The Growth of Morisset

Interviewee: Mary Theresa France
Yambo Street
Morisset
In this interview, Mary France gives evidence of the major influences on the lives of the people in the Morisset District. Both the drawbacks and advantages encountered as a mainly rural community are re-lived and illustrate the geographic and economic factors that determined the relatively slow rate at which progress reached Morisset and surrounding areas.

Mary Theresa France was born at home on March 27th, 1927. She was the eldest of eight children born to John and Mary Wilcock, and lived, until her marriage in the family home at Eraring, on the site of what is now the head office of Newcom Collieries.

Leaving Newcastle Post Office to become a farmer, her father purchased a 2 bedroom house on 10 acres of land at Eraring and established a market garden, that not only provided food for his growing family but yielded a surplus which was sold enabling the purchase of necessities.

The children were expected to help with the work on the farm, which varied with the crop and the seasonal planting and harvesting, as well as their share of household chores. Although hard and often tedious, the work gave the children a sense of responsibility that proved invaluable in the years preceding and following their parents premature death.

In her early years, Mary attended the tiny school at Eraring with her brothers and sisters, and later travelled by train to
high school in Wyong. Mary considers herself fortunate to have gone to high school at all, unlike the majority of children who remained at the small school for two years to complete two years by correspondence.

The medical services available were confined to one doctor in Morisset, and a small hospital in Cooranbong which was run by Nurse Connolly. In the event of the doctor being unable to be contacted Nurse Connolly would drive her horse and sulky, often in foul weather to attend the sick or to deliver babies. For many years the nearest chemist was in Wyong, however to overcome this, the doctor often prepared his own medicines and kept a supply for emergencies.

Although social lives were dependent upon the amount of free time available, there were dances in the local halls in the district which doubled as picture theatres on weekends. The necessity for local entertainment and shopping facilities was heightened by the inadequate roads and unsatisfactory train schedules and compounded by a distance that was too great for horse and sulky.

Local industries provided the basis for settlement in the area and lack of suitable employment for young adults completed the cycle of movement away from the district, in this way the population remained constant by never stagnant.

Throughout the interview with Mary France, it is apparent
that hardships were never dwelt upon and that any drawbacks
served only to strengthen the appreciation of the simplest of
conveniences and luxuries. Similarly, today the advantages
of living in Morisset outway the many disadvantages that
still exist due to the geographic and economic position of
Morisset.
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Signed ... (Interviewee)
Date ... (Date)
Interviewer ... (Interviewer)