

Doreen Arney - April 2011



I was born Ellen Doreen Rowe at the Mallala Nursing Home, the second child of Eva and Norman Rowe of Calomba, seven miles west of Mallala. Calomba consisted of three houses, a chaff mill, shop, post office/telephone exchange, wheat stacks/railway siding and a church.

I had a brother, Ralph and a sister Merle - my parents lived on a farm three quarters of a mile from Calomba.

My childhood days were happy days and lots of fun, I attended Long Plains Primary School which was three miles from home - the children from Calomba were taken to school by horse and cart and we mostly walked home at night, or if we were lucky, sometimes the railway gangers gave us a ride on their trike.

I enjoyed my school days, it was a one teacher school and my teacher was there for all of my school days. Each year we had a combined sports day at Port Parham, our school travelled there on the back of a truck and we arrived in time for lunch, it was a very special day.

We also had train trips to the city beaches once a year - Semaphore, Henley Beach and Glenelg.

The teacher's wife used to teach sewing, knitting and singing, she also warmed our pasties for lunch and helped us with knitting problems at recess time.

I gained my QC and left school to help on the farm, with hay stooking, hay carting, bag sewing, fencing, blade shearing, tractor driving, but mainly milking cows, separating milk and general house work - I also enjoyed horse riding.

On Saturday mornings I would ride to music lessons - dressmaking was another option given to me and each Friday I used to go by train to Adelaide. The cabin was my usual place for lunch, a three course meal for one shilling and three pence. I did dressmaking after learning and received fifty shillings for making a dress.

Two years after leaving school a Basketball (now known as netball) Club was formed at Long Plains, I enjoyed this and played in defence. I attended the 50th birthday celebrations of the Club and it was great to catch up with old friends again.

In 1944 I married Tom Arney in the Shannon Methodist Church, it was a hot dusty day and one of my bridesmaids got her dress, made of net caught in the gate as we were going to the car, so we had to sew up the hole, naturally we were late - net was coupon free during the war.

Tom and I went to live at Grace Plains, still on a farm, we were there four years and during that time the CWA was formed at Mallala and I was a Foundation Member and had many happy times there.

In 1948 we moved back to my old home as my parents decided to move to Adelaide and they gave us the opportunity to purchase the property. The first three years we were married we had poor seasons and the cream and egg money had to keep us, but after we went back to Calomba the seasons changed, the years were good and we were able to make progress.

We experienced a bush fire that was started by the East West passenger train at Avon, the men left at 12 o'clock to fight the fire and got back at 6 o'clock and by that time the fire had reached our property.

I managed to round up the sheep and cattle on horseback and put them on a fallow paddock. A friend at the telephone exchange kept me in touch with the fire's progress. No human lives were lost, but quite a few homes and sheds were burnt and a lot of stock had to be destroyed.

The shop, post office etc at Calomba were all burnt and on my parents' property, only the house and motor shed were left, so Tom had a lot of work to do, but the community spirit was marvellous.

We moved to Strathalbyn in 1960, to a farm at Sandergrove and noticed the difference in climate, as northern air is hot and dry and nights were really hot. It was quite a break for me after living in the Mallala district all of my life.

Our three boys can't remember a lot of their life at Calomba - we now have three lovely daughters-in-law, four grandsons, two granddaughters and one great grandson.

Our middle son and his wife had an exchange year in Colorado in 1984 and we went over to visit and did some touring, it was their fall (autumn) when we arrived and in seven weeks we experienced autumn leaves and snow and lovely gardens in an old quarry in Vancouver.

I have been connected with Floral Art for a good few years and was not deterred when my first teacher told me she thought I would be better cooking cakes! I changed teachers and had much pleasure learning - my last teacher took me to judges school in Melbourne and seminars in Ballarat. I have attended most of the judges schools in Adelaide and in 1981 I won the SA Wirework Award.

I did wedding flowers and church flowers and recently funeral flowers - my garden is not what it used to be.

I am a member of the Strathalbyn Floral Society and the Finnis CWA, having worked as a volunteer on the Sale Yards Luncheons. Meals on Wheels has been one of my most rewarding duties, where I volunteered, delivering meals for 30 years.

I have always had a garden at home, mainly fruit and flowers. At Sandergrove there was nothing there when we arrived and again at Liverpool Drive we began 21 years ago with a bare block, built our house and now I have more than 50 roses, lovely shrubs and fruit trees.

I enjoy the Garden Club, the speakers are great!