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Dear Mr and Mrs Smith

My brother who lives in Griffith, NSW has sent me a copy of the article from the Sun Herald referring to Woolstone. This particularly interested me because I lived there in 1939/40.

Last year I wrote my biography at the request of my family and am attaching a copy of the pages referring to this period of my life which may be of some interest to you. My father purchased a business in William Street and I drove from Adelaide with him, arriving in Bathurst just after Xmas 1936, for the first 2 or 3 weeks staying at a boarding house in Piper Street run by a Mr and Mrs Banfield. It was while staying here that Woolstone first came to my notice.

While boarding I made friends with a boy who lived opposite. He was two or three years older than I, and had a dog called "Buller". One day we were gazing out over the town and the Macquarie River, and he pointed out to me a very large house dominated by a tower surrounded by paddocks, situated in Kelso. He said very gravely, "That house is haunted, no one has lived in it for years, and in that tower is a lift which goes up and down by itself, and you can actually see lights going up and down past the windows at night". Little did I know that I would be living in that same house one day.

After a year father's business failed and he put a proposal to the council that he begin a Bathurst Tourist Bureau and they readily agreed. He ran this successfully until we decided to leave Bathurst for Sydney in 1940.

I'm particularly grateful to be able to read from the Herald article details of Woolstone's original history as we knew nothing about this while living there. Although we were a family of seven, only four of us, my sister Lorraine aged 15, myself aged 13, and my parents lived in Bathurst at that time. My mother was the honorary Carillonist from 1937 to 1940.

In 1965 and again in 1985 my wife and I drove through Bathurst during holidays and both times I parked in front of Woolstone absorbing the nostalgia of the place but couldn't pluck up courage enough to go in and ask to see over it.

I would be very interested to know whether you or your guests have ever encountered any unusual paranormal or psychic experiences or whether you've heard anything of its old reputation for lights moving about upstairs. Perhaps when electric wiring was installed this may have ceased!

I do hope you don't mind me writing to you but thought my recollections as a 14³ year old may be of some interest to you.

Yours Sincerely,



Extract from memoirs

With vacant housing still in very short supply Dad finally managed to find us one, it was the "haunted" house pointed out to me by the boy I met when we first arrived in Bathurst!

"Woolstone" was a huge two storied white mansion with a tall stone tower in the centre front rising well above the roof level, and it stood on several acres of land about one mile over the river at Kelso. Dad drove Mum, Lorraine and me out to look at the place as soon as he announced it, and on the way I contemplated what a great adventure it would be to live in a real "haunted" house.



The house was set way back from the road, had an overgrown untended large garden in front with a long "U" shaped drive sweeping in from the gate through which we entered, around past the front of the house, then leading out to the road again through another gateway which was permanently closed. Getting out of the car at the front we stood gazing at the great house dominated of course by its great

square tower in the centre and the ground floor tiled verandah around three sides terminating at a glass conservatory built on the left hand end of the house. Going around to the back, twenty feet from the back door a strange sight greeted us, there was a row of brick cubicles with six showers and six toilets, beyond which were some stone outbuildings, stables and a windmill. Above us on the first floor level a verandah with wrought iron balustrade went right around the house so we followed it back to the massive front door above which was a glass fanlight with "Woolstone" etched into it. Dad took from his pocket the largest key any of us had ever seen, about nine inches long, which he inserted into the huge door lock and we entered the house to a large entrance hall.

On the left was a huge ballroom at perhaps thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, with high, ornately corniced ceiling, and at the far end of this double french doors opened into an enclosed glass conservatory. The entire walls of the ballroom were painted a light shade of green and over this a very fancy blue and gold design had been either hand painted or hand stencilled, making the room look quite magnificent. Opening off the entrance hall to the right was a sitting room off which was the master bedroom which would become Mum and Dad's room. At the end of the hall to the left a wide passage opened into the main stairwell. To the right a hallway led to the dining room and a good sized kitchen in which was a wood stove, the largest ever made I imagine, about six feet long and three feet deep, together with a kitchen sink with one tap.

Mounting the stairs I noted with regret that there was NO LIFT!!, so all my thoughts of a lift mysteriously going up and down in the night flew out the window, together with the idea that the house was haunted! A few months later I wasn't so sure about that though!!

At the head of the stairs was the large "bathroom" with the floor covered entirely with lead sheeting. On one side of the room stood the "bath", a quite gigantic thing about eight feet long and three feet wide, and it was so deep that when you sat in it you could barely see over the top. To get into it you first mounted a raised lead covered platform built alongside it, and there was one cold tap only to fill it, also there was a very old style hand basin fixed to the end wall, and a flushing toilet opposite the door.

All of the other rooms on the first floor appeared to be bedrooms, each with french doors opening onto the encircling verandah, but the most unique feature was that all rooms had a fireplace with a marble surround and mantelpiece, each room having a different coloured marble.

The electricity wasn't wired to the first floor level at all, and in fact even downstairs there were only a few single bulbs about.

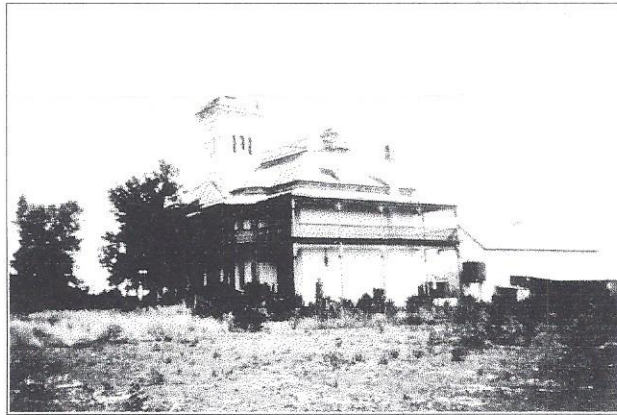
On the way back to "Omeo" Dad explained that the mansion was built before the turn of the century and had been unoccupied for many years because for some reason no one wanted to live in it despite the housing shortage. Several years previously some syndicate had decided to open a private

boarding school there so they had all the toilets and showers built in a row in the back yard near the back door, but on opening day only one solitary pupil appeared, forcing them to abandon the project, so the place still remained deserted until we rented it.

A few days later we moved in, poor Mum having to scrub years of dirt and neglect away from the few rooms we occupied, but our lovely big black and white cat, Ocsar, loved the place immediately. Due to the limited electricity availability Lorraine and I moved into the large ballroom, and Dad put a long wardrobe type fixture from his failed business almost right across the centre of the room thereby dividing it in halves, my end being nearest to the Conservatory, and Lorraine's nearest the front hall. The kitchen facilities were a great trial for Mum and all she could do was to light a fire in one end of the giant stove and cook on the hotplates immediately above it, but manage she did and we ate well.

A close inspection of the property revealed many interesting things. The only water available was from a well and had to be pumped to a 300 gallon pressure tank located in the first floor ceiling by the windmill, which had to be started by having its wind vane turned at right angles to the fan wheel. We did this immediately because none of the taps delivered any water, and fortunately there was a breeze so we eventually had water flowing after pouring copious quantities of water in the top of the pump to prime it, from a small rainwater tank nearby. Within a few days we had this down to a fine art, turning off the mill each time we saw water flowing from the overflow pipe, although we soon found it best to leave it partially turned on so that the fan would turn once or twice with each strong wind gust, keeping the pump primed. The back yard was enclosed by a four feet high stone wall, and a wrought iron gate through which we could get to the back paddock and also a walking or bike track leading directly to a gate on the main Western Highway which saved me a half mile every time I rode to school. On the right hand side of the back yard was a long two storied stone building containing several rooms, plenty of junk, and ONIONS!! Bags and bags and piles of them! It turned out that a market gardener had rented two of the paddocks for the season and put in brown and white onions, but when he sent the first load to market he didn't even cover his freight costs so he just abandoned them, there was still at least an acre of white onions on the ground in the north side paddock also.

Lorraine and I explored the upstairs and found a narrow stairway leading up through the ceiling so up we went. At ceiling level a door opened off the left side which led into the ceiling itself giving access to the water tank. closing it again we continued up the stairway until confronted by a sliding horizontal door on rails secured by a large pad bolt which we released. We slid the door back out of the way, and walked out onto a very large decked flat roof right on top of the gables, surrounded by a cast iron balustrade. The view fairly took our



breath away but we were more excited by the fact that there was yet another door in the side of the tower, so opening this we climbed a narrow stairway attached to the inside walls ending against a trapdoor in the ceiling. Lifting this up we entered the top of the tower itself and stood looking around over the wall topped with cast iron lacework, in all directions, giving us a magnificent view of the surrounding district and across the river to Bathurst. We soon had Mum and Dad there with us but Mum never went up there again as she didn't like heights.

The four of us settled down quite well in our new home although, after only one try at taking a bath in our huge bath by carrying saucepans of hot water upstairs by torch light, we all agreed that we would thereafter put up with cold showers! We each chose our own toilet and shower from the row outside the back door and actually the cold showers, a bit of a shock to the system at first, weren't too bad because the weather was getting warmer, although we daren't even think about the next winter with its thick frosts and frozen pipes!

Dad looked at the heaps of onions and thought, "What a waste", so when he found plenty of glass screwtop jars in an upstairs room in the barn he co-opted all of us to help him peel great quantities of the small white onions and he made some dozens of large jars of pickled onions. All of our friends in Bathurst were keen to visit us of course, due in part no doubt to the fact that Woolstone had quite a

reputation, but when each one left after their visit they were given as many onions as they would take, plus two or three jars of pickled onions, which I must admit tasted as good as the bought ones. Needless to say, every meal Mum cooked was well laced with onions too!

Lorraine had by this time finished at Marsden, and was attending Business College near the city centre, so she drove each day with Dad, but it meant a ride of a couple of miles or more for me to get to the High School, which was nothing to me anyway on my bike.

Barney and several other school friends visited quite often as they loved exploring the flat roof, tower, and outbuildings, etc, but we soon thought up another activity which was great fun. We each carried our bikes up the stairs to the first floor verandah and had bike races around and around the house, the timber decking being an ideal riding surface. We really achieved remarkable speeds after a while and looking back now I think we were lucky not to have an accident, but over many weeks none of us ever did.

We were visited one day by an old friend from my "All Saints College" days, Maurice Turner, and his mother. Maurie, who wore glasses, was a rather impractical sort of "Absent Minded Professor" type with a penchant for music, and Barney and I decided to show him around while Mum and his mother were having afternoon tea downstairs. On the way up to the roof he saw the door into the ceiling space and wanted to have a closer look inside, so, after telling him to walk only on the rafters, Barney led the way into the ceiling with Maurie closely following him, and I brought up the rear. After about ten feet, Maurie, who'd never seen a ceiling from above, thought the laths looked solid enough to walk on so put one foot on it to try it out. Well, the result was quite spectacular to say the least, because his leg just disappeared through the ceiling sending a shower of plaster down the open stairwell to crash on the ground floor 32ft below, leaving poor Maurie with one leg and two arms hanging over the rafters in the ceiling. On hearing the crash Mum and Mrs Turner rushed to the foot of the stairs to be confronted by plaster all over the floor, and looking up, saw a leg dangling from the ceiling 2 floors above waving around. Mrs Turner, who must somehow have recognized Maurie's leg, screamed out over and over, "Maurice dear, keep perfectly still or you will fall", but of course he just kept moving it around while trying to get a better grip, until with a great effort and our help he managed to extricate it back into the ceiling again.

As he was rather shocked we helped him straight downstairs again where he and his mother made a hasty departure, and he never did get to see the roof or tower because his Mother forbade him to ever visit us again! It was just as well that Dad was easy going, because he didn't even bawl me out over it, despite having to pay for the repair when we finally left the house, I suspect that he saw the funny side of the adventure.

One day the windmill began to squeal with dry bearings, so after turning it off by moving the tail in line with the fan, I climbed up the ladder to stand on the 12" wide timber deck around the top, and found that the mill had a cast iron gearbox with a hinged top to it. While checking this I found that each time the wind swirled, the fan moved with it, so it became a rather hazardous job dodging around the top as it moved, keeping out of the way of the large fan which would turn this way and that, backwards and forwards. Going down again I eventually found a tin of sump oil in the barn and with this in one hand climbed to the tower again, and, while keeping one eye on the dangerous fan, managed to pour a quantity of oil into the gearbox, getting myself nicely doused in the process. I was very thankful when back on solid ground again, and decided that Dad could do it next time, but fortunately it never gave trouble again.

Fortunately when opening the school was contemplated, telephone wires were run in to the house so we were able to have it connected straight away, which was very convenient for Mum because she kept up quite a bit of social activity with her "Musical" friends. On all her excursions to friends' houses she had to use her largest handbag so she could accommodate "The Key", as it was so huge, and of course it was always a great "conversation piece" with everyone wanting to look at and handle it.

Like most boys of my age I was somewhat nervous in the dark but in this house I always felt quite comfortable on the ground floor, although I have to admit that I was terrified to go upstairs in the night time even with a torch. I recall one Saturday night when I rode my bike alone to the pictures at the Burlington Theatre in Bathurst, and riding home after 11PM, Woolstone appeared quite ghostly in the bright moonlight yet I thought to myself, "What a friendly old house this is", so, if it really was haunted, the ghosts I think must have liked small boys!

One Saturday afternoon when Lorraine and I were away on our own pursuits, Mum settled herself on the North verandah with her constant darning bag enjoying the fine weather while she darned the socks, when she suddenly became aware of heavy footsteps on the verandah above her head. Thinking that it was Dad, she took no more notice but as the minutes went by she became aware that the

footsteps were pacing back and forth, so she called out, "Dad dear, what on earth are you doing up there?" There was no answer so she called out again, this time in a very loud voice, but got a heck of a fright when Dad appeared from the stables saying, "Were you calling me"? Well, mum immediately gave up her darning and sent Dad upstairs to find out who was there, but he found no one, which didn't please her one little bit!

Dad and Mum had to go to Sydney necessitating an overnight stay there. Mum was nervous about us being in the house without them, so they approached a nearby family named Boyd whom we knew slightly, and asked whether their 19 year old son could come and stay with Lorraine and me on the night they would be away, which was agreed to provided that he could bring a friend with him. So it was that the lad and his friend arrived after dinner on the particular night and at bed time they went to the master bedroom where the double bed had been made up for them. Early the next morning as soon as we were up they departed. A couple of weeks later Dad ran into the boy's father in the street and asked, "How did the boys get on when they stayed over with us?" He laughed and said, "They admitted when they arrived home that they were terrified and spent the whole night together in the bed listening to every strange noise coming from the house and didn't sleep a wink, they were under the blankets most of the time!"

Among the party games which we brought from Adelaide was a "Planchette", a six inch oval shaped disk of wood with small castor wheels on one end and a pencil at the other, a quite efficient replacement for a "Ouija" board which over the years had given us quite a bit of fun. The idea was to put a sheet of white butchers paper on a table, then all place our fingertips on it and it started moving about making lines on the paper, and we found that Mum must have had more psychic powers than the rest of us because provided she was with us it always had something to say. Well one night we decided to bring this out and give it a try, and immediately it started to write all sorts of stuff and then kept going all down the paper until it stopped, it always made a circular full stop when it finished saying something. Putting it aside we studied the rows of writing carefully but could make nothing of it, so on a whim, Dad went and got a mirror, and, when we viewed the reflected writing, there, quite plainly written were lines and lines of poetry. We started asking questions and although it always answered I usually found the answers rather cryptic or evasive and not direct enough for me.

Lorraine and I soon lost interest in Planchetting but Mum and Dad became really obsessed with it and soon found it unnecessary to even use the Planchette board at all, because whenever Mum picked up a pencil it started to write by itself, and if Dad wanted to participate he just put his fingertips on her wrist and it would respond to his questions also. Whenever he was there someone called "Jo" came through who said he was Dad's guardian, so thereafter, all his life, whenever something good happened to him he'd say "Jo's looking after me again", which became a bit of a family catch phrase. They filled quantities of sheets of white butchers paper, and one night it simply told him "Jack needs you", which puzzled Dad for a time as the only Jack he knew was a very old friend in Adelaide named Jack Lindow. The next day he wrote to him and after a couple of weeks received a reply saying that he had been very ill indeed and dad's letter had really lifted his spirits and he was now recovering, so Dad was very pleased that he'd written anyway. What, if anything, it told them about the house I don't know as I never asked them, but it came as a surprise to me that when we left Woolstone they dropped it like a hot coal and never tried it again as far as I know. I did ask about it one night twelve months later and all Dad said was that "evil forces were coming into it which wanted to control our lives" and that they wouldn't touch it again!

Mum went out to a musical evening with several friends one night and was brought home in a car with three male friends. As they crossed the Macquarie on the Western Highway, Woolstone could be seen quite clearly in the moonlight and one man said, "Well, Edgar (Dad) is still up because an upstairs light is on", so Mum said that he must be up there with a torch because we had no electricity anywhere upstairs. They were all watching the light when it suddenly went out only to reappear moments later in an adjoining room then again in a third one. When they arrived home Mum invited them in for coffee as Dad would be up and about, but when they got inside the house Dad was in bed sound asleep, so Mum woke him and wanted to know what he'd been doing upstairs at that time of night. Dad claimed that he'd been asleep all evening so they all said, "Well there's someone up there anyway"! Dad got up and all four men went up to investigate, first, going through every room then right around the verandah but no one could be found. "I know," said one of the men, "As we're walking around the verandah one way he is dodging around the other way", so Dad suggested that two go one way around the verandah and two go around the other way and both meet in the middle, but by this time all three of them were very jumpy and didn't want to separate. Dad, seeing the way things were, told them all to wait where they were and he walked right around the house and arrived back again without

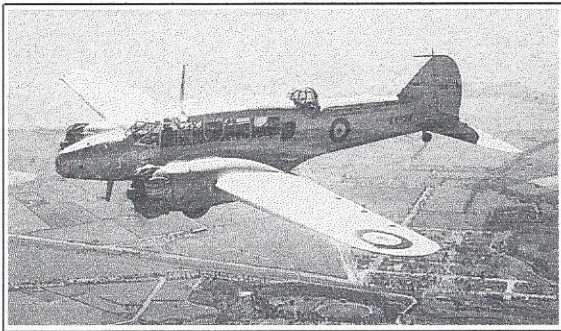
seeing anyone. Moments later downstairs, they all declined to stay for coffee and hurried from the house and strangely enough none of them ever came to Woolstone again, although there was a sequel to the incident.

Three weeks later Mum and Dad received a letter from a man in Sydney who said he was a psychic, and he had received a letter from a friend who happened to be one of the three men concerned, who had told him about the incident, and would it be possible for him to visit Woolstone. Mum replied that we would be pleased to see him when he came to Bathurst, and in due course he arrived one Friday afternoon and stayed to tea. He said that he was well acquainted with the house's reputation because strange lights had been appearing in the upstairs windows since last century which was recorded in various paranormal publications. During the afternoon he carefully inspected each upstairs room in turn, then all of the downstairs rooms and outbuildings which took until tea time. There was no discussion at all during dinner about anything Paranormal or odd for a particular reason which I'll explain in a moment. After dinner Dad couldn't persuade him to go upstairs again and when Mum told him that she had prepared a bed and expected him to stay the night with us he eventually untactfully admitted that he was too nervous to stay the night in this house! Dad drove him to a hotel in Bathurst and we never heard from him again.

During our time living in Woolstone Mum and Dad took every care to see that Lorraine and I knew nothing about anything which was unusual happening in the house, for fear that we may become frightened or nervous, so we actually knew nothing about the foregoing occurrences until some months after we had left the district.

Mum also admitted later that as she considered the outside toilets rather "public" during the daytime, she preferred to use the one in the great bathroom upstairs. However, she was too nervous to go upstairs alone so she would always make sure the cat came with her, and while pussy was up there she felt quite all right.

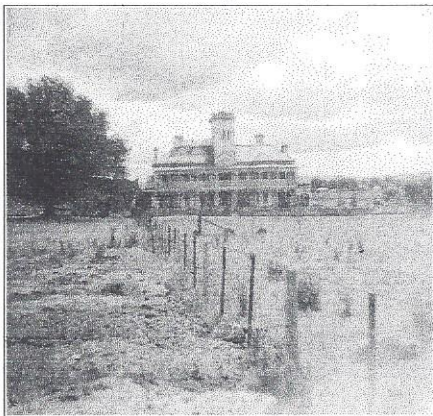
One day a telegram arrived from the RAAF informing us that Gordon had been seriously injured in a car accident. He had rolled his car and was in hospital with a fractured skull and a broken back.



Gordon flying an Avro Anson, 1938

Lorraine and I were quite concerned about the welfare of our pussy at Woolstone which was being fed by a boy living nearby, so we proposed to Mrs Eagles that we cycle out and comfort him, and perhaps stay overnight there. She was very emphatic that we were not to do this as Mum and Dad had left specific instructions that we were not to go to the house while they were away!

When Mum and Dad returned they brought good news that Gordon was recovering well. They said when he woke up in hospital 36 hours after admittance, that he was surprised to see them sitting there and asked what they were doing there. He was in a heavy plaster cast for three months and was back flying again in four months and says today that he suffered no ill effects from the accident in later years.



Fortunately, before the winter frosts began, once again our lives were about to change yet again and we moved from the district.

End of extract.

This is how I saw Woolstone when I returned in 1965