

Phyllis Whitten's Diary about the time of Lloyd's Leaving Certificate

May need to be verified and clarify some of the terminology and ambiguity
Lloyd has made comments & Charlie needs to confirm these changes 9b03

1935 and 1936 extracts

...suggested that the kiddies have a sleep on his bed and was very insistent that they should have their feet covered up etc etc. Then he made a camp for me on the floor and I lay down and went to sleep. A little while afterwards mother came in to take my shoes off on Uncle Harry's instruction. At about 10 o'clock we set out for Lowestoft. Dad and the two girls, mother and Uncle Harry in sulkies and philgarlic on the chestnut mare. [I hadn't been on a nag for about 5 years and didn't feel too sure of myself but got into the way of it again after a while. The next day though, I knew I had a few more muscles than I thought the day before. I seemed to be stiff in every muscle and bone in my body].

The view of the mountains blue with haze through the gaps in the hills was something lovely. The old house nestling in among the trees looked as homely as ever. The two lads were on the front veranda to greet us – such a pair of derelicts! Wes with his hair absolutely standing on end and Lloyd with [#] of weeks stubble on, an old hat and boots and his shoulder through his shirt. Talk about Bush-wackers!

Uncle Ted seems brighter since we came. He seems to like the kiddies fussing round him and likes fussing round them. He makes up all sorts of excuses to get them onto this his horse. Of course young Wes is the apple of his eye and young Wes knows just how to handle him. There is a young chestnut here which has been out to grass for a good while and is just a little bit flighty. Uncle Ted wouldn't let Wes on it until there was a coroner on the spot. Nothing, however, could stop Wes when he wanted to ride the chestnut "which horse is he going on?" asked Uncle Ted. "Ok the coroner," said Wes.

When Wes arrived first Uncle Ted wanted to know if he had been using curling tongs on his hair. Wes kidded for about a week that he had and Uncle Ted was highly disgusted. Uncle Harry has been a dear. He is wonderfully kind and thoughtful. He always seems to brighten the place up with his ringing voice and his hearty chuckle. He has a wonderfully quick eye too and he's a great stickler for truth and absolute truth. "As old mother used to say. Never tell a lie, even if only in fun". Wes tells me that every night and morning over at the schoolhouse, no matter who is there, he gets down on his knees to say his prayers. It is remarkable that living the life he has he has kept such a youthful attitude towards life. Like old Fabtaff Falstaff whom he resembles in several ways in spirit he is still the child, gathering the flowers in the meadows. [Last year in a letter he sent Auntie Jennie some spring flowers.] He told me his tried to keep his interests varied and not to get an idée fixe.

He was saying was a terror was then I was a kid. Auntie Lucy used to say Mother and Wes were frightened of me. "You don't mind a person getting a bit wild, once in a while, but they needn't pull the house down."

To Dad he was describing an asbestos mine up on the flat top. "It was so steep you'd have to put a britchken breeching (a leather strop around back of horse to take weight of sulky going down hill) on a wallaby."

"Certain people were born to be toffs, but they weren't wanted."

One day speaking of the boys I said "Oh they're not bad kids!" "There are a lot worse than them," says Uncle Ted, "If you could find 'em", says Uncle Harry.

Yesterday I went out with the boys, setting their traps the lovely crisp air blowing through my hair, and the afternoon sunshine warming me. The air up here is as crisp and as clean as crystal.

Sometimes Uncle Harry's phone will ring for someone else and he'll pick it up and say "Hello dearie, how are you? I'm not too clever myself dearie."

One day Auntie Hilda rang and he didn't recognise his own code till she was just about to ring off. "I was a bit phone-shy," he said, "and was afraid I'd be poking my nose into someone else's business."

One day he was in town on his horse. His beard was pretty long and his face as usual very ruddy. As he passed a little chap sidled up to him and said, "Good-bye Santa Claus."

Uncle Tony's butcher failed him. In his usual drawl he said, "The cows, I could run that shop better on my head, than those three cows."

Uncle Harry had his elbow bumped. "It wasn't very hard but he could have got on very well without it."

Looking at Saturn through the telescope – "He hopped away like a big bull-frog or a white possum."

Referring to Uncle Ted's snoring – "He's like a saw on an old board."

Speaking of somebody or other Uncle Ted said "Oh he's got a rat – and a pretty big one". "Why he's got a wallaby" says Uncle Fred.

Mother asking someone to keep the flies away from the meat safe while she got some meat out. Uncle Red Fred sprang to it and started waving a cloth round, every little while giving mother a slash with it. "There's one old chap round here is terrible troublesome."

Uncle Ted told me he was surprised to find me so motherly. My face is really softer than the photo he has. "I'm a bit hard naturally, but I've imbibed a little of Mac's gentleness" I just said. "Flow's pour old Mac getting along."

"You'll try to get Mac wild and all she'll do is to gun at you with those big teeth of hers."

A quack doctor in Ireland was once the means of killing one of his patients. At the inquest the coroner asked what he has given the patient. On being told he said "You might as well have given him the Aurora Borealis." "I was going to give him that next only he died."

A chap at the shearing was stung in the eye by a wasp. Next morning he was asked how he was "I've got an eye on me like a half opened oyster."

An old lizard ran up the wall in the kitchen. Thinking he might be a death older adder Dad landed him a pint of boiling water. Uncle Harry was sitting up having tea. He said, "I suppose he'll go home and Mrs Lizard will ask "Well how did you get on today." "Oh", he'd say "I met some very insulting folk who threw hot water in my face." [he'd probably think he was having a hot shower.]

Uncle Harry was talking about lambs dying in the drought. "I used to take it to heart once, but now I look at it this way. "If he lives, he lives – if he dies get the skin off him".

Uncle Ted wanted to know if my green voile frock represented the wind amongst the willows.

Uncle Ted was suggesting a rabbit drive to get rid of the rabbits. Drive them up into a corner and then put the dogs onto them or shoot them down. "Yes" says Uncle Fred, "and when you'd finished you'd have enough rabbit to make a stew for a sick gin."

Uncle Ted to Wes, looking at Dad's picture of a stag. "Wes do you see anything wrong with that picture?" "No" says Wes. "Look again!" "Are you quite sure", "Yes" said Wes "Well you'll never make an artist. Did you ever in your life see a female gender with a buck's head?" "Yes" said Wes "Once", "Where?" "Up there".

Lloyd hurried to catch Uncle Tony to post a rather urgent letter to Geoff but missed him. He hailed a chap in a car and asked him to post it, and was rather laughed at for his simplicity and trusting nature. "I suppose the stamp is torn off and in his pocket by this" said Dad. "Well" said Lloyd, "I thought it would have more chance than it would if it stayed my pocket."

Uncle Ted comes in almost everyday with a little lover gift of some kind. One day a red rose, another a white, or a ripe apricot or big orange. Yesterday it was a red rose, a red cactus flower (which he considers the most beautiful thing he ever saw) a piece of asparagus and a grape leaf for background, tied with a piece of coarse string. Today, it was a wreath of willow leaves which Olwen said made me look like a "gumnut baby bewitched."

Uncle Harry told a few yarns about old Aunt Fanny. Mundy used to call her 'old mother slipper slobber. She'd ring a bell and you wouldn't know if it were for a nice cup of tea or an armful of wood.

One day she asked Mundy if ever he'd like to marry again, "I'm not anxious" he said.

The other day the men were working and Dad was rousing away. "I say Jim", says Uncle Harry, "I suppose you's rouse just as much, if you skinner skinned your dimble fingers, as you would for a long one."

Dad had a couple of goes at a flying fox the other day, and when he came in Uncle Harry said "You should have kept at pigeon shooting when you were a boy – you would have made a great name for yourself. I suppose the old flying fox thought he was on the edge of an earthquake or something.

Early one morning two flies were worrying him. "Oh they'll go away when it gets a bit lighter but I looked up and there they were peeping over the top of the blankets at me, trying to make out whether I was alive or dead. As though they hadn't the whole world but must come bother me."

Before we came up Uncle Harry had a shower under the outside bathroom tap and came in with just a towel wrapped round him. Being 2 inch round the hips, the towel only went about half way. He tried for a while to see if he could wangle his curtain to get round a corner, but failed, so he said to Wes "Go'way, go' way".

Dad and the boys were down at Spring Park, branding steers. For dinner they had quite a number of oranges. Uncle Harry said. "I don't think orange juice is much good to chaps hanging on to the end of a bull".

Uncle Ted speas speaks of the "history and mystery" of something. He just did it for a bit of "home-made mischief."

Last night Uncle Ted and I were having a yarn about different scientists Newton,

Pasteur, Warum etc. Then he spoke of the wonder of creation. "Now if you'd have seen two walls of fire spinning round each other in the air and I'd said that on one would grow human beings, lilies and violets and roses what would you think? You'd think I had a rat!"

Uncle Harry to the dogs when mustering. "Sit down you old fool!" "Here you son of a gun." "Come here you son of a blue bitch!"

Dad shouted out to Uncle H's dogs which he treats as kindly as if they were human. "Here, don't you go insulting them dogs."

He bubbles over with unconscious humour like a bubbling brook. While branding the steers, Wes saw he was a real circus. He'd put a loop of rope round the neck of one of them. "Good morning" (in his most affable tones). A victim would be roped. Woa poor fellah, didn't you

know you were one of my pets?" "Oh I beg your pardon" he'd say after landing a steer a red-hot brand on the hip.

As they branded a very young one. "Oh it's the baby boy."

Beth inquired at breakfast if Uncle Tony had a temper. "Do you think they are all like me?" asked Uncle H.

Uncle Ted was holding forth about girls being made bolder by having their hair cut. (Uncle Harry thought it most sensible to have it off for the kiddies in the

sweltering heat). "Uncle Ted", says Beth, "you must have been bitten by the same insect as Dad."

Olwen signed a letter to Edith "your loving niece". I corrected her so she replied, "she's old enough to be my grandmother!" In the same letter she wrote, "we are having quite a jolly time with the fruit, the animals and the uncles."

Uncle Ted was warning Wes not to be too susceptible to flattery. "You'll take a city and then you'll be captured by a young clowness with a head as big as a round ball, with about as much in it except for a little grey matter above the ears, that's upside down."

Uncle Harry, "When I go down to the trough to give my horse a drink and I see a fly or a destructive insect in the water I usually kill it, but if it's a harmless little beetle or something like that I usually put in a straw or a piece of grass to help him get out."

He was once in his sulky and a little bird attacked the horse, pulling hair out as he worked. He waited for a while and then said "Well I can't wait all day for you little chap, I've got my work to do."

One day Wes found Mac's bull in his yard, so I drove it along to a paddock where two of his own bulls were, because he hadn't seen a bull fight for years.

Someone criticised him for having old nags. "They are a bit slow but so long as they do the work, I can wait."

Some expert was giving advice as to how to get rid of certain thistles - "Mow them down." "You'd need your mower on an eagle hawk pretty often, said Uncle Ted.

Today there was a storm - you could feel it in the air. At first very quiet as if nature were holding her breath. Then the twittering of birds as they came to shelter in the trees. Then a breeze arose wafting clouds of thistledown through the air.

Uncle Ted thinks that Mae and I have the same virtue - the way we laugh, opening our mouths and showing our teeth, our tongues and our tonsils. Without that our faces wouldn't be worth anything and our lives would just be a blank.

Uncle Harry of Uncle Ted. "I guess you'll be getting a bit of lectioneering now." With some bones.

"Come along little doggie you're wanted." Of Uncle Bob - "He's a queer mixture. If you were sick he'd sit up and poultice you all night and as soon as you were well he'd murder you."

Uncle Ted, 'If anyone flatters you, man, woman or child, just get up and walk away', "Unless it happens to be one of your Uncles" says Uncle Harry, looking up from under his eye-brows, as he does when he knows he is saying something he shouldn't.

Thinking Beth was in the bathroom on Sunday I went to the door and said, "Can I come in Betho, it's only me?". To my horror and mortification I heard Uncle Harry's voice. No comment was made only, "Mind the mat!"

Owing to rain on Saturday, the grocery order was not delivered. Sugar and porridge ran a bit short. On Sunday afternoon Uncle Harry was missing. "I bet he's gone to his place to get sugar" said Mother "surely not!" was our comment. But sure enough, back came Santa Claus with sugar and porridge under his wing and a plum each from Uncle Tony's orchard for the two kids."

I quoted come saying "God must have had a sense of humour or he would not have made kittens." "Did someone important say that or one of your friends? Asked Beth. "Why do you think Phyllis' friends are only 17/6 in the £ sort of chaps" said Uncle Harry.

Describing an operation he had – he was sure they were trying to do for him – getting him to talk – anything to save his old cocain!"

Speaking of a fly-blown sheep that had been treated with blue-stone. "The old fly comes along and before he lays his eggs, he has a bit of a taste. When he gets the blue-stone on his tongue he goes pthah, pthah (going thro' the action of spitting and spluttering).

Uncle Ted doesn't know why the Irish are so hot-blooded. It may be that the blood is three connected, racing through their veins!

Uncle Tony came up for a saddle. "I'd stay and help you," he drawled, "(I'm as good as 2 men once I get started) but I suppose by the time I get home as it is. I'll be cremated." "(True as bloomin' steel" was Uncle Ted's comment of him). Unruffled and calm and looking about 40 – a deal younger than Dad – but brown eyes so sad.

Uncle Harry to his dog "Come here you little crawler, I suppose every chap what's owned you has been hung."

"I hate killing and get out of it whenever I can. I don't like to go along to a sheep and pick him out and say I'm going to murder you."

Beth seems a new being here – bright eyes, happy expression and laughing mouth. She is unbound by restraint and can yell and squeak as much she likes without being hushed. Her love for animals which is so suppressed at home is given free expression. She talks to the horses, cows and dogs and the other day I caught her waltzing with the little-puss and speaking very caressingly to it. This morning she came in burning with indignation to Uncle Ted, "If you don't attend to that sore on the sheep I don't speak to you any more. I think you are cruel letting them stay there for more than a day, just famishing with thirst." Over she and Olwen go with a tub to give them a drink.

Uncle Harry working at the fence. "You know you chaps want to be careful you never know when they've got the theodoble onto you, giving everybody a look."

Uncle Ted says when he makes a stew, he puts everything in but the clock.

After the daily vigorous ringing of the bell to get up, two rather fierce little face's appeared around the door. "Will I ask Uncle Ted the time?" inquired Olwen, "No" said Beth, "he'd give you a lecture on how the hands go round." I don't think I ever saw Mother so helpless with laughter. She just screamed till the tears rolled down her face. Beth fondling the kitten, "If ever I have children of my own, they are going to have a pet of some kind. I don't think it is fair that we've never had one." Then after a pause, while she was considering the matter she said, "But I suppose it has been from the blooming dying of the little wretches."

Uncle H was speaking about the numerous spiders at his place. "Jennie came and did for some of them as I had a few to spare."

Mrs Barnett can't sing a note in time, neither can Betty and bless me if they haven't stewed the magpie! He calls out "steady boys, here comes the bobby."

Speaking of someone he said, "She'll somehow get from you the secrets of your heart and then go and tell them to the Ladies Church Aid. To Auntie H "You know I'm not a very happy man. I'm a good bit on my own."

"Mother" holding an audience, to the kiddies, "Well dearie and how might you be." "Bread and fat merchant" – "booze artist". "Ginger you old sausage, why wouldn't you work for ". "I'll sell the grey mare to a man who doesn't know his age".

Uncle Fred asked Mother if she wanted anything from town. "I suppose you'd want half a dozen straight hooks and a granding grinding stone".

He once sold a horse which pig-rooted to a man. Sometime later he saw the chap, who said "My son wasn't too pleased that bargain of mine". Uncle Fred was at a loss to know what to say for a while, then he replied, "Some blokes would complain if they were going to be hung."

Alphonse, a Norwegian was once working here. He was for sometime in a circus and was like a wizard with animals. Robin, the old draught horse was only caught once in six weeks perhaps and was usually a bit of a problem. Alphonse would just go over to him and say "The poor B.U.G. and he would be as meek as a lamb.

One day Alphonse and Auntie Lucy were arguing about patriotism. He was a returned man and replied "Well I fought for my country, and that is more than you do."

One time Auntie Lucy went to see Auntie Hilda and she was praising Daris Doris up to the skies. Victor stood it as long as he could and then came beside her and said "Here's me!".

Uncle Bob put an advertisement in the paper. "House to let etc etc. Poet's and women, need not apply."

Yesterday we had a real circus watching the cat playing with young splinter the dog. The puss was as cheeky as could be, crouching and pouncing on the pup and at one stage, made furious attempts to reach him through a wire-netting fence. Olwen said "Well that was a real circus. I'd give 1/- to see that again." "Bring out the 1/- and we'll call the dog back", said Uncle Ted, "Forgeries are no good to me" she said.

Down in the water hole, blue dragon flies and flame red.

The old home is a haven for birds probably on account of the lovely trees. Around the house are peppercorns, acacias, cedars, an old "rugged elm, a huge tree, which was brought here about 60 years ago, in a saddle pouch". By the creek are several willows and everywhere of course are nature native eucalypts.

Under the roof of the veranda two swallows have a nest of fledglings. In the elm are willy wagtails, native canaries and diamond sparrow, with scarlet tail feathers, known locally as "fire tails". There are three types of wagtails – two you can only distinguish by their call – and a crested bird. One says, "such pretty little creature," and the other, "so help me toot." Magpies and other bird's I don't know by name, are others which find a sanctuary here. Away on the hill-side two old kookaburras greet the dawn and the dusk with their merry laughter.

Uncle Harry told us of a young chap who had been coming to see a girl for sometime.

Being a bit curious as to how they were getting in Uncle H looked thro' a crack in the wall. The girl was sitting up and just leaned her head on his shoulder. The chap got a long pipe out of his pocket, "Are you going to have a smoke", she inquired. "Yes I'm goin' to have a smoke", he drawled Uncle H. "Well then I left them to it. I thought to myself well, a chap wouldn't learn much from you two."

Uncle Ted seeing a horse which Wes had blued because of the itch. "There's enough blue on that chestnut to blue all the clothes between here and Northern Queensland."

During the afternoon a heavy shower stopped the menfolk working on the fence. Uncle Harry joined to help the two kiddies play hide and seek. The dear old thing! He hid them in the linen press, tucked them in the wardrobe. Once being stuck for a good place he just threw a towel over Beth – telling her she looked just like an old chair.

At night he joined in a game of alphabetical names.

Boys names. U – Uncle H's turn – "Uncle!" he replied as quick as thought. Girl's names. Q – "Query?". Animals. V – "a venomous reptile".

The two girls and I went for a tramp over the paddocks in the rain. We sloshed through puddles, squelched through wet grass, paddled through the creek, screaming and hullabalooing to our heart's content with no-one to hear us but the rabbits and gum-trees.

Hallelulah Hallelulah Lloyd passed leaving – every one standing on their heads but he as cool as a cucumber.

Sitting in the dining room Uncle H. "You don't happen to be in love do you?" I suppose you are looking for a chap that's never been born yet, and wonder what you'll find him. I think by the cut of you, you'd make a better old maid."

Grandfather "If you want to have a row don't pick a mosquito." Uncle Harry crept into the dining room after dinner. "Did you have a sleep?" "What chance would I have near a magpie's nest." Uncle H "Once there used to be a seal real old sinner living down from us. He was a Dane and the kids would be sent a message. He'd turn on them. "What the blazing, flaring hell are you doing here?"

Wes came in with a hare he shot, chest out and his eyes bulging to such a degree that I thought they'd pop out.

The two boys and I went out to Mt Emblem, which is the highest peak for 50 miles. Wes rode the "stone-breaker" with a bag for a saddle and stirrups attached with a leg-rope, Lloyd was on the blue chestnut and Wiggins rather timorous on the bay mare. We crossed the long paddock, climbed the wild Mt and tethered our horses and started to climb. It was very steep and I was red and puffing like a grampus before long. I had to have several rests before I reached the top and the boys thought I was a real old woman. "Come on", "Oh just a little bit longer". On the way, we saw 4 wallabies, a wallaroo and 3 kangaroos, which Splinter vainly endeavoured to pursue. Their lovely, easy motion was grace itself. The view from the top was well worth the effort. Being a perfect afternoon it was particularly magnificent. First of all we looked over towards Uncle Fred's, then further round saw the Mt peaks overlapping each and saw the farms laid out like a chessboard, or like one of Auntie Jennie's patchwork quilts, as Lloyd said. Here was a patch of dark green Lucerne, there a square of brown ploughed land or yellow wheat. Amongst it all the Great Northern Road wound like a great serpent. We sat there for a while big the trig dix at the summit and just drank it in.

The return was much quicker as we could slither most of the way. Lloyd shot a rabbit and had a pot at a crow but missed. Coming home, he rode the stone-breaker and after behaving a bit nastily coming down the wild mountain, without a bit of warning he got down on the ground and rolled over. Lloyd fortunately sprung free. The shot must have frightened it. It soon got up and trotted home again. Neither of the Uncles had ever heard of such a thing.

Uncle Harry came home with the news that an eclipse of the moon, was to commence at about 10-47. We all felt interested and felt that while we were near Uncle Ted's telescope, we might as well watch it. Uncle Ted watched it almost right through and then called the rest of us at about 1.15 when the shadow almost completely covered the moon. By the end of

the telescope we could see two little stars while seemed about 1'5" from the moon. We all turned in at 1.45 and slept soundly till morning.

Leaving Mother and Uncle H. at home, Uncle Ted and the rest of us climbed the flat-top. The boys took the telescope up and so we were able to investigate the landscape – saw several trig stations. Mt Sheba gold mine etc. Considering the height of the Mt, the view is great.

At tea-time, Uncle Harry and Uncle Ted gave us an account of the trip to Narrabri – setting out with all their belongings about ten little long-nosed kids, little Elliott, an adopted niece of Grandpas etc. Uncle Fred left the party and rushed back to the old garden "Where's the kid going?" asked Grandpa. Outside the garden was an old stringy bark tree, under which they used to paly and Uncle Fred wanted a little stick shaped like a pipe, as a souvenir of the old home. At the top gate, Grandpa broke down. From Boggabri to Narrabri, the line was just being made, so that they had to travel on ballast trucks and Nellie almost fell out. Such a pathetic little party, and such a tremendous undertaking.

When you consider things like that and look at the tremendous job that must have been ahead of them in the old days, it makes one realise how much grit and backbone the old folk must have had to face up to it.

"Uncle Ted was Gaspard called after a man?" There never was a man in the world called Gaspard, unless in the North West of China.

Uncle Ted, looking at his reflection after the kids had done his hair, brush-back. "Bless the Lord. Oh my soul".

Uncle Harry sitting up eating afternoon tea. "I know I'd be better without this, but when a fellah has to rush about, he can rush a bit better on it, even though he's buried up with indigestion when he's finished.

Uncle Harry wouldn't let us take his photo because he looked too much like a sheaf of wheat. "They'd think you'd picked up some wild old man from the bush."

"The most tree that surprised Mother". Woman getting very sentimental, "When your father came to visit me first, the sun was shining in romance and the moon was glittering through the trees."

"Uncle Harry, would you care to have a little nourishment?" "Yes, thank you I think it is rather good for the body."

Speaking of dreams – "I've sometimes dreamt that I was in the town minus my pants, scringing along by a wall, but people would go past, with their noses in the air, and not even know that I was there.

"Are you girls really fond of each other, or is it just a bit of kangaroo love".

Mother told Uncle H. about little Ella Hindhaugh in the concert signing "Bopeys" – "Wargin" their tales behind them.

One day the boys brought down a log, attached to the back of the sulky. "They came home wargin their tales behind them", said Uncle H.

One night the frogs were croaking on the tops of their voices. "Listen to the old mother frogs, teaching the young ones to swim," said Uncle H. to the boys at the school house. "You quack, you quack." "Knee deep, too deep, go back!"

Uncle Fred was to change a pair of trousers for Lloyd. He did that but instead of bringing them out from town, brought a pair of Keitho parcelled up, which he had forgotten. " They should have done well at a little drapery business," said Uncle H. "They've got the method."

Uncle Tony came over one night when Uncle Fred was there, "Well I'd s'pose I'd better go in and see these ragers," he said in his usual drawl. Uncle T "If that happens I won't hear the end of it, in this world or the next.

When he was younger he had a great habit of blaming someone else if anything went wrong. One day he banged his thumb with a hammer and roared up the kids in the next room and told them to stop talking.

One day he went bees nesting with some white mosquito net over his eyes. He couldn't see very well, "By George, it would be a cow to be blind."

Uncle Harry is a great newspaper reader. He reads the Northern Leader and the Quirindi paper from cover to cover – all the murders and crimes and accidents, the children's page, women's page and household hints, everything.

His mind is just crammed with little hints he's gathered from the paper. Peel an onion from the bottom and it won't affect your eyes so much. Tie the knot in the end of the cotton which comes off the seal first and it won't tangle so much. When he boils potatoes in the skins, he cuts a piece off the end the size of a sixpence to prevent them bursting. Except that the stitches are a bit largish he can patch like a woman.

He's very tidy in the house. The morning Uncle Ted was away, he lit the fire he swept up the ashes at the grate and moved the chip box to sweep the hearth.

Uncle Bob, usually has a letter in the paper. If a fortnight passes the others feel that something is wrong. A prize ad was "To let – women and poets need not apply".

Another week, after he'd had an accident, a most scurrilous letter appeared about "Old Bob Whitten had fallen on his neck etc". Uncle Harry was going to complain about it, when he discovered that he'd put it in himself.

Last week he wanted a loan, this week it was "To let – for races, garages, lawns and camping reserves. Grazing paddocks, money lent. Bag snatches barred. R Whitten.

At last the day came to bid adieu. We rose in a grey dawn to find a lovely cloudless morning. By 6.30 we'd breakfasted and were ready to set off. Uncle Harry had been up since about 4, lit the fire etc. Olwen and I came with him and Lloyd drove Beth and Mother. The morning air was lovely as we left. At the top fence we saw a little wallaby. Auntie Hilda met us at her gate with fruit and we bid Uncle Ted and Wes adieu at Uncle Ted's gate. We had a pretty rough trip in. Uncle Harry and I both on the iron. Judging from my hip, which I padded with my coat, I guess his was pretty sore next day.

Everyone we passed he greeted "Hallo (whoever you are!). "Good morning little girlie." "Hallo sonny" (to a chap over 20).

I was astounded. Coming in he told us about some girl from Tamworth who danced at a church concert in a wide frilly dress all high kick stuff and he sitting up in the front seat. "It wasn't as if she had any fancy strides". Thinking of the Geordie connotation of strides I was amazed at a man of Uncle's modesty speaking so fare-facedly. Dad soon explained it. "Harry wouldn't know that meaning and would blush if it were suggested. By strike he'd mean "steps". [he'll never speak of the bull before ladies – it is always the "animal". One day the bull got through into Mac's paddock. "Some of your children been playing up since you were away?" "Yes one of his boy's said Lloyd.] "Although I'm only a rough sort of a chap I don't like that sort of thing for a church concert. I like the church to be kept holy, so that I feel I can worship there.

Auntie Joe met us at the station with the three girls, all looking fresh in their good frocks. A beautifully cooked chook was a welcome addition to the lunch. Uncle Harry supplemented the fodder by apples and minties, which was very acceptable.

He was dressed in navy pants and waist coat, grey coat, fawn hat with a brown band on it. But there are things that count more than clothes! He seemed sort of lonely and old when we left. I tried to bring him into the conversation, but as there was a slight element of argument, he said "You needn't bring me into your old women's yarns." He wouldn't come onto the platform. "I've got nothing to say and I might get my back up if I felt out of the picture." So we bid him goodbye at the gate. I felt sorry when I realised. It seemed as though we had just shunted him off when we'd finished with his services. When I went back he'd gone.

We had a compartment to ourselves most of the way down though it was frightfully hot. When we arrived home the Parsonage was spick and span. Dad had washed, mopped from the front door to the back, hosed the veranda all round and the front wall, got spires down, dusted the mantelshelf and dresser, scrubbed the table. We all thought it was far too clean for Dad's work, he's usually such a slap duster and thought he must have paid some woman to do it. But we had misjudged him. He'd done it all in his little own some. So we apologised and congratulated him heartily.

After Uncle Harry left us, he visited the barber, and was so sleepy he went to sleep in his chair.

He confessed to the boys "I'm a bit short-grained with Ted, but I try to encourage him. Although he had a post ready for a gate, when Uncle Ted suggested doing it a different way, he went and got two other posts and carted his own back. I call that generous and noble.

Frightfully hot – went to Newcastle with Mr Walker and the two kiddies in the new Ford. Had an interesting talk on psychology. Another, Dr Angus, etc. Lovely swim.

While on beach shop bell rang. Such a scatter and "like peas out of a packet". One girl just about collapsed in her excitement to get out – everyone crowded in to see what was happening. Lloyd on hearing news that Dad had booked a room at Wesley. "Thank Dad very much, but it makes no difference to me if I stay at Gout Govt House or Woolloomooloo.

At Sunday School someone spoke of "Atrazerkses". "That is not how you pronounce it", said Mr Baioskill. "It's arta x eris".

Uncle Harry was giving us the account of some concert. Two chaps gave a skit on the "Village Blacksmith". Once kept interrupting. When he came to "with measured beat and slow" – (you didn't say he was a policeman). The muscles of (her brawny legs) stood out like (butcher's blocks) filled in the prompter.

The morning we left, Wes came in with his shirt half hanging out. "You look a bit shirty this morning Wes, I hope your not in a bad mood."

Dad speaking of someone. "He was all grit and green-hide and stringy bark."

Uncle Harry told Uncle Ted to look after his dog as it had a couple of grass seeds in his eye. "You make a lot of fuss about a dog that's worth 21/2 less carriage.

Dad went to the choir picnic at the Bar Beach. The blue bottles were rather plentiful. Dad got stung on the legs and went to the ambulance room to have the blue bag administered. Later Johnny Mitchell saw him, "They didn't put any on me", he said. "well what did they put on?" asked Dad, "nothing, because I wasn't stung!"

Extract for the Women's supplement 7-2-'35 "Harmony

How many of us with an inherent love for good literature, beautiful paintings and music, wish we could excel in some masterpiece that would bring lasting pleasure to an appreciative public? But few of us pause to consider that we really can produce beautiful works of art in an abstract sense by sincere endeavour for perfection of character and personality. By setting a strong guard on our conversation and behaviour, by achieving intolerance, selfishness, selflessness, insincerity and priggishness(?), surely we can achieve that harmony of existence which will bring inspiration and happiness to some fellow beings. "

In Uncle Ted's letter – speaking of the need for constant care in looking after Lambs – "the crows are on the wing before the stars are off the sky".

The Irish fishwives were noted for the sharp tongues. One day Dean Swift was passing through the Dublin Market when he met an old woman on a donkey with other donkeys in a string behind her carrying her wares. "Good morning, mother of asses", said the Dean. "Good morning my son", replied the dame.

Miss Docker's welcome party at Settlement – Dr Peyser, a German girl there.

Wonderfully interesting – apparently seen much sadness, by sad brown eyes. Spoke of social service done by a boy and a group of his friends in the slums. He was distressed to find children playing in street, so he and his friends played with them two afternoons a week. Later took them away for holidays, work grew, organisation, training of voluntary helpers. But now – it had to stop because the leader was a Jew.

No distinction between helper and other – Motto "Youth helps youth". When getting interested in dubious pleasure, invited to better places etc.

Unemployment tackled after the war. Asked boys to choose whether they had lectures handwork, sport etc. Unanimous cry was "we want work".

Girl with sad home conditions – contemplating suicide. Dr spoke with her 2 hours. Then asked her what would be her wish if her Fairy Godmother appeared, "To find some work, where I'd be needed." Feeling of futility because outside of things.

Bruce – analogy of narrow minded people in little dark hut. Looking through a tiny chink they announce that they can see the light and invite others to see it.

Prof Brown in wool shed. "This will be a grit great place for Ping Pong, if there were a little more of the ping."

Ralph Cook and Fred Searle travelled on the same train as I, and it was quite a diversion to have company the well-worn track. Travelling alone is rather dull or a social animal. Sunset on the Hawkesbury was gorgeous. My exit was most embarrassing. It was a corridor carriage, and when Ralph tried to open the door it was jammed. He and Fred pulled for all they were worth and reinforcements came in the guise of a porter, who pushed with all his might. But like the stone in the road, the door stayed there. Heads were popping out in every direction and shouting advice. "Get her out the window". Poor little Phylly grew hotter and hotter. "I'm afraid Madam, you'll have to walk through the carriage." I got half-way to find another blinkety door blocking the passage. In the meantime, Fred had managed to move the unresisting door and I retired in the midst of blushes. As the train went out they gave me a loud cheer.

The family are blooming. Dad seems more contented, Mother well and rosy. Beth is as fat as mud a propos of cod-liver oil and a glass of mil each day. Lloyd suggests that she should practice "girth-control". Jove she's funny! The other day she was pretending to answer the phone when the doorbell rang. She tore through the house and went and hid in the wood tank up the back yard.

Lloyd says he doesn't smoke its far too effeminate.

On Sunday we did the 60 miles round trip – through lovely bush along a winding road.

At Dora Creek anniversary I told my little Brownie story (well punctuated with "ers").

Mousset Morriset Mental Hospital is heart-rending. Such a pathetic assemblage – some faces wild, others just simple and others written all over with despair and hopelessness. The grounds are ideal – about 11,000 acres of bush running down to the water's edge, beautifully kept round the hospital itself. Dozens of kangaroos and wallabies, very tame.

The cases sent there are fairly bad I think. One poor soul (who was really rather funny) played the organ. During the prayer she left her perch to shut a door and because it rattled she "shshshed" to it very audibly. Afterwards, speaking to us she said, "you know I think it must have been music that sent me off my head." Then the nurse came to hurry her off to her ward. "Now look at nurse she hasn't enough time to talk to the Minster's wife. Isn't it enough to send you off your head, you know I'm only a bit off but the nurse is whole off." Then the nurse said "Race you up to the others, and away she scuttled like a young rabbit. Several quite young folk there tugged at my heart strings. It is a puzzle to know just what message to give them. They are just like souls groping in the darkness. It is hard to speak of the love of God to them.

One poor, simple, harmless soul waits for the minister outside each time. I think religion must be his obsession, but he seems a dear old thing. "I say to the others, now who is your best friend?" They point to one or other, "Is he your best friend?" "Yes he's the best friend". "Well" says John, "there's a better friend than he and that is God". "But how can he be your friend when he's so far away on a great white throne?" "But he's not", says John, "he's with you always too be your friend and to help you." A man called of God, whose name was John."

He had his little hymn book in his pocket and showed us some of the hymns he knew by heart.

Had tea with Gambrills – most hospitable, natural family – cheese carrots.

Per Lloyd: Uncle Harry had been branding calves. Came in and was offered tea by Beatrice. Thank you Beat – I am so dry my spit would hobble a pigeon.

Sent by Murray Hohnen as he went through Phyllis papers - 20 Sep 2009