

# Atkinson Family of Westridge

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Laurence Henry Atkinson, born in Allansfield Victoria on 5 May 1913 married Ivy Cloreen Nicolls born on 11 December 1910 Monteagle New South Wales. They had three daughters.

**Alieen Margaret** born in Young New South Wales on 30 September, 1938 who married Colin Bruce Maxwell at Saint Christopher's Cathedral in Manuka on 31 October, 1959. They have two children, David Bruce and Kerri Ann both born in Queanbeyan in 1961 and 1963. Colin is the second son of Doug and May Maxwell who moved to Westridge in January, 1950. Their home was on the corner of Novar and Bentham Streets and known as number 41. This was the newer section of Westridge at the time. Colin only lived at Novar Street until 1952 when he commenced work with Woodgers & Calthorpe Stock & Station Agents in Queanbeyan. He still operates his own real estate business, Maxwell & Co and resides in Queanbeyan.

**Lurlene Adele (Dell)** born in Queanbeyan New South Wales on 27 September 1939 married Kenneth Leonard Stafford at Saint Christopher's Cathedral Manuka on 16 December 1961. They have one child, Karen Lisa born in Canberra in 1966. Len moved to Canberra from Cooma in 1946 after serving with the 8th Division AIF in the Malayan Campaign. From a brickmaking background in Cooma before the war he commenced work at the Commonwealth Brickworks in Westridge. Len worked at the Brickworks both in Westridge and later at the new location in Mitchell until November 1979 when for health reasons he moved to the ACT Parks & Gardens as a gardener and worked there until his retirement.

**Kay Lorette** born in Canberra on 25 April 1943 married Noel Arthur Wicks at Saint Christopher's Cathedral Manuka on 20 April, 1963. Kay and Noel have one child, Anthony John born in Canberra in 1965. Noel moved from Sydney to Canberra when he and Kay married in 1963. He worked as a motor mechanic with several car dealerships and service stations in and around Canberra. He also spent some time in the Australian Public Service as a personal car driver for the head of a Government Department, but returned to the motor trade for a period before taking on his own motor repair business in Fyshwick. Laurie and Ivy Atkinson moved from Young to Queanbeyan around June, 1939 and then to Wentworth Avenue Kingston in 1941 or 1942. In 1942 the family moved from Kingston to Westridge which at that time consisted of three blocks of houses, where they resided at 77 Novar Street. The family remained there until the death of Ivy in 1960 and Laurie in 1967. The children relocated to Queanbeyan and other areas of Canberra after they married.

Laurie Atkinson was a builder's labourer for many years and for varying periods he was an office cleaner at West Block. He spent some time as a courier with the Department of External Affairs and at the time of his death was a tyre changer at the transport department in Kingston. As an office cleaner in West Block Laurie worked shift work from four in the afternoon until eleven at night. Not owning a car, Laurie's mode of transport from Westridge to West Block was on a bicycle. Ivy undertook catering from her home, catering mostly for birthday parties, wedding receptions, Masonic lodge meetings, cocktail parties and balls.

The children were all educated at Saint Christopher's School in Manuka. Public transport was very basic with few services outside the normal school and office schedules. For shopping people would take the morning bus to Kingston or Manuka and if they did not wish to wait until the afternoon bus service, they would catch a bus to the Prime Minister's Lodge and walk the remaining distance to Westridge. The majority of wives and mothers took this option, carrying their purchases all that distance.

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Immediate neighbours at Westridge included Bill and Lola Hawke at 75 Novar Street, who had three children, Dianne, Roger and Larry (*Snowy*) and Gladys Marsh and children Marlene and Dandra, Mrs Horan and sons, Terry and Peppy.

A grocery van operated by Milners of Kingston visited the area on a weekly basis, and another store, Cleary and Wardell had a representative who would call on households each week and take their grocery orders, these would then be delivered a few days later. A fruit and vegetable truck also provided a weekly service. Les Smith was the milko who delivered fresh milk daily, leaving it in a billy left out for him at the back door. The post office was managed by Mr and Mrs Johnson in Hutchins Street. The only phone service was a public phone box at the post office and the Johnsons were happy to take phone messages left for the residents which could be passed on when the mail was collected.

Leisure Activities included:

- \* weekend tennis afternoons at the Westridge Courts.
- \* Cricket Matches played in the open area opposite the Westridge Hall.
- \* The gathering of pine cones for use in stoves, water heaters and open fires. These were gathered from where the Royal Canberra Golf Club is now located.
- \* Yabbing in the local water hole.
- \* Picking mushrooms from the paddocks between Schlich Street and Corkhill's Dairy on the banks of the Molonglo.
- \* Swimming in the Molonglo River.
- \* Sunday afternoon walk which culminated on the lawns in front of the Forestry School.
- \* Awaiting the ice-cream van on Sunday afternoons.
- \* The annual Trades & Labour Picnic at the Cotter was also an enjoyable outing for the children.

Bill Boyd of Novar Street was a brick carter at the Commonwealth Brickworks and a keen supporter of the Manuka Australian Rules Team. During the football season Bill was always happy to take enthusiasts to the matches on the back of his Federal Truck. During the blackberry season Bill also took his truck loaded with keen pickers to the Cotter for a day's picking. Old kerosene drums were filled with blackberries which would be turned into jam in the following days.

Fund raising and dances and kitchen teas for local lasses were held in the Westridge Hall. These functions were open invitation to local residents and always well attended and Commonwealth Day presented a challenge to the younger population. Two bonfires were built, one in the open area opposite the Post Office, and the other at the bottom of Novar Street. Children spent many hours over a number of weeks collecting branches, bushes, old tyres etc for the bonfires, each group endeavouring to have the best and biggest fire. The following morning children would be out scouting around to see if they could find any crackers that did not go off.

The first shopping facility in Westridge was the construction of a general store on the corner of Hutchins and Bentham Streets which was initially operated by Frank and Elsie Dyer.

The Saturday Matinee at the Capitol Theatre Manuka was a favourite outing for young children. To attend picture sessions at the Civic Theatre or the Albert Hall dances, patrons would have to catch a bus from the north side to connect with a bus from Kingston/Manuka which would meet up at the corner of Melbourne Avenue and Empire Circuit, outside the Brophy residence.