace told me that Arthur had two tanks at the Bakery that he wanted to get rid of. "They're concreted" he told me. Impressed, I went down to see Arthur who had started a tractor repair shop in the old Bakery that had last baked rolls for the schoolkids when the regular trade ran out. I nearly bought the Bakery site myself when I looked over the village. I thought I could open a Gallery there, but couldn't raise the money for the two small blocks on the title at twice what I paid for my twelve acre block on the hill. I thought I had made the better deal, but there was the lack of water to contend with. Extra tanks seemed the answer. I planned to funnel the rainwater off the roof line that wasn't going into the house tank, shoot it downhill to these two spare tanks and use it to water the planned veggie garden overlooking the creek, way below.

At no stage did Wallace or Arthur tell me that as soon as you move a concreted water tank the concrete cracks into as many pieces as you want,

depending on how many times you drop it. Empty, a 500 gallon water tank weighs as much as a large bag of concrete. A concreted water tank filled with 4 bags of cement, 12 bags of sand and a bag of lime mixed up with a bit of water, weighs as much as well, 4 bags of cement, 12 bags of sand ...et cetera. Two concreted water tanks ... you do the arithmetic. It was easy to see that my plan to buy and transport two concreted water tanks from the Bakery to my place was fraught from the start. But they never let on, they never as much as grinned in my presence. They just stared at the ground, shuffled their feet and let me do the talking. I was fond of talking. I knew a lot. I had read all the books before coming up here from Melbourne, prepared for 'Self sufficiency as New Settlers on the Land.'

It was probably my idea to chuck 'em on Wallace's trailer and drag them up Koonorigan Road to my place, then drop them off on site, 'cos you wouldn't want to move the buggers once you dropped them off'. It was agreed, signed, sealed and delivered, triumphant with only a few

mishaps on the way up, oh, and one big one on the site. The inadequate planks broke as we tried to slide the first one off, almost severing my leg. We stopped to admire the view until I got my breath back. Wallace told me about 'some young blokes, coming up here with their fancy ideas, Comfrey farm, using my effluent. "Amazing" he chuckled. The epitome of bucolic reticence.

The day was running out and Wallace wanted to get off home to his milking. He wanted to get this job done and finished with. The second tank was dropped off with less care, I felt as if he wanted to see if it could clear Tuntable Creek. He and Arthur might have had bets on whether one or both would end up in the creek, like my first attempt to site a new, empty tank minutes before a hurricane force wind took it and threw it down the hill. "At least these won't blow away" I said to a budding hernia. It winced back at me in silence.

The tanks were useless, of course. They were cracked and crazed beyond any repair and lay where they fell until they could be replaced by a solid six thousand gallon concrete tank, built on site.

Twenty five years later, I too like to see young bucks charging at solid brick walls. It makes my aches and pains seem less irksome and I don't blame Arthur and Wallace, letting me find out the hard way. Learning comes in many forms, as does wisdom. The boy, now a man, drives a fork-lift truck for a living and is as happy as a boy driving a fork-lift truck. Wallace made a big impression on us both.

**Michael and Joy Smith** came to live in Koonorigan in 2001. Michael, a surveyor, always wanted to live on rural acres. Joy, a physiotherapist, grew up in Casino. New to rural life, Michael kept a 'diary of a new chum farmer', here are some extracts.

Where I live, at the end of a dirt road in country NSW, it is very quiet. Sometimes, on a Monday and Tuesday, there is a mournful bellowing of cows. That is because their calves have been rounded up and sent to the Tuesday cattle sales. Vocalisations of maternity seldom last more than 3 days, and nights. About once a month a human voice is heard, usually an expletive bellowed at an errant farm dog. A few times a year a human being can be seen wandering across the paddocks. Yes it is quiet on my block. And dark. Outside the house at night you will need a torch to go anywhere, no streetlights up here.

Yesterday I was lying in a hammock under some pine trees, farmers probably never do this but I am a beginner. It was mid-summer, I noticed a wall of smoke coming up the valley. Our first drama. Went on fire alert. Filled all the buckets with water, attached the hoses and put the keys in the car's ignition. Watched and waited. Closed all the windows and looked for falling sparks. Visibility was down to 50 metres. There was tremendous wind. Then, mercifully it started to rain, then pour, then hail.

Plunged into the jungle that is my back paddock, and half the farm. Found 2 gum trees, lots of lantana, pine trees and rainforest regrowth. There is quite a bit of grass for the cattle, a spring, water trough and some fencing to mend down there.

Got to eat the first produce from the farm, macadamia nuts. I have 2 trees and they produce 20kg each per year. I have got rabbits. Getting used to having a finite amount of water. With a few guests I managed to use a quarter of it in 10 days. Gunna run out one day. Finally got on the tractor, attached a chain and tried to pull out a stump. Managed to dig 2 big holes under the wheels. Still got the stump. Been using the chainsaw every day to remove pest trees and weeds. 20 beef cattle arrived at 7am today. They are about 6 months old, weaners, they miss their mothers, so I have to keep them in the yards for 3 days, so they can cry it out. Tomorrow I have to castrate 12 bulls,

drench and inject the lot as well. A bloke has taken pity on me and is coming up to show me how.

The cattle have been here a week now, and thanks to hours of fence straining and repairs they are still here. The stock agent came to give me a hand with some animal husbandry. Each beast had to be injected under the skin with 5-in-one to protect them from such nasties as blackleg and pulpy kidney. Then a 25ml squirt of a creamy chemical down their throats. This was for internal parasites. The sound of the emasculator doing its job will remain with me always. I am considering becoming vegetarian.

The snake turned up again. He was lying on a piece of timber that I was about to grab. It was bad luck for both of us. Earlier on I would have made a pact with the snake that if he promised not to bite me I would promise not to kill him. But can you trust a snake? Turns out you can't trust me either. I grabbed a spade and turned him into 3 snakelets. It was a bad business. There is a huge brown snake in the garden. Very deadly. One of us may die if he does not find a home further from the house. I am taking measures to keep down the rodents and to open up the vegetation.

One of the Herefords developed a disease called pink eye. Quite disgusting to look at. I herded the lot into the yards by myself and, a few at a time, put them in the crush for a check over and an insecticide spray to knock the Buffalo Flies from them. All are doing well.

The previous occupier of this house, a German lady, left behind an arrangement of pots that are used for extracting juice from grapes by using steam. She also left the instructions in German. We now have a million grapes to deal with. Had a try last night. Got 2.5 litres into sterilised bottles.

When you take over a farm you find evidence of past endeavours. This is usually old machinery and buildings no longer needed. I managed to score an old dairy, now used to store fence posts, firewood and, no doubt, snakes. Many generations of persons have worked this farm. Their personalities can be read from the remains of their handiwork and repairs. My touch also will soon be in evidence. Friday evening will see me in the Koonorigan Hall with the other locals for the



monthly BBQ. Hope they don't laugh out loud.

The north coast is in drought. Yesterday the tank on the house was empty. I started laying pipes to be able to fill it from the spring 100 metres down the hill. This particular tank only waters the veggie garden. Our drinking water tank was still half full.

A few days ago, I got a phone call from a farmer 3 properties up alerting me that he had 2 new beasts in his herd, perhaps they were mine. My two biggest and best steers were munching away in his paddock. As it turned out he was sending 10 of his calves to be sold at Lismore saleyards that afternoon. Decided to send the errant pair along with his. Went home and got my tail tags and paperwork, phoned my stock agent and helped him and his 2 dogs yard the lot. What followed was a few hours of yelling, barking, head bailing, mother separating and being excreted upon.

Normally this 70+ farmer, manages his heard alone. I hope it did not take him much longer to do it with me there. My best steer fetched \$360, the other one sold for \$284. The market was down due to lots of cattle coming from the west because of lack of water and feed.

Went to the Koonorigan big morning tea and finally met one of my next-door neighbours. She owns 250 acres across the road but her house is 10 km by road from me. She lives alone except for 50 cattle. There are other women in their 70s living alone on their farms, which they run with a little help.

Yesterday there was a tremendous storm with destructive winds and rain. I closed the storm shutters over the windows and watched in grim anticipation. When the rain eased, I went out to count my losses. My biggest banana tree blown out of the ground, most of the corn flattened, a couple of hundred mangoes on the ground, half a years macadamia nuts unripened on the ground, half the tin roof of my wood shed blown off, a couple of trees blown over and miscellaneous branches down everywhere.

They are saying that locally this is the worst drought in 100 years. The place is dry. Each day the temperature goes over 30 deg and another 20% of the grass dies. The place is looking brown with a smattering of green. The cattle are doing well despite the conditions. The bottom spring has stopped flowing so I won't pump from it any more; the bloke I share it with needs it more. The top spring has slowed down and is expected to stop soon. I share it with 3 other farms. The house tank is less than half full. This will probably keep me going for 3 more months even if it does not rain. Plants and veggies are now getting a careful dose of water from a can, just to keep them



Mario, Julien and Petrina Fraccaro, Alma and Stewart Graham, Stephen Holmes.

kicking over. Have decided that when the tank is 20% full I will let everything fend for itself, that means die under current conditions.

#### **The day the 'little pig' didn't come home, Glenda Fraccaro.**

Stephen Holmes had been raising a piglet and had it just ready to send to market. He popped down one day for a bit of a yarn with his Italian mate (new to the area) Mario Fraccaro who is a joiner by trade - not a butcher. Over a "cuppa" the two of them decided not to send the pig to market but in the true Aussie tradition 'give it a go' and make salami and pork sausages in Mario's shed. As the photo shows it was a true "hands on" experience with Stewart and Alma Graham offering advice as to the blend and mixture whilst Julien and Petrina just looked and wondered what their dad would get up to next. The salami and sausages were absolutely delicious and a good day was had by all.

#### **Lindsay and David Ashton.**

21<sup>st</sup> Century Impressions of Koonorigan from two former city slickers.

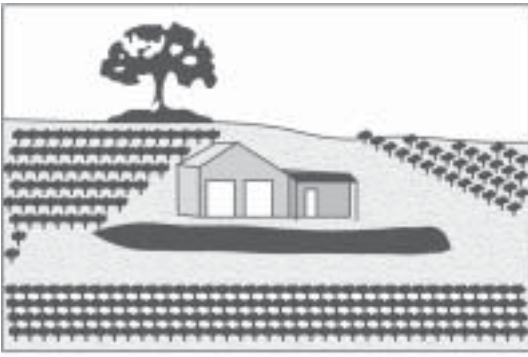
Place and date:

Apartment in Potts Point, Sydney, October 1999.

Lindsay, wife, said to David, husband,  
"What's the name of the place again, where we've bought the land?"

David:

"Koonorigan. Koon- (as in cheese), -origan (similar in sound to oregano, without the o on the end)". So, having learned how to pronounce and spell the place, the next stage was to plan the big move from city to country. In February 2000 the furniture was brought up into storage and we took up temporary residence in our friends' home in Dunoon while our own quarters were being built. In our pioneering early days, we would drive from Dunoon to Koonorigan



with our picnic, water bottles and few tools in our possession to start hacking at the forests of lantana (did I really buy a lantana plant for our garden in Adelaide where we once lived) and tobacco bush, in anticipation of preparing the land for subsequent planting of coffee, our chosen crop.

We rather nervously attended our first Koonorigan barbecue and were instantly placed by everyone in attendance as soon as we mentioned our abode, a new shed. "Oh, you're the people from 'The Green Shed', we've watched it being built." At the barbecue we were taken aback by the great warmth and friendliness that oozed from everyone, as we struggled to remember all their names and faces. A few more barbecues later we remembered names - well, most - and yes, we felt we'd definitely been accepted in the village when asked to host the barbecue ourselves.

Now, three years later we feel like old hands. We have six cows, six chooks and a labrador ("*Who'd ever have thought Lindsay and David would be doing this?*" our families in England say). The lantana has almost been tamed, we have 3,000 cherry-bearing coffee trees and we have now moved into the newly built house alongside the shed. We have even gathered together some farm equipment to supplement our meagre scythes and hoe.

We regularly thank our lucky stars that we stumbled upon Koonorigan when doing our land search on snatched weeks of holidays from our jobs in Sydney. Our particular thanks go to Glenda and Mario Fraccaro and Alma Graham, all of whom have offered great support, encouragement, that wonderful Aussie mateship and much needed advice for our new life in the bush.

And thanks, too, to our dear friends the 'Koonoriganites' who are as friendly and enthusiastic for life as ever.

As to that apartment in Sydney, three years down the track (or should we say up the ridge) we wouldn't swap back to our lives in the city for quids.

**Angela Alexander** has lived in Koonorigan for the past 20 years. She discovered the place when visiting relatives during the cold Canberra winters. She liked the feel of the place, the warm country

people. She felt safe. Angela recognises two types of people in Koonorigan; the community-minded and the city types who go to the pub. Those who don't change move on. She says there is an energy on the ridge. After raising her children Angela now lives with her pet mouse 'Houdini'.

**Ray Johnson** came to live in Koonorigan with his wife in 1974. This was just after the Aquarius festival was held in Nimbin. At that time lots of 'alternative' people were colonising communes around Nimbin and The Channon. Ray's hair was long enough to reach half way down his back, so it came to pass that he and his family were known as the 'hippies on the hill'. He drove a VW beetle, and presumably because of the way he looked, he would often not be served in some of the Lismore shops. He had never been out of work, but nevertheless was too straight for the hippies, and too hippy for the straights.

Ray bought the Cox's homestead (1921) at the end of Cox Road. At one time the Cox's owned all the land on the western side of Cox Road. Ray paid \$17,000 for the house and 5 acres of land; at that time a home in Canberra cost \$22,000. After living in Canberra and training as a pathology technician, he wanted a place in the country. Once he saw the view from the verandah, he knew that this was the place for him. Ray went to school in Lismore and he had a job in the local hospital. Just after arriving, he was at work when he had a call from Frances Osborne to say that his furniture had arrived. By the time he got home there were 2 families there to help unload. Afterwards the Osbornes took the van driver home and gave him dinner; he was reluctant to leave. Ray noticed that Koonorigan had a sense of community, everybody knew each other, and anyone who chose to live there was accepted.

The **Gosling** family arrived in Koonorigan in January 1985. We moved into my parents' (Jack and Elsie Braidwood) family home with our three children, Vanessa, Adam and Rebecca. According to a conversation that was had with the then Local Member for Parliament (Bruce Duncan), we were told that the house at that time was about 50 years old and Bruce remembered the original house burning down. Coincidentally at that time I started working for the Lismore Neighbourhood Centre and one of the first people I spoke to was Joyce Hall (nee Turner), who advised me after an exchange of information that she was raised in the very same house. When Joyce lived here the farm was being run as a dairy.

When we arrived on the farm my parents were running a few beef cattle. We continued doing the same along with a couple of goats, 2 donkeys, ducks, and Chinese geese and not to forget the dog and cat. Finally we got sick of chasing cattle and decided that we wouldn't have to if we planted Macadamia trees and proceeded to put in 1000 trees.

In 1988 Kevin decided a change of direction was necessary career wise and started an aviation advertising paper called Aviation Trader. It was run from our home and eventually grew to the extent that we had to move the business into Lismore.

So now, on the verge of retirement, we have been able to run a business in town and live a busy but very pleasant and fulfilling life in Koonorigan with a friendly and welcoming community.



Koonorigan School 1940



A 'Mock Deb' Ball 1955

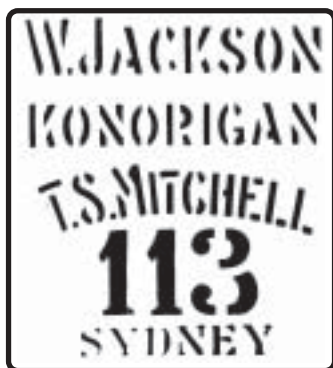


## Koonorigan / Konorigan

The Shire Clerk, Lismore City Council  
Dear Sir, At a public meeting recently held at Koonorigan Hall it was unanimously decided to see what could be done re the signs to same. We sent a letter to the council and received one directing us to the Geographica Names Board, which was quite negative. A personal letter of my own to the above years ago was answered with the statement that they found one "o" in the spelling on the school and one again in the spelling of the range we are situated on. From the beginning Koonorigan has been spelt as the aboriginals pronounced it with two "o"s. Our postal address, the historical Soc, press and everything we are connected with but those sign posts. When they were put up they had two "o"s for a few days then someone had them changed.

The Summerland map has two "o"s in your office in Magellan St. We all of us use two "o"s. People ask us why the different spelling.

24th October, 1978 Mr. W. Jackson,  
Koonorigan Hall Committee, KOONORIGAN.



This is the stencil that Wallace Jackson used to mark his sweet potato bags. The story goes that the stencil maker shortned the name to fit it on.

The Secretary, Geographical Names Board of N.S.W. Dear Sir,

Spelling of "Koonorigan"

Council has been approached by Mr. W. Jackson of the Koonorigan Hall Committee regarding the spelling of Koonorigan with a double "O" in the first section of the word.

Council has resolved to inform you that it understands that Koonorigan is spelt with a double "O" in the first section of the word and seeks advice from the Board as to why it is spelt in its records with a single "O".

It would be very much appreciated if the Board would confirm that Koonorigan should be spelt with double "O" in the first section of the word.

Yours faithfully, (B.C. Stevens) TOWN CLERK.



The Koonorigan Hall.

*Thanks to all the people who I interviewed and who let me copy their photographs. Their names appear in the stories.*

*Thanks also to the typists Glenda Fraccaro, Berenice Casey and Denise Braidwood.*

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