

Kathleen (Porter) Wilson

Kathleen Porter was born in Maleny on 17 September 1922 and her parents, Fred and Hilda Porter were dairy farmers. She attended the Maleny State School and completed Scholarship (Yr 10) in 1936. At the age of 14 years she moved to Brisbane and started an apprenticeship in dressmaking with Miss Thelma Dunn in the Rothwell's Building, Edward St, Brisbane. About 2 years later Kathleen moved back to Maleny and started private dressmaking in Waddle's (Boxsell's) building in Maple Street. Her father purchased her this sewing machine, an Industrial High-Speed Singer Sewing Machine, No 103. The serial number EA623693 was one of two thousand serial numbers allotted on 29 June 1936 to the Kilbowie factory, Clydebank, Scotland. It has both electric and a treadle. Kathleen used this machine when she started dressmaking in Maleny, firstly with Mrs Richardson and later Ruth Battle who was Mrs Richardson's niece. Her parents were farming at Cambroon at this time and she started private dressmaking, sometimes staying in people's homes while sewing for the family.



In October 1942, just after her 20th birthday, she joined the Australian Women's Army Service in Brisbane and remained in it until the end of the war in 1945. At her initial training camp, she continued with sewing, adjusting uniforms to fit all sizes. Kathleen rose through the ranks to Warrant Officer. She had met Jim Wilson just before the War. He returned after being a POW in Italy and they married in Brisbane in July 1945. Kathleen obtained her discharge from the Army on the day peace was declared, 15 August 1945. She was reunited with her Singer Sewing Machine and it stayed with her for the rest of her life.

In 1946 Kathleen & Jim started dairy farming and farmed at Proston, Cambroon, Kandanga, Murgon, Harvey Bay and the Hornibrook farm at Obi Obi in 1957. Two children were born, Bruce in 1946 and Neil in 1949.

The sewing machine was an important feature in the life of the family. There was no electricity at some farms so using the treadle was necessary. Kathleen made all the clothes for Bruce and Neil until they started high school. She sewed fancy dress costumes, made many of her own clothes all her life, and sewed for neighbours.

Kathleen and Jim retired to Buderim in 1974. She lived there for 43 years, effectively the second half of her life. She passed away on 24 November 2017, aged 94 years.

Kathleen kept her celluloid doll all her life. Bruce presented the doll, with a wardrobe of hand made clothes, her sewing machine and dress maker's dummy to the Society for posterity.

Bruce Wilson, 17 August 2017