
Mavis Bennetts (nee Barry)

I was born in 1924 and lived in Cunderdin before WWII. Life was very hard for country towns with not a lot of work and not the dole as today.

My parents had a small farm of 200 acres and grew wheat, with implements towed by a team of 4 horses, which I sometimes drove. In between crops they did contract work, clearing land and fencing and other odd jobs, which I helped with.

They also caught rabbits, which were in plague numbers and sold them for sixpence (5 cents) a pair. I helped with this. My brother, 3 years older, and I, dug rabbits and foxes out of burrows with dogs. The foxes were sold for five shillings (50 cents) a scalp (a strip from nose to tail).

Bread was five pence (5 cents) a loaf. We had pictures on Saturday night, which cost three pence (3 cents) admittance for children. My Dad also had a mail run which delivered mail to north and south Cunderdin and we liked to go with him, holiday times, and put the letters, bread and other things in the boxes. Interschool sports days, we went by train to Meckering, Tammin, Kellerberrin and Doodlakine and had lots of fun. One of the activities most enjoyed was sliding down a steep rock on a sheet of tin.

I left school at 14½ years in the 8th Standard (year 8) and worked as a housemaid for 1 year. I then worked in the Post Office as a Telephonist on the Telephone Exchange with five other girls and passed my exam to be on the permanent staff. I enjoyed the work as a Telephonist and was very busy. These exchanges were later made automatic, which put 6 girls out of work.

I wanted to join the Women's Army, but was told that there was an Air Force Base in Cunderdin and my job essential, I was manpowered. The Air Force Base was for pilots to learn to fly Tiger Moth planes, it was fun watching them!

We ran socials once a week for the Air Force boys and dances once a week, music played by an Air Force Band and enjoyed by all. I met a lot of young men from 18 years upwards training to be pilots and many of them were sent to England and shot down and killed which was very sad. The cream of our well educated young men.

I was a Telephonist for about 4 years and met and married my husband. After three months, he was discharged from the Air Force to go to Mt. Barker to work on his father's farm, as his father was ill. A mixed farm with milking cows, sheep, apple orchard and other fruit. I was on the farm when war ended on our 1st wedding anniversary and very relieved our men and women would be coming home at last. We had five children, four boys and a girl. We later sold the farm and lived in Albany.

I am now 80 years old, play lawn bowls, fish, play cards, travelling and gardening. I have twelve grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. I have had a happy life and a lovely family.