

HYDEN PICTORIAL HISTORY, SETTLEMENT ALBUM, INTERVIEWS

MILLAR FAMILY (ex- diary of Hilary Millar)

Kevin William Millar: born 8-8-28, died 30-12-1999. City bred, an excellent sportsman, trained as Draftsman at the GPO Perth, great interest in mechanics, motor and aircraft. He joined Winterbottom Motor Co maintenance for 3 years. There he met his life partner, Hilary, and it was Hilary's Dad that soon had Kevin fired up on farming. He spent one year as a "farm hand" to Max Halbert on his Cunderdin farm, and under Max's guidance was ready to marry his love and take her farming. They worked as a married couple for Arthur and Betty Wood of Wyalkatchem.

1951

During our third year as a "Married Couple" Kev started to get restless and felt he should be putting his work time into share cropping for us to further our lives. About this time Agnes (my half-sister) and Wally Hall were touring around doing a bit of shearing and hotel work and spent a few weekends with us during which Wally talked Kev into going to Hyden with him one weekend to look at the abandoned farms he knew of. This really fired Kev up and he visited the Lands Department and found several blocks available. On the way home from Hyden, Kev and Wally called into my old home farm to say hello to my half-brother Jim Wilson who was there as Manager with his wife and family (pending probate sale of the farm). They were immediately very interested in the Hyden land availability and arranged to visit Hyden again when decisions were made to take up adjacent blocks and start together with plant of Jim's and from home farm and materials to build a shed immediately to house grain and super. Kev built a house dwelling and when we wound up after harvest with Arthur and Betty Woods, Kev and Lorelle and I moved our chattels over to Hyden into the shed.

Under extreme conditions Kev and I cleared scrub and re-growth off approximately three hundred acres and prepared the ground and planted a wheat crop. The crop grew well and was soon taken over by roos, so every night we patrolled and shot roos to keep them off and then skinned and nailed out hides to pack off and sell for living money. Marj had taken over all the business and correspondence with regards land application etc., so that come November when on a visit to the city, Kev visited the Lands Department to sign and finalise our block purchase and payment was quite shocked to find that no blocks were in our name. "Big Blue!!" We stayed on to harvest the crop and take our share and moved all our chattels to Meeking Brothers shed. Lorelle and I went back to family in Perth and Kev stayed on and worked at Meeking brothers. They took him out east of King Rocks to look at Drydon Brothers block (part cleared).

In January 1952, Kev came to Perth to apply for Drydon's and we were able to sign up plus another thousand acres to square the block on a ninety year lease. Kev sold our car and bought a long tray Bedford truck and enough timber iron and cement to load back to our new farm which we called "Coombrae". Kev stayed at Meekings as care-taker (February to April) while they took a trip away and built our first home at Hyden (King Rock) a 24x12, cement floor, one door two windows and had it finished by April when he came back to the city loaded the truck again with tanks and whatever we could afford, and Lorelle and I and home we went to start life as pioneer farmers on a mostly virgin block. While we were still at Wilsons block we had Sandy Forbes, Geoff Cashmore and Laurie Cottrell visit and stay with us in the shed (all people we knew from Wyalkatchem). They spent a week walking bush blocks south east of Drydon's and all took up virgin blocks around us. Laurie camped with us and he owned a two stand motorised shearing stand on his little orange Bedford truck, so he

and Kev worked up a local shearing run and later at Narambeen and Corrigin. Kev bartered old pregnant ewes in lieu of wages.

Our long tray truck worked hard in this way also. Trucks loaded with fencing posts from Narrogin to local farmers procured our first tractor and sow pig (Bertha) in litter and produced ten fine babies and from these we bred a fine herd. My half-brother, Bob Wilson, gave me our first two cows "Juneey" and "Trilby". We hired a bull, so soon had young beef on the way. Once Kev was away shearing, I had water to cart for us and for our animals and bucket water and feed to them and milk a cow. When Kev wasn't away shearing he would get truck work (a load of fence posts from Narrogin for other farmers) to augment our expenses, mainly sheep carting after sales etc., and this is how he bartered for our first one hundred old ewes in lamb, and a couple of reject rams. Any time he had at home, he and I and Lorelle made fences. I drove the tractor and post-hole digger and Kev kept a scrupulous line and dropped in the post and rammed them, and later we ran the wire from a home-made "jinney" and tied the netting. We always had a pressure cooker of soup with us and Lorelle had her day sleeps in the truck. Shearing and carting kept us fed and procured super and seed and fuel. Odd weeks of labour enabled us the use of a seeding machine and the post-hole digger from our ever so helpful neighbours Meeking Brothers.

By our first harvest Kev found an old harvester for £30 and our first crop paid for our first seed super and fuel and a scrub roller to being the next seven hundred acres of land clearing over which we got a very good burn, and was able to borrow a plough and work the ground. As the ground was sandy mallet the ploughing brought up hundreds of roots so from then on every available hour and man picked roots onto the truck and home for firewood. So each year for the next many years we cleared a bit, burnt and cleaned a bit, and seeded a bit more, and fenced a bit more and picked tons of roots.

For the first three years the only access to our farm was on a bush track to the Meekings farm and then through their farm to the main road therefore our mail, bread and weekly grocery order was delivered to the Meeking farm. Our outing of the week was mail day and cuppa with Joan. Just before Lorelle turned five Sandy and Geoff Cashmore contracted to push and clear a road from Cashmore Road right along behind King Rocks and along the back of Meekings to the existing Humps Road. The Shire then formed and graded the road to enable the school bus to do a round trip and pick up Wilson, Cashmore and Millar schoolies, Greens and Loverings. Lorelle was five in November 1954, and so started school and did a lot of sleeping on the school bus. Now we were able to go to town without bothering the Meekings.

In the meantime, with quite some medical help, I was at last expecting again and Gail arrived on 1st May 1955. Kev and Lorrie still had the shearing run as we still needed the finance to survive. Gail was a very placid baby, so I was able to care for a much enlarged animal need and other farm care, very lonely times, a bit scary. I recall on one occasion when the radio news told us of this murderer by the name of Bailey they thought had made a getaway and the Police were on the lookout on the Eastern States Roads and Rabbit Proof Fences. Big shock at 7am as I quietly left the house to milk the cow one morning, to see a man walking through the cow paddock towards the house. I ran back inside the house for my faithful Browning 22 repeater rifle and quickly loaded nine bullets and back outside to protect my two little sleeping girls. The guy had done a jog up to the house and as I went around the house corner we met almost face to face. I gave him a good look at my armoury, chest high and shouted to back right off which he did in great haste and he kept shouting "Don't shoot PMG, PMG,

I'm bogged". Once we both settled at a distance, he told me he and another fellow were on the Rabbit Proof Fence testing radio signals and were hopelessly bogged.

I told him to load a couple of long building planks into the back of the ute and a heap of bags and I would get some shovels. I wakened Lorelle and told her what was happening and to have brekky and get ready for school, and back to the ute with my rifle and shovels (shovels in the back, rifle in the front) and no way would this guy get in and said "no thanks, I'll ride on the back". It was all he said and the other old "charmer" was so glad to see us and so grateful and once we got the van on top of the bags and boards and out, was only too glad to accept my offer of breakfast but can you believe the young bloke declined definitely and back at the house stayed in their van. No! No! Of course it didn't end there, the young bloke reported it from Hyden to Karlgarin to Kondinin and poor Kev was told at Corrigin where he was shearing and in a few days I had a visit from the Police Sargent from Kondinin and had a lecture, but of course I told him I would do it again if a similar occasion occurred and he agreed *unofficially*.

"Workmen!" could fill a book of incidents; so very briefly our first lad was John Forrest aged 16 years from an orphanage and became part of our unit for our first harvest and the next seeding. A happy employment but John really found farming lonely and moved on. From then on for a couple of years I managed cows, pigs, chooks dogs and sheep while Kev was on shearing runs and clearing our farm. During this time I was seeing Dr Lindsay Taylor and our Dr Pat Cranley having assistance to get pregnant again. Eventually, when I knew the happy news, Jock Steele (a local homeless pensioner) asked if he could be our pig feeder and root picker for his board and lodging. Jock was a very helpful part of our family and work pattern for the next five years and until ill- health and age took him off to care. Jock loved the kids and spent most of his pension on dolls and toys for them. About this time, my nephew and God son, Bill Pringle, finished his education and asked if he could come to the farm for work experience. He loved farming we employed him as a worker and loved family member. Bill was very athletic and social and soon got quite integrated into the Hyden sporting world and was eventually one of Hyden's top footy players. Latterly, we helped Bill take up land north east of our farm and over a period he developed this land in conjunction to our work pattern and with our plant and work assistance. Because of the pressure of super fuel and plant costs eventually Bill decided to move on and asked if we would buy him out. Under much strain we were able to do this with payment over a number of years.

As Craig grew past toddler his mindset was always farming, then sport. Clive was always sport, kicking a football, building a high jump etc., and while Craig hand raked a farm into shape, Clive had his TV programs when they weren't out with Dad on the tractor or driving turns in Dad's ute or little car. Kev put motors in their go-cart so that they also spent a lot of time speeding around Farm Progress towing each other on a sheet of iron behind their old car all around the lake, car chasing roos or emus on the farm etc., etc., and always training for high jump, hop skip and jump and their jumps pit, running trials and kicking footy.

1954

Kev had built our first 12x24 dwelling over January and April in 1952 plus caretaking and working at Meekings farm. In 1954, when expecting our second child, with the help of Laurie Cottrell we added a back extension. A bedroom, passage and bathroom with a 400 gallon square tank for all household water needs right outside the back door to be bucketed to needed points. Copper and wash troughs

were still outside this area. The toilet some distance out the back was built with the original dwelling, but now had a couple of drums supporting a little lighting plant engine set up at the back wall of the toilet. We had several elec'lights!! Grandad Laurance, Kev and Laurie installed the light post wiring and fittings. A 'lean-to' shed was temporarily put on the front of the house to cover next year's seed and super, tools and a small room, which eventually became the workman's room.

At the end of 1956, a third baby on the way and as the harvest was good, we had another ambitious extension! Lorelle's bedroom went on the end of an open sleep-out cum family area with a quite smart bathroom with shower nice new pink bath and basin, linen cupboard and clothes box and out the door to a covered laundry room. Such luxury! Also during this period work had been going on, on a shearing shed and super and seed shed and workshop. The old shed at the front of the house was removed and door cut out of the kitchen onto grating.

By this time we had logged or rolled another 2000 acres of mainly sandplain land, had good burns, gave the land its first ploughing and brought up tons of mallee roots and years of root picking and carting off. Fencing off paddocks was an ongoing job. The sheep flock was growing, Kev shearing only the home flock. Quite good wool clips, pig herd very enlarged and excellent prices for our truck loads to Narrogin or Narambeen. The cattle herd was producing well for sale and home consumption. Very broke as tractor and plant upgrade is constant, prices of fertiliser and sprays are more costly each year.

Our first dog Sandy Forbes gave us- sister to his part-kangaroo, part-staghound, "Shaga". We called her "Gypsy". Shaga was black with a rough coat and Gypsy was quite kangaroo hound. Very smooth, golden beige and pure black muzzle, very devoted affectionate dog but a fast and strong hunter.... to page 16.

Postscript from interview 2nd June 2015

Lorelle was born in 1950, went to HPS and Narrogin High, and went to work in the city.

Gail was born in 1955, with a similar education, and has gone into ophthalmology in the city.

Brenda was born in 1957, followed a similar path to the city via HPS and Narrogin High.

Clive was born in 1966, educated at HPS, and Governor Stirling by boarding. He was a great sportsman with West Perth, then home but suffered a brain injury aged 24.

Craig was born in 1967, followed the same path, came home on the farm. Craig took over developing the farm after Kev died. He worked up a stud, got into green fertilisers and modern methods until his death at only 40 years old in 2007, leaving his widow Julie to carry on. She had 3 children, so leased the farm to educate them in Bunbury, and it has been put on the market in 2015.

Told to Ted Mouritz, 2nd June 2015