

Introduction

In this brief account I have tried (with a lot of help from a lot of people) to draw attention to the lives of those members of the Hodge family who lived for a time on West Ooma, a small property about six kilometres from Garema along the link road between Garema and Pinnacle. The family comprised Sam and Isabel Hodge and their 11 children, seven of whom moved to the farm with their parents, and four who were born while the family lived at West Ooma. This account has five sections:

This introduction, which also contains the small amount of information we have about Sam and Isabel Hodge.

A short general history of the area, and the circumstances in which the family found itself from 1917 to the late 1940s. I am particularly hopeful this section will give younger generations an appreciation of the difficulties confronting people of previous generations in simply 'making do', and the hard physical work of both males and females that made it all possible.

An account of **the lives of each of Sam and Isabel's 11 children**. This section has some problems of evenness of length because some family members had much more information available about them than others. I am sorry about this, and it could have been avoided if I had started on this work many years before I actually did.

Beginnings in Australia. We have a good deal of information about those who arrived here from the United Kingdom at various times between the 1830s and the early 1850s that has been gathered over the years, and with the exception of the Taylor/Wilson family (Jessie Read's parents) is reasonably complete. Note that it may not all be accurate, as new information keeps turning up, but it is the best we can do at this time. In terms of Australian family backgrounds it is pretty good. Please also note that much of this work has been done by others, and I have tried to recognise this in the text. The family tree is added as appendix 1.

A ready reckoner of family members of the two generations that came after Sam and Isabel, the first of which are the children of Sam and Isabel, and the second being their descendants, or 'the cousins'. I have finished here because going any further makes the enterprise too large, and also because one of the main objectives is to create a 'platform' from which future generations may determine their own histories. The cousins are listed in appendix 2.

It is not possible to get a highly detailed picture of the Hodge family and their involvement in activities in the Garema/Pinnacle/Wirrinnya area, as well as the town of Forbes, so we too have had to 'make do'. We fortunately have the written stories of Isabel, Sam Jnr and Thel, and Betty Knight's story of her mother Eily, which give us considerable information about life on the farm and the things people did to make Garema a community. For the rest I have talked to cousins about moments and memories that largely originate from experiences in our childhoods. It has been particularly valuable to have Aunty Thel at hand, and Barry Hodge has been an extraordinary source of facts and tales. The resulting stories I have included when they seem relevant. It is not a full picture, but is hopefully enough to create an idea about life in those times.

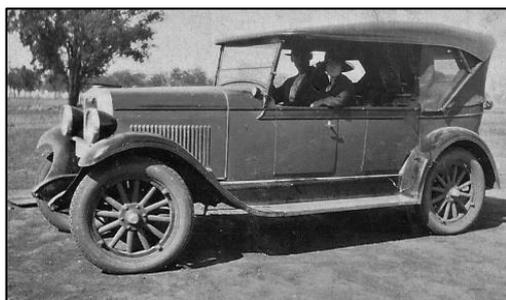
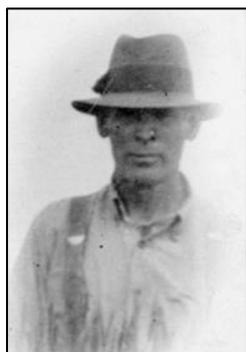
Ray Cavenagh

Sam and Isabel Hodge

Information about Sam and Isabel's family histories is to be found in the *Beginnings in Australia* section.

Samuel Richard Hodge (Sam Snr) was born in Grenfell in 1878. He was the 10th child (of 14) born to John Hodge and Elizabeth Parker.

Sam Snr died of cancer in 1930, when he was 51 and his youngest child, Harold, was one year old. The most significant memories of Sam Snr are in the first-hand stories of two of his and Isabel's children, also called Isabel and Sam, both of whom remembered him warmly and noted his steady character, his skill as a farmer, and his affection for, and support of, his family. His death was a tremendous blow for all the family.



Left: Sam, taken from a picture of him and his son Irwin in a crop some time in the mid-1920s; centre: Sam in his 1926 Rugby Tourer; right: Sam with the very young Harold in 1929.

Isabel Margaret Read (sometimes known as Bella; known as Gran to her grandchildren and hereafter referred to as Gran) was born in Forbes in 1883. She lived all her life in the Forbes district, and died and was buried in Forbes. She married Sam Hodge in 1904, and they lived at Calarie, just north of Forbes. There's nothing much at Calarie these days. The houses in which the Hodge families lived are long gone. The only survival from those days is the school, which opened in 1901 and functioned until the end of 1969. It is now the State Emergency Services building.

By the time the family moved to West Ooma in 1918 or early 1919 Gran had had seven children, and had another four while living on the farm. Her child-bearing years therefore stretched from 1905 to 1929, from the age of 22 to 47.

Gran was the youngest of six children (three of whom died in infancy) born to Frederick Read and Jessie Taylor. Gran never knew her mother, who died shortly after she herself was born. After her mother's death, her father married the housekeeper, Esther Field (1853-1947), and they went on to have another eight children. At the time her father remarried, Gran was just a baby. Her sister Jessica was three years older, but not much more than a toddler herself. We can assume that Agnes (Jessie's child before her marriage to Frederick), who was 12 years older than Gran, was also there, as was Gran's older brother Jack. As they all got older, they would have had to assume increasing responsibility for the running of the house and the care of the younger children.



The photo to the left is the only photo of Gran I have that was taken before the 1930s. She looks about 5 or 6 years old. It is a studio photo, and rather attractive.

The next photo I have of her was taken in 1935, after 11 children and six years of widowhood. It was taken in West Wyalong, with (left to right) Esther Read (nee Field), Isabel Hodge (back), Agnes Swan (nee Read, the oldest of Jessie's children), and Gran, aged 52.



We know nothing of Gran's schooling or adolescent life, and whether she ever had a time of party frocks and dancing shoes, but one suspects her social life was fairly restricted. Still, she did meet Sam Hodge somewhere.

Gran never drank alcohol, and would not allow any in the house (her sons – 'the boys' – would hide their beer in the shed). She was also religious, to an extent, and made her daughters ('the girls') go to the church service held in the Garema Hall. She had at least three cars at different times, but did not drive.

Maureen Gavin, who lived next to Gran in Farrand Street Forbes for three years, said that she was always in Gran's house and often wished Gran was *her* grandmother, 'She was a lovely old lady'. She also noted Gran's hospitality. 'There was always someone there'.

Lots of things about Gran turn up in the stories, particularly those of the girls, and particularly about the range of skills she needed just to keep the show on the road in a house that never had electricity or running water.

Here she is with her chooks, and with granddaughter Meg.



Isabel Margaret's story underpins the story of every one of her children.

