



## Laurel Robson



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*Dad had a gift, he was really clever. It didn't matter, where we were, he could find water.  
I just thought he was so unreal, there was no one on this earth like my father.*

### There were 14 kids in my family

I was born on the 31st October 1938, in Yass. My mother's name was Ivy Lillian Brown. She was born in Braidwood. She met my dad in Yass, his name was John James Bell but they called him Ferdie Bell, he was born in Yass.

There were 14 children in the family. There was Ray - he was my eldest brother. Then Richard and Rex. Rex died when he was five months old with whooping cough. I've still got Richard, so he's the only brother now. Ray was crippled in a wheelchair and he finished up with diabetes, he had a heart attack. He had spent the last five or ten years in a nursing home in Victoria. I've got eleven sisters. I'm the seventh girl. There was Lila the eldest sister, Lexie and Linda; those three worked at the Yass Hospital. Lila was a cook there and Lexie was a cleaner. When Lexie left, another sister, Loretta went in and took her place. And then when she left I took her place and I got the job. So there was Lyla, my eldest sister and I, we worked at the Yass Hospital for a long time. Lyla was there for quite a long time maybe about ten years, when she decided to leave and go to Melbourne, I followed her. I was almost like a little puppy dog; whatever she did I was behind her.

Lexie died when she was 29, she had cancer. I get really emotional when I start talking about her. I was only young when she died. I was only about 20 just going on for 21.

Mum was a little, really little old fashioned lady and she was real prim and proper. She never told us the facts of life. We never knew much about the facts of life and the other kids didn't either. That's the way we were reared up. We thought it was really rude to talk about things like that.

### My Grandparents were real perfect

I vaguely remember my grandmother. I remember her house was so clean I used to hate walking into it. It was built out of kerosene tins and the floors were concrete. They were polished, really shiny. She used to have starched pillow cases on the bed and the sheets were so white. She was really strict. She had little old fashioned hand made jugs, with little nets across them, with little beads hanging from them. The table used to be perfect. I was too frightened to touch anything.

*Left: Laurel's mum (middle) with her sisters*



She was really, really spotless, she had about five sons, including my dad. They used to all work out at Burrinjuck. Our grandmother used to make them get a dish of water and sit outside on the rocks to wash their feet before they were allowed to go inside the house. But she was lovely. And she used to dress so beautifully. I've always remembered her down town in these black costumes she wore. She'd have a nice little hat sitting on her head, on the side, with a net coming down over her face.

My grandfather he was a little short, fat, chubby sort of fellow. He had been a black tracker and he used to hang around outside the house all the time. He was always out in the shed or grooming the horses. But he always had a suit on, even when he was at work. This old suit, he'd have good ones to wear out but he used to always wear a suit and have a little hat on his head. He was an old gentleman and he'd go down to town and the hat would come off to everybody he passed. They were real old fashioned but they were real perfect too.

## It was hard when I first came to Tumut

It was hard when I first came to Tumut to live. That's because it was good living in Melbourne. I had my little girl with me, she must have been about 18 months and I was pregnant again. We came here on an old train, an old diesel train from Cootamundra to Tumut.

And then when I went up to the hospital here, to book in to have my baby, they had to put me out on the veranda there for a couple of days, until they found a vacant hospital bed. I was thinking, "Don't tell me they're going to leave me on the veranda and forget about me because I'm an Aboriginal person!" I remembered in Yass when I worked in the hospital there, most of the Aboriginal people got put out on the veranda and forgotten!

Dad used to work out at a place called Bundarba, it's about 100 km away out through the other side of Brungle. He worked doing fencing and on the rabbits.

## Our first place in Tumut

I was pregnant when we got the first place in Tumut. The grass was that high all up around the place and there were cattle and cow poo all over the place. I sat under the tree and I cried. I told my family, "I'm going back to Melbourne! I can't stand this, I thought it was going to be really nice here". My brother and sister said "Don't cry sis! We'll fix it all up" and they cleaned and washed it all out. They went with dad and found some old kerosene drums, went down to the river and got water and washed the place out. They had newspapers and they cut out little doilies from the newspapers for the mantelpiece.

So we managed and stayed there because there was work there. That's where they grew all the millet for making brooms. There was millet all around us. You never got bored because there was people everywhere. Aboriginal people and white fellas, they all camped down on the riverbank. All the men worked and my brother Richard learned to drive a tractor out there. Dad worked on the millet cutting and they also had corn out there too. Richard worked alongside dad. That went on for six months and everybody made a few bob out there. Mum and dad must have lived out there for about five years later on. And I went back to Melbourne and then finished up back in Tumut about four kids later.

## We were frightened of Ghosts

Dad was really clever at bringing up water from the spring and he would dig down really deep until he struck water. But it was funny one night, dad got a 44 gallon drum off one of the farmers, we used to take it over to the pump a couple of times a week to fill it up with water. This one night dad said, "take the drum over and see if you can fill it up". So we did. We filled the drum up and we had to sort

*Opposite page: Building in Tumut*  
*Right: Banksia*

of push it up back up the hill when these couple of horses in the paddock whinnied and started galloping. It was a real moonlight night. Well! Because we were frightened of ghosts, we screamed and let the big drum go! We went running inside and we said, "Dad there's a ghost out there and we were scared stiff". Dad went crook at us and made us go back to get the water!

## We'd only see dad once a week

Dad did lots of different work. He used to go out digging rabbit holes and then he worked as a boundary rider. We lived on one





property, a dairy farm. Dad milked the cows and took it all to the separating machine where they made the cream. He also worked out at Burrinjuck Dam. Yes, he used to be a laborer out there. When we lived in Yass they had a bus that picked the workers up in Yass. I think we'd only see dad once a week. They'd come home on the weekends and go back again on Sunday night. Dad was always pretty busy.

## We were bold kids

We lived down at Bookham too. When we lived down at Bookham I was probably about seven and dad used to take us out in the bush



and all around the area where we lived. His job there was on the farm. We used to go around every night and walk for miles setting rabbit traps. He taught us how to do that. He'd teach us how to put a piece of rolled up newspaper on the plate of the rabbit trap, then just sprinkle a little bit of dirt over it and put it down in the ground. Just enough so that you can just see the top of it.

Sometimes he used to kill cattle too or sheep. Dad would go early in the morning to milk the cows. We used to sneak down there when we were kids and dad wouldn't know. He'd be over in the milking sheds and we'd go over where they produced all the milk and where they made the cream. We'd sneak in and grab his cup to skim the milk off the top of the buckets and we'd drink most of the cream off it. So we were bold kids, we were!

## Dad had a gift

Dad was really good at getting spring water. One time he said "I'll go and see what water I can find". He went out with a pick and shovel, up the side of this valley and he stood there for a good while looking around. The next thing we knew he started digging and he dug and dug, and the next minute all this water came bubbling up. He had that gift, the gift of being able to find water. Dad was really clever, it didn't matter where we were, he could find water. I just thought he was so unreal, there was no one on this earth like my father.

## Life at Bookham

When we lived at Bookham and even in Yass, all the girls were taught to work hard because dad used to be so busy. I can always remember the weather out there, it was always wet and freezing cold so dad brought home these two horses. Two draught horses they were, and this big cart. It was a really big heavy cart. It had these big old iron wheels.

*Left: Dad (middle) with two of his brothers*

The four eldest girls had to go out with these big long crosscut saws. Do you know what they look like? They have a handle on each end and dad would go out to burn some of the trees down for wood, then mum, Lila, Lexie and Linda would go out and saw them into little logs with the cross cut saw. Then they'd stack them in the cart and bring them home. He'd come home and chop them all up into fire size pieces.

## The house at Bookham

The house out there was like a shearer's house. It had a big old kitchen. I remember it must have been big because they had a couple of big wood stoves and in the middle of the floor they had a big wooden chopper. That's where they chopped up the meat. And I remember all the ladies would come over to the house. They would all go out into the kitchen and they'd make all these lovely cakes. They had all the big wood stoves going. Dad would come home and it was nothing to see him throw a full sheep down on the chopper. The farmers he worked for would give him the sheep to kill. We used to get big blocks of butter too and we always had plenty of cream. They'd give us honey too. So we never really went without food out at Bookham, it was really good.

## I'm going back to study

I'm finishing work this year. I'm retiring, because I've been working up at the TAFE college for 18 years now. So I'm going to call it a day at the end of this year. I'm going back to TAFE as a student and hopefully I'm going to do year ten. Working up there at the TAFE had made me tempted go back to study.

The kids today are lucky. I missed out on an education, you see. But I think I learned a lot myself, by reading. You can sort of look at a book and put the words together, when you try. I taught myself to read. I taught myself before I went to TAFE and did my Year nine. I had thought I was pretty bad at studying, but I ended up helping out others in the class.

So now I've started to write my own book. I've written it all on the computer. I remember the TAFE teacher came to me one day and said, "I can't get over you Laurel! You sit there like that and you write all this straight out of your head, straight onto the computer. You don't even need to write it all down on paper". I said to the teacher "Well I can't do it that way, I've got to do it with the computer, it comes to me better". But that's what it was like when I was in class. I helped the others to spell in class. Students my age and sometimes younger! So I liked it. I was good at it.



## Tammy Tidmarsh



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*I've got seven grandkids and another one on the way. I've always told my three children about how hard it was growing up on an Aboriginal reserve and living in a tin shack with dirt floors. It was hard but it was home and it was a happy home*

### The Best Days

I'm 47; I was born on the 6th of December 1956, at Yass. Tammy is a nickname; my real name is Shirley Ann. I lived on Hollywood Mission when I was a little girl growing up and moved from there to Brungle. I can't remember what year it was. I spent most of my life on Brungle before moving into town but I honestly have to say that living on Brungle Mission was the best days of my life and that's why I'm back here. I went away for 20 years for studies and work and everything else and then decided it was time for me to come home.

### They fell in love, got married and settled down

I come from a big family. There were 11 of us left but I lost another brother three years ago. He suffered with epilepsy and it was epilepsy that killed him. All my brothers and sisters live in Tumut. My mother's name was Doreen Freeman, she was from down at Wreck Bay, down on the South Coast and she met my dad at Yass. They fell in love, got married and settled down.



My dad's name was Lindsay Connolly. He came from Yass. He worked on the Water Board in Yass for many years. His family all grew up in Yass and my father's father was a sergeant in the Salvation Army back in those days. And one of my cousins is now with the Salvation Army up in Bundaberg, Queensland so they carried on that tradition there.

**Left:** One of Tammy's paintings

**Above:** Tammy's parents Doreen and Lindsay Connolly



## The dirt floor would shine

We lived in a tin shack with dirt floors in the old days. The floors were that hard they would shine. Mum would buy the bottles of phenyl, put it in water and throw it on the floors and sweep them. I mean you could have eaten from the floor, they were rock hard and shining.

We had these old potato bags, they used to split potato bags and we'd hang them on the inside of the walls. We used to go down to the clay pan down the road to get the whitewash to paint them. We also used potato bags as doonas.

Our shack had one big room and a kitchen. We had a big open fireplace that we could actually stand in. And mum had all the old pots and kettles and things like that. Dad would bring the old tin bath tub and sit it down in front of the fire so we could have a bath. But we had to go to the creek to cart water up to the house. We get drums of water from the creek until we got a tap.

## Dad was a terrific cook

My dad was a terrific cook. Mum and dad shared the cooking, but dad was always in the kitchen. He loved to cook. We were brought up on fish, on stews, curries, jonny cakes and dampers. We call stews 'mulligans', that's what the Koori people call them. On Sundays dad would do a baked dinner and we'd have ice cream and peaches. That was his favourite and I still love ice cream and peaches to this day. And damper and plum jam. They're the things we had for sweets back then.

## We all got our turn to go shopping

We had to save our pennies and for a treat we'd go down and buy a bag of broken biscuits. They were about three cents for a bag full. If we had enough we'd buy a paddle pop but if we didn't have enough money we didn't care. We used to buy the tank loaves of bread and we'd cook eggs, sausages and potatoes, pull the inside of the bread out, butter it up and stuff it back in. That was our lunch.

I can remember when mum and dad would take one of us into town each fortnight. One time it would be me, the next time it was Pat, then Bev and so on. So we always got our turn to go into town shopping with the parents.

I can remember when we'd all go down the creek swimming. We'd throw salt in because the creek was full of leeches. So we'd take it in turns to buy a packet of salt. Leeches don't like salt. Or we'd use the salt to rub on a bite if we got stung.

We used to climb to the top of Mount Bray. The boys would get pieces of corrugated iron and they'd bend the front up, tie a rope around it, drag it up the hill and we'd all jump on it and ride it down. There were four of us, me, my two eldest brothers and my eldest sister.



Now I'm an artist. I love to paint. When I'm painting I always think of my old people. It makes me feel close to them and to my brothers. My brother Lennie is an artist too.

## Goannas, Bunyips, Djirri Djirris and Killimicat Craypton

The goanna is special to us at Brungle. So in all of my stories and artwork there's a goanna. I have got to acknowledge that special Goanna and that's the way I do it. So instead of me writing on my paintings, I sign it S A T, Shirley Ann Tidmarsh, or I put Tammy or a goanna. So I don't write Wiradjuri in words, because it's the white man's way.

The old people used to scare us with stories, to keep us away from areas or from being out too late at night. Apparently there was a spirit dog out here called the 'Mirriyoola Dog' and they reckon it could change its shape into anything. When we were kids we used to lay in the grass and play hide and go seek in the night.

## Being a child on the mission

In the old days we'd go around playing late in the evening. We had billy carts. We used to get sunshine milk cans, nail them on the front of the cart and put candles in them. We had lights and that was to see where we were going. We'd play "rounders" out the front for hours of a night. And the old people used to always sing out, "Come on get inside". When we got street lights we had one at this end of the street and one down the bottom near Auntie Min's house. As soon as the lights came on we had to come inside.

We had rules. I was always taught when I was a little girl that children were never allowed to sit around when adults were discussing business. If children were meant to be included they would have been asked to participate. So if we ever walked into the house and mum and dad or whoever was sitting around the table we'd just turn around and walk back out. Dad would only have to look at us. He was a very stern man my dad, he never had to open his mouth or threaten us with a belt, he just looked and pointed.

My mum taught me a lot. I said to her one day, about three years before she passed away, I said, "you used to sit around the table talking when I was young and I knew you'd have to tell me one day".

## I bought Mum a little gold tea set

My first job was at Batlow Cannery. I was on the peach line, and later on the boilers where the cans came down through a boiler vat to be filled with peas or corn. With my first wage, I bought mum a little gold tea set. It sits in my lounge room now. I often look at it and think of mum. My second job was at the fruit shop in the main street of Tumut. After that I went fruit picking over at Young and Eaglevale, picking the cherries and prunes. That was a family thing, all the families from here went fruit picking.

**Opposite page:** Brungle Hills – view from Tammy's house  
**This page:** Sunset in Brungle





My mum and dad would say, “You’ll be laying in that grass one night thinking there’s one of your friends there or one of your brothers or sisters and it’ll be something else, it could be a Mirriyoola”. And they’d tell us about the Bunyip, we weren’t allowed down to the river or to the creek when it was dark because of the Bunyips.

There were other warnings like the willy wagtail too. We called them ‘djirri djirris’ Koori people call them djirri djirris. They reckon that they’re either there to warn you of something or they’re there to protect you. They have different movements with their tails, but the old people would tell you, “Don’t talk about that to other people”. And magpies, magpies will coax you away. I’ve watched a magpie try to coax my nephew down the road one day. He kept hopping up to him. And I told my grandson to hunt the bird away. But as soon as my back was turned it would come back again. The old people used to say that meant bad news; watch the kids.

Then they had the story about over at Killimicat, they reckon there’s a bloke called ‘Craypton’ up there and he’s got no head! His head was cut off and he rides down Killimicat on a horse at night.

And there’s a story about the ‘Mimmi’ lights in Queensland, up around that way. And around the Territory. They reckon here in Brungle, if you see the blue light you want to run!

## I wouldn’t trade my time at Brungle

We did different things for entertainment. One highlight for us was going to the movies or even just going into town to buy an ice cream.

We had dance competitions too I used to win all the time. I’d do the twist, so I’d win the twist competition. But that was embarrassing.

I don’t think I’d trade my time on Brungle Mission for anything and I’m dead set honest about that because the friends that we had when we were little, we still got them now. And you know it takes a good friendship and a good person to keep a friend for that long. My friend and I were always in strife, we were like two tomboys. These days the kids have got play stations and all of that sort of thing but back in my day we had tins and tyres and that was it. We made billy carts. Dad would get these large sunshine milk cans and he’d fill them up with sand and put through the wire so that we could walk with them on our feet.

## I tell the kids these stories

I’ve got seven grandkids. I’ve always told my three children about how hard it was growing up on an Aboriginal reserve and living in a tin shack with dirt floors. It was hard but it was home and it was a happy home.

I still walk up the back, up along Brungle Creek Road. If I’m down and I’m not feeling well I just get up and I walk up that road and I sit down. There’s a little old bridge there where poor Aunty Dorrie Williams lived with her girls, Loretta, Robin and Thea. Or I go and sit up in the Brungle Cemetery because I’ve got a little brother up there. I want people to know that Brungle is the 2nd oldest Aboriginal mission in NSW and that all of us here love this place.

*Above: Tea tree flower*

# Mary Williams



*My life out at Brungle and the memories that I have are great, and anywhere I go I always say Brungle Mission is my home.*

## Mum and Dad were from Brungle

I was born at the Gundagai hospital in April 1952. I’m 52 this year in 2004. My mum’s name was Stella Little Freeman and my dad’s name was Harold Boogie Freeman. Mum and dad were both from Brungle. Mum and dad got married in Gundagai in 1950.



They’ve passed on now. I spent most of my life at Brungle, most of my young life that is. There’s a lot of good memories and a lot of bad memories too, but I’m a positive thinker so I try to think of the good things.

## Dad put our house up

Dad built our house on the mission at Brungle. He collected tin from the tips at Tumut and Gundagai and put together stringy bark poles from the trees, he reckoned stringy bark lasted longer than other types of tree. His brothers and pop came and helped him, whenever they could but basically he built it himself.

It had dirt floors but mum made it all really nice. She used to make a broom out of oak bush and she swept it and put sheep dip in the water as disinfectant. It was really lovely, real cosy. We had hessian bags as walls, which we whitewashed, and some of the walls we’d cover with Women’s Weekly’s, to keep out the draught.

*Left: Blackberries at the river*





There was an open fireplace in this one big room, I suppose you'd call it something like a lounge room. We were lucky enough to pick up an old black stove for the kitchen, so mum thought the stove was just it, she was able to cook her cakes in the oven because otherwise she'd have had to use the old camp ovens over the open fire. We used to have the old iron kettles, so we had hot water all the time.

### Us kids slept in a double bed

There was me, my brother, my younger sister and the baby girl, we all slept in one bed, one double bed. There were two bedrooms partitioned off, mum and dad had their room and the other room had a double bed where all us kids slept. Mum used to get a lot off both my nans. Nanny Cass would bring us a lot of clothes and sheets from over in Griffith. And nan used to go around Gundagai, boondering<sup>1</sup>. That means going asking people if they had anything they didn't want. I used to go with her too, walking around the streets of Gundagai and walking around the streets of Tumut. Mum wouldn't do it. But she had a nice lady, a white lady in Brungle, Mrs Piper, who had a lot of sheets and a lot of clothes for the boys.

### I remember my grandparents so well

I remember my grandparents so well. Well my two nans were sisters. I had a nan named Kathleen and one nan named Evelyn, nanny Eve and nanny Cass. Nanny Eve is buried in Harden because she moved over there in the 1960's and nanny Cass is buried at Wreck Bay. I had two grandfathers, grandfather Googlie they used to call him and Pop, his name was Knox Bamblet, he came from Griffith. Nanny Cass lived in Griffith with pop. Mum's father was Alex Little, Alexander Little. I never met him because he died in 1946. He's buried in the Tumut Cemetery. Mum and I would go up every Anzac day and put flowers on his grave because he was a returned soldier. He was with the light horse brigade in the war, in the First World War. Apparently my grandfather was Scottish and these three Scots brothers immigrated to Australia in 1915. So he was a Scotsman.

Nanny Cass always told me that when mum and her brothers and sisters were little, (nan had about ten or eleven kids) they'd go around in a sulky. They'd go anywhere for work. He was a very good horseman my grandfather, this old Alex Little. He'd work on properties but when he came back to the mission, he wasn't allowed to come on, because he was a white man. Only my nan and the kids could come on. I think they had a manager in those days. I remember nanny Cass telling me that she used to make a lot of mum's clothes out of flour bags. You know in those days they had that real starch material and when you wash it a few times it goes real soft, so she used to make all their undies and everything.

### The river is very important to me

The river is very important to me. We went down there fishing, but we couldn't go down there on our own. You see, dad used to frighten us with the Bunyip and he'd always say, "If you're at the river before sundown you'd be OK". He never ever took us to the place where the Bunyip hole was, but he showed us that it was there between two poplar trees. We weren't allowed to go there.



*Left: Mary's mum Stella Little  
Above: Brungle River*





We weren't even allowed to fish there. Like, even today when the sun's going down, and my husband and I are fishing, we get out of there before sundown. Dad would take us fishing on a Sunday, that was our day.

But the river was our livelihood. Now you've got a common out there, that non-Aboriginal people run. It's called a common now but really it's our area. And you know the people will even tell you, no camping or anything there now, but my mother and father camped there for 50 years. You know there is peace there by the river. Once I was sick and the river made me better. I drank from it. I washed myself in it. I don't get in it any more because it's freezing, but I still maintain my links to it to this very day.

## Washing where the two rivers run

When I was young I was the eldest girl of nine children. I've got a brother Doffo. I was only four pounds when I was born. Mum had such a hard time after she had me, that nanny Eve took in my brother and sister and looked after them while mum got me better. But the best memory I have of my mum is doing the washing with her down in the river. We used to go down to a little spot at the

Brungle River and it used to be where the two rivers ran into one. Into the Nimbo and this little creek came in from the side. That spot where the creek comes into the river was really warm water so that's where we'd get out the soap and have a wash while mum did the washing. I had four younger brothers and sisters and the two youngest ones would sit in the old cane pram. Mum had a little iron dish, like a tub with the handles on. I can still remember it and she had two kerosene tins. She'd have all her washing stuff there with the 'Rinso' and the 'Blueo'. Mum would make a fire before we had our swim. Then she would let us have our swim while she took the little kids in the river for their wash. And then she'd put all the washing in the two kerosene drums full of water on the fire to boil up all the clothes. I remember she'd rinse the clothes in the first tub, then she'd boil up all the whites. After the clothes boiled for a long time she'd take them out to rinse them. Then she'd spread it all out on the grass. There'd be heaps of white clothes lying all over this grass! And when they dried we'd just collect them and fold them up and put them in the pram. I'd carry one baby back on my shoulders and mum would carry the other one on her shoulders.

The tub and the two big boilers would be stuck on the side of the pram, filled to the brim with all the folded up dry clothes. How she rinsed the clothes was so interesting for me because she'd put the blue in the rinse! I always wondered why she rinsed the white clothes in blue. But after they were dried, they were just as white as anything! She'd let the boiling water cool down a bit to scald all the boy's trousers and jumpers.

I remember the time then when she moved away from Brungle, over to Kingsvale, near Young. She got an old home over there and all the kids and dad packed everything up and we moved over there. That was because dad went fruit picking there, cherries and prunes.

I remember when she walked in the house and saw a laundry with cement tubs! She just cried. She was that excited about having a

copper. There was a copper built in the house, like in the laundry off the house. There were cement tubs and a tap coming off the tanks, (they only had tanks in those old homes). But the tanks would run out of water over there and then we'd have to go down to the creek to bring the water up. She had to use a lot of bleach over there too, because it was bore water and had too much silt in it.

I can remember the yellow soap mum used to use. It came in four blocks and you'd break a cake off as you needed it. We'd have a cake for washing and for washing our hair. And she loved talcum powder.

## I knew I had to help Mum

We had to have sponge baths in those days. Mum had a big old iron tub and she'd bath all the kids in it. She'd start heating the water outside in the kerosene tins. But we used to go to the creek and carry those tins up, filled with water. I had to carry two tins back from the creek, to the house every second afternoon, for baths. That was one of my jobs. Then for drinking water, I had to go down to the creek every day until we got a 44 gallon drum. Then I'd rolled that down to the creek and when it was half full, I'd roll or push it back up to the house. So mum had water there all the time for the baby's bottles and for cooking.

There was a lot of hard work. I always helped mum around the house. I'd take the babies for a walk in the cane pram when they cried. Mum was a good mother. She was an excellent mother. She cared for us kids. She took us under her wing and she always warned us, well scared us really, about the police and the inspectors that used to come onto the mission.

## I went to school at Brungle

I went to school at Brungle. It was good. I loved maths. And hated writing because they were really strict about hand writing in those days. We wrote with ink and a pen, we had ink wells on our desks and it was too easy to make a mark or a mess with ink. But Brungle



school was really good. Everyone got on together, even the white fellas. It was like a family. The only time the parents came to the school was at voting time, and you can't tell me that Aboriginal people got the rights to vote in 1967 because my mother and father voted long before 1967<sup>2</sup>.

## Old Man Weed

I had a lot of accidents as a child. I'd graze my knees. Mum would get some 'old man weed' from the river and she always had that there. She'd make up the ointment and medicine with salt and lard dripping and she used to mix in the 'old man weed' and use it like an ointment.

## Baboo Fred and Toby

Baboo Fred. He's my great grandfather; he's my mum's and dad's grandfather. He used to live with us. He lived with us for about ten years. I used to look after him because I was the eldest. I can remember his beautiful white hair and he had a little moustache and a beard later in his life. But I can remember that he had a little strap

*Opposite page: Aboriginal Cemetery in Brungle  
Above: Brungle School sign in front of a canoe tree*





on a stick and he used to call it Toby and he'd say, "this is for you kids!" (if we misbehaved). He lived to be 114 and we had him live with us from 101 to when he passed away.

## For my Grandkids

My daughter-in-law has got twin girls on the way. Then there are Jessie and Cory, my two young grandsons. I want them to know that I did grow up at Brungle and I want them to know that I did grow up on a mission. I want them to know the good things about the mission, the sharing and support. And I want to see them get a good education. I want to see them get jobs. I'm an adult educator - I've got a Bachelor in Adult Aboriginal Education so I'm going to teach at TAFE one day.

## Brungle is our Life and Soul

I had my life out at Brungle and the memories that I have are good, that's why I always say when I go to University, or when I go anywhere to Canberra, I always say Brungle Mission is my home. I've got a daughter Irene buried at the Brungle Cemetery. I've got a grandmother and a grandfather buried out there, I've got uncles and aunties buried out there and I've got my husband's family all buried out there so its just our life and soul.

<sup>1</sup> Boondering is a Wiradjuri term. It means going around asking people for things they don't need anymore (particularly clothes)

<sup>2</sup> The 1967 referendum did not give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the right to vote. This right had been legislated for Commonwealth elections in 1962, with the last State to provide Indigenous enfranchisement being Queensland in 1965. (Source: National Archives of Australia web site)

**Above:** *Old Man Weed*

**Right page:** *Aboriginal Station, Brungle 1898, AP112/E77812, Australian Museum Archives*

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