

Subject: Lillian Hepher  
Interviewer: Andrew Allen  
Date: 7 May 2010  
Precis: Lillian Hepher recalling her memories of Campbelltown

**Oral history interview Friday 7 May 2010. Can I get your full name please?**

My full name is Lilly Hepher.

**What were your parents names Lilly?**

They were Triglone and my mother's name was Amelia and my father's name was Milton.

**How long did you live in Campbelltown for?**

We went there in 1919 and we actually moved to Bundanoon in 1980, so that sounds like about 61 years to me. I was born in Gundagai and I was four when we moved to Campbelltown, and Jack too.

**Do you mind me asking you the year that you were born?**

I was born in 1915. I would have minded once but when you're 90 you more or less drag it into the conversation.

**How many were in your family?**

I had two brothers and two sisters and my grandmother lived with us. So there were really eight in the house.

**Can you tell me whereabouts in Campbelltown you lived?**

When we first moved to Campbelltown we lived in Lithgow Street, practically opposite the Primary School or very close to the Primary School, and then my father bought a property in Queen Street. When he bought it he said this will be a good site for Woolworths some day and actually Woolworths did buy it. I don't know if they are there now, but I know that we sold it for seven thousand pounds which we thought was a wonderful amount of money and we moved up to Lindesay Street.

**Can you tell me a little bit about the houses that you lived in?**

I think the house in Lithgow Street is still there. There were two weatherboard houses next to each other. There was a little veranda on the front and we would have had three bedrooms and a veranda. In those days it was quite usual for somebody just to sleep out on the veranda. We were quite comfortable there. When we moved to Queen Street it was a two storey house so we were able to spread out and we had three bedrooms upstairs. We thought that was wonderful to have a place with stairs. It was quite a big place and quite comfortable. No hot water of course, but then my father did put in a hot water service in Queen Street. He was a plumber and he put in a hot water service and then he put in upstairs sewerage for us. He was very clever like that. We were very comfortable, I can't think of many hardships.

I remember when we got electricity. Up till then we had what they called a primus stove for heating water. Do you know what a primus stove is? It ran on kerosene. We had kerosene lamps. The first thing I remember about electricity is that we had to pull a cord to put it on.

We used to have a street lighter, a man used to go around lighting the lamps. I knew his name, Banford I think it was. He used to go around at a certain time every evening and light all the street lamps.

**Can you describe the sort of food that you ate as a child?**

I don't think it would be very much different to today. We had meat; it was a standard thing meat and three vegetables. We had breakfast, dinner and tea. Dinner was the hot meal in the middle of the day and tea we would have bread and jam, scones sometimes, cake if we were lucky. I was never forced to eat anything I didn't like. I was very lucky that way, because some children are forced to eat something and hate it forever more. We had meat and green vegetables. I don't think we thought much about healthy food. We just ate.

**What about the games and sport that you played as a child?**

At school we came out at 3 o'clock on Fridays for half an hour play. I'm not sure about this, but the main games that we would play would be, we used to have different names, red rover, one team one end and the other team on the other end and you would have to run through. Sheep, sheep come home which was a similar game and you weren't allowed to run until they called sheep, sheep come home. We didn't have cricket or tennis. I don't know whether the boys played cricket because the boys had their playground in one place and we had ours. Marbles was quite a big thing. We would go to school with our bag of marbles and win or lose some from the others. Ordinary chasings and hidings and things like that. Don't start looking for me until you have counted to a 100, do they still do that. Things haven't changed so much.

**Were your parents very strict and what sort of things were they strict about?**

I was pretty lucky as I had a very happy childhood. I was never smacked that I can remember and when I went to school into second class we had a teacher called Miss Dennett and the first day I was in second class I got the cane because I copied a number down wrongly and it was such a shock to me to be smacked, I spent the whole afternoon crying outside. I had an easy childhood; I can't remember that they were strict about anything in particular. We went to school regularly, but then I didn't mind going to school.

**Where did you go to school?**

Campbelltown Primary, we just walked across the street. They had four teachers in the primary school then, no kindergarten, one teacher for first class, one for second and third, one for fourth and fifth and one for sixth, just the four teachers. To go to High School, I had to travel to Parramatta. That was the nearest High School there was. I used to catch the train at half past seven and got home at half past five and got train sick every day.

**Did you have any favourite teachers?**

Well, when we got out of Miss Dennett's class, she was very strict, it was wonderful to have Miss Cooney who was a good teacher but not severe. We could talk to her and ask her questions. She was a very good teacher. The Headmaster at the time was Baldy Cline. No-one ever called him anything other than Baldy. Their house was attached to the school. Looking back I think that we had fairly good teachers except for Miss Dennett.

**Did they use the strap or what kind of punishment did they use?**

Miss Dennett had a ruler and she used to cane people. Nobody went through her two classes without getting the cane. If they were very bad, she used to make the boys turn their hand

over and cane them on the knuckle. We had one family called Darling. She used to call all the boys by their surname. When she asked them what their name was and they said Darling, she said oh, what is your Christian name?

**How old were you when you left high school?**

I did the Leaving Certificate, I think I was 17 or 18, I can't remember that was a long time ago.

**What did you do from there?**

It wasn't really common for girls to do their Leaving Certificate then, most girls left after third year, but my father was pretty advanced in his thinking and he looked on education as something in itself, not just something to get a job. Most of them said oh it's not much use educating girls they will only get married and not do anything. I stayed at High School until I got the Leaving Certificate, not very well, I just did it. Then I went to Business College for a year and then I stopped home and helped my mother. It was in the time of the depression and it was very hard to find jobs, especially from Campbelltown travelling in. I don't think I tried very hard to find a job, I think I was quite happy stopping home. I was home for a few years before I went to work. Even the jobs I had in Campbelltown, I never had to apply for.

I worked for the newspaper for a while with Mr Sidman, which was quite interesting. Then I worked for a big department store called Solomons in Campbelltown which then became Downes Stores. I don't know what is there now. If you know Queen Street well, we lived right on the corner near Downes Stores on Milgate Lane which was the side of our house. Dumaresq Street was called the sewer lane. Is Woolworths still there? **No they have moved, but I know where you mean. Milgate Lane no longer runs off Queen Street.** There were quite a few houses down there. **That's hard to imagine there are no houses there.** I was in Queen Street a year or so ago and if someone had put me out and not told me where I was, I would have had no idea that it was Queen Street. It is just completely different. If I went up the town and forgot my money it didn't matter, because people knew me and would say you can bring it back.

**The area between Dumaresq Street and Cordeaux Street is completely changed.**

I didn't recognise anything. Of course Mawson Park is still there. He was the Doctor when I was a child and his brother was an explorer. He had the male boys choir too, he used to conduct it. We thought it was a joke.

**Dr Mawson lived in Cordeaux Street across from the park didn't he?**

Yes and then Dr Jones took over from him still in Cordeaux Street and then a very nice doctor what was his name, I forget his name. Are they still in Cordeaux Street?

**No, Cordeaux Street has changed a lot too.**

It was just a residential street, just all houses.

**No, it's not any more. I don't think there are any houses there at all now, just different businesses.**

Is there a big weatherboard place up on the corner of Cordeaux and Lindesay Street?

**There could be more up that way towards the Catholic Church**

**When you worked for the newspaper what sort of things did you do there?**

There was an Editor, a man that worked the linotype. I was everything else. I was the office staff. Occasionally they would let me write an article, but not very often. I helped fold the newspapers. We would get people in on Thursdays when the paper came out. We would get friends in and we would fold the papers and wrap those that had to be sent. I was the whole office staff.

**Do you remember what sort of pay you got?**

Yes, I got a pound a week and I used to give my mother a quarter of what I got, that was five shillings and then when I got a rise to 25 shillings, I have her six shillings and seven pence I think, a quarter of it anyway. I thought that was good. I think I was around 21 and then when I was offered a job at Solomons and the wages were three pounds a week, I thought I was made, it was good then. I think we're silly to say oh a pound that's nothing, because it was what you could buy with it. People say I used to work for ten shillings, but ten shillings was different then.

**After you left school and started work what sort of social things did you do. How did you spend your evenings? Did you go out much?**

At that time the Church was the social centre of the town. We had a young people's group and the Scouts. The Scouts used to run dances every month and there was nearly always somebody running a dance to make money up in the Town Hall. Well, the Town Hall is now the Theatre Group. So, we would go to dances regularly. See, all the young people knew each other then, so were sort of a group and we would run socials to make money and I remember the games we used to play and they were good fun, all sorts of games. We used to run concerts from the Church group. The Presbyterians had a little hall too, and we used to put on concerts there.

Later on I was very friendly with a teacher from the school called Dulcie Webster and Ian Crago and they were both teachers and we used to run concerts from the Church and we had the hall full because everybody knew everybody and they would all go along. We had plenty to do and in the days, we would walk out to the Woolwash to go swimming and once out there, there would always be people we knew, because all the young people knew each other in Campbelltown then. It was sort of a social outing as well as a swim.

**It's changed hasn't it, people don't know each other. Campbelltown has grown so much. It's a shame.**

**Did your parents have a car when you were younger?**

No. My father had a motorbike, a very noisy one and Mum used to say "Oh yes, when I hear the bike I can put the vegetables on". Because he was so far off when she would first hear it and then he bought, this would have been I think in the fifties, he bought a very smart utility and we did a lot of outings in that. My sister and I would ride in the back. We had it all comfortable and we would lie there and go to sleep and we used to go down to the coast in it. We would visit relations in Guildford. He used it a lot, but cars were rare in Campbelltown when I was growing up. If we went to something and there were two cars there, we knew there must have been a crowd of people because most people walked. We would know the people who had cars. We would be amazed to think that we would ever own one. Jack had one when he was fairly young. Jack had the bike shop and he had a car, a bull nosed Morris. Pity he hasn't still got it, it would be worth a bit now.

**What about the movies, did you go to the Cinema?**

Oh yes, that was a big thing. When I was very young they had movies up in the Town Hall. I can remember seeing a picture there with Mary Pickford in it, but I didn't go much when I was young. Then they moved to Macquarie Cinema. Is it still the Macquarie Cinema?

**No, it's not unfortunately; they tore the building down a good while ago.**

That's right, Jack bought it and we ran skating there, roller skating which was very popular. That was the thing; you would go to the pictures on Saturday night when you had enough money. I think it cost two shillings.

**How did you meet Jack? Do you remember where you met?**

I think it was at the Scout dances that I got to know him. I mean, he went to school and his sisters went to school and I was friendly with one of his sisters. But, I think at the Scout dance I found out who he was. They were good little dances, they would have a pianist and maybe a drummer and we would all sit around the edges of the Town Hall. At the dances at the Town Hall they would bring supper around. They would walk all around with cups and somebody would come with the tea. We didn't ever think about coffee then, it was always tea. We would never say to people do you want tea or coffee, it was just do you want a cup of tea. We would get supper and maybe a biscuit with it for two shillings. The dance itself was two shillings. We went to the pictures, but not often because we couldn't afford it. Two shillings was a fair bit of money.

**Was it love at first sight with Jack? I suppose you knew him from the start.**

He said to me once about seeing me at something when I was 19 and I said "You didn't know then that you were going to marry me did you" and he said "Oh yes". I thought that was dull, I wasn't going to marry someone from the town like that; it was going to be somebody on a white horse. But I don't regret it after 68 years. Mind you, I think that I and a lot of other young people are lucky to have a happy marriage because when I was young, I was only interested in people that made me laugh and were good company, I didn't think about things like good temper, generosity or ethics or any of those things. So I'm lucky that he turned out a good man.

**Where did you get married?**

In Campbelltown in the Methodist Church it was then, now it is the Uniting Church but I think the Wesleyan Chapel is still there. That was our Church and we had a guard of honour from the Scouts and it was in 1942 when I belonged to the VAD which is the Voluntary Aid Detachment, so we had a guard of honour from Scouts and voluntary aides, so it was good.

**Did you have a honeymoon?**

Yes, we went to Canberra because with people not having cars, so honeymoons in those days were places that you could get to by car and Canberra we could get to by car. In those days Canberra was full of empty paddocks and buildings. It was peculiar, they had it all planned out, but there would be a building here and another one there. It was strange. **It still is a strange place. I used to live in Canberra.** I think it would be a good place to live, there is always something there. Jack's sister used to live there. We went there once and John Bell was putting on some Shakespearian play in a tent and we didn't have to book, we just went. So Canberra is good that way.

**Did you have children?**

We only have two. We didn't have any for ten years so we had Rosalyn out there and we have a son in Tasmania.

**Did you both have the same ideas about bringing up children?**

I don't think we had any ideas at all. We just brought them up. I look back now and I think maybe I should or shouldn't have done that.

**Just getting on to the depression years Lilly, do you have strong memories of the depression?**

Yes, I do and my biggest memory is I thought how unlucky I am to be brought up in a depression. I never thought about how hard it was for my father and mother. All I thought was, oh I can't have a new dress because of the depression. It lasted a fair while, because that was when I was young and when I was left and was looking for a job, the depression was still on. I can remember groups of boys just standing around in groups on the footpath, none of them with jobs, it was a hard time. It was a very hard time but we never actually suffered, we always had plenty to eat, clothes to wear. But you know what young people are, I just thought the world centred around me and why can't I have that. It lasted a long while from 1929 till about 1935 or 1936.

**So, the Second World War, you were a VAD.**

Actually, I was the Assistant Commandant which was quite impressive. I don't know why, but I was. We had quite a few girls in that.

**So, where did that involve you going?**

I did nothing. I used to drill the girls. Some of them went as Assistant Dental Nurses to places. Looking back I can't see that the VADs in Campbelltown ever did anything much to help the war, but some of them went helping with dentists, maybe with doctors. We had a uniform, hats and we used to drill. I can't remember it really getting anywhere. Our Commandant was someone called Jenny Sedgwick. Her brother Frank was later Mayor of Campbelltown. Everyone used to call him Mate Sedgwick. Jenny used to live up here somewhere with her son. He was a dairy farmer. Mate Sedgwick was a good man, good company anyway.

**Do you remember the blackouts during the war in Campbelltown?**

Yes, I remember the blackouts. We had to put black paper over all our windows. My sister and I used to go up to the Town Hall, I think once a week. I don't know if we were there to listen for air raids or what happened. We didn't have any air raids. When I hear about the people from England and what they had to put up with, we didn't have a war at all. We used to have to go up there and have to be on duty. They had someone on duty and maybe they would have advised us if there had been a raid and we would have to let everybody know. I worked on the exchange for a while, manual exchange where we used to have to plug in. I don't know why I suddenly thought of that! I suppose because I thought we had to let people know. The thing about the war, I suppose if you had someone in the army that was a constant worry. We did of course and we had friends. But for most people it was the shortages of everything. When I went to work for Solomons, we used to keep a list of people who wanted preserving outfits and things like that and as they came in we would give them to them. There was a constant shortage of bran and pollen, the soldiers settlement was up there and they had poultry farms and always wanted bran and pollen and we couldn't get enough for them.

**You lived at the Soldiers Settlement didn't you?**

No, Jack did. Jack was brought up there. His father came out of the army and had a farm up there. Not many of them did very well. They found it very hard. Jack was brought up in Waminda Avenue. He used to walk down to Lithgow Street to the Primary School.

**Is the house that Jack lived in still there?**

It was up until recently. His sister lived in it until she died about ten years ago. Last time I knew, the house was still there. There aren't many of the original houses still there. They had a veranda put on the side of theirs, a big veranda which helped. That was where Jack used to sleep as he had six sisters. They weren't bad little cottages.

**Do you remember some of the old buildings in Campbelltown? Various buildings and what replaced them.**

What's the pub up in Queen Street, isn't it the best example of 1890's buildings.

**You mean the old Colonial buildings.**

Yes, opposite what used to be the Town Hall. They have always been there. There's one where we used to drive the coaches through. Is the Good Intent Hotel still there?

**No, it was pulled down to make way for The Mall.**

It was a new building. I remember when they put it up; we thought that was a very smart building really.

**Do you remember Alpha House, the old building before that?**

Yes, I think originally they had a school there. They used to have a private school there, before we went to Campbelltown, before 1919. I have an idea what somebody used to run a school in Alpha House. It was an old building.

**There was Marlowes next to the Fire Station. There was the Town Hall, Fire Station, and then Marlowes just before Dredges Cottage.**

Marlowe was a Mayor too. Percy Marlow, but they lived in Cordeaux Street from what I remember. I don't remember them living in Queen Street.

**Maybe they had it in the early days. There was a building there, but it is gone now.**

Like most others. Next to us in Queen Street there was a little fruit shop. Mrs Fairburn had that. Bursills had a grocery store and Sam Bursill built a house in Queen Street not far from us, just a private house on a block of land. It was quite a nice private house, it seems strange now. They lived there. Right up Queen Street on the other side there was another house there, not far from the Town Hall and then a fruit shop and down on Lithgow Street there was a grocery store Bussell Bros. I think. They had produce up on the top floor and they had a snake up there. Sometimes we would see the snake through the window, which was exciting. I suppose they had the snake to catch the rats, to keep them out of the produce.

**There was Tripps Garage**

Tripps Garage was in Queen Street and not far down from us where we were in Queen Street down to the left, there was another garage Rider Bros and I think he had the only taxi. People

didn't use the taxi much but if you needed a taxi then Rider had the taxi. That's two garages. Jack would probably remember that.

### **Was the bicycle shop in Queen Street?**

Jack's bicycle shop was. That wouldn't have been until well into the 30s. The place we had in Queen Street also had two shops with it. One was a draper shop and then there was a little shop there and Jack used that as a bike shop. Then later on there were three new shops built opposite and down a bit towards Sydney and he took one of those. I'm remembering things I thought I had forgotten! There was a private house right next to those shops. Wilkinsons lived in it.

### **There was also Milby's the Hospital.**

Yes, Jack had his appendix out down there. Later on that became a restaurant. Is it still there?

**It was Fisher's Ghost Restaurant. It is a little bit controversial at the moment. It is very dilapidated and run down and it has been in the news a lot. It is very unfortunate it is crumbling and falling down.**

What a shame. We didn't have a hospital in Campbelltown and I don't think we had Milby for some years. Do you know when it started? I don't think it was used a lot. It seemed quite OK for us to have a hospital in Camden but not in Campbelltown. When Jack had his stroke five or six years ago, he was in Campbelltown Hospital. I would say you are in Campbelltown Hospital and he would say "No, there is no public hospital in Campbelltown." He wouldn't have it.

### **There were a fair few buildings down that end of town.**

I knew some people who lived down there. There must have been a bakery or something. We were friends with them and they lived down there.

### **There was another private residence I think opposite Milbys. It's not there anymore.**

There was a Doctor there. I suppose it must be. You think that it is a pity that these buildings have gone but people have to progress.

### **Do you remember any colourful characters in the early days of Campbelltown?**

There was one who was called Delia Larkin. I don't think she would have any relatives around now. She was certainly mentally affected. She would walk around the streets dressed in black, big hat and always carried an umbrella. We were children then and we would say "Good morning Princess Cordelia" that was wonderful but if anyone said "Hi Cordy" she would go for them with her umbrella. Everyone would know her.

Oh, there was the town drunk, which was Mick Daly. I remember once he was walking up the town, somebody stopped to talk to him. He was very polite, raised the hat and put it back. He would turn to talk to them and turn back and walk back the way he had come, he'd forgotten where he was going. There were a few like that, but they were harmless.

We thought nothing about catching the late train home from Sydney and walking up because we knew all the people. It was a good little town really. I didn't want to leave it, even when we did in 1980 I still thought Campbelltown was a good place to live in. Of course it has a lot of things now that we didn't have.



We lived in Lilian Street and fifty and sixty years ago we would let the children go wandering over to Warby's paddocks, I don't suppose that's there now. We would think nothing of it. We would go walking up Badgally Road. Sadie Payten had a dam there. She rang me up to say that the children were at the side of the dam and if they fell in they would never get out because it was so cold, so I had to go and get them. But that was alright, people would let you know.

**Did you ever take the train Pansy from Campbelltown to Camden?**

Yes, when my mother was in Camden Hospital, the only way we could get to see her was to take the train and then walk up to the hospital. It was never called a train though for some reason, it was called the Camden tram. It had trouble getting up Kenny Hill; sometimes it used to run backwards. But it was a good sight. We would go for a walk every Sunday night along the Camden Road across the railway line and sometimes the tram would pass us. It's funny to think of it now but we used to walk right across the road all arm in arm about ten of us. Maybe if a car was coming we would get off the road to let it pass. Actually we lived in Broughton Street when we were married in 1946 and we used to play tennis on the road and stop when a car came.

**Whereabouts in Broughton Street did you live?**

Up near Lindesay Street about two down, it was a weatherboard place.

**Was that near Engadine the house on the corner of Broughton and Lindesay Streets?**

That would have been Mrs Cuthbert's place. We were not as far up as that.

**Where did you go swimming on hot days?**

The Woolwash was the swimming place. We would walk out there – two and a half miles. If we were lucky, occasionally we would get to the Menangle River that is if somebody who had a car would take us. The Woolwash was the swimming social centre. I was always looking for somebody to walk out to the Woolwash with me. I loved swimming. It was a good little swimming place. It's hard to get to now isn't it. Have you been there?

**I haven't been swimming there, but I know where you mean.**

There was a rough road down to it. You could drive down or there was a short cut.

**You came to Mittagong in 1980.**

We came to Bundanoon in 1980 and we came to Mittagong in 1999. Jack had the bike shop there. He's always been a bike man. They had a good bike club in Campbelltown too. He used to go in the Goulburn to Sydney bike races.