

# ***THE SANDY HOLLOW LINE.***

***A story of the Great Depression 1929-1939.***

## ***Chapter 1***

My baby son was only five months old when my husband was finally given relief work. This was the beginning of the worst period of my life, as this work was on the notorious ***Sandy Hollow Line.***

My father was also to work on this job as a ***powder-monkey***, a name given to a worker who set the charges of explosives used to blast out any heavy rock.

We were on top of the World with work at last. Frank had heard that the line would take a long time to build and that he would be in employment for a long time. No longer one week on and three weeks off. It was full employment at last.

As we were told, good accommodation would be in tents with board floors and fuel stoves with beds provided. Wives and families were to be able to be there to see that their man could enjoy home comforts.

Water was pumped from the nearby river and there would be a tap outside each tent. As we had been carrying water from creeks to our home for the past six years the mere thought of turning a tap was indeed a pleasure.

Facilities for bathing were to be shared and we were told that they would be in excellent condition. Hot water would be supplied by a ***donkey engine*** and we would have to keep the fire going using wood supplied. A real luxury.

Communal lavatories had been built, one for the ladies, one for the men also in good condition.

We were told that as there was no general store handy, trucks would come from town with goods that we could buy, several times a week.

There was a flurry of excitement as I prepared to leave my parents' home for the first time. Leaving my mother and my kids was the only shadow on my happiness as I packed what few possessions I had. We had to take our own linen and I had one pair of sheets, two pillow cases, and a pair of towels. These were my wedding gifts and we had two tea towels made from old flour bags.

We had two blankets and a nice rug that Mum had made for us.

We also had two old saucepans, an old frying pan, a camp oven and a billy-can with a spout that was also a teapot. As my father planned to have his meals with us we also had three knives, forks and spoons.

This was all packed into a galvanized tub that was to serve as a bath.

Our few clothes and baby things were packed in an old suitcase.

This was all that we had after three years of marriage.

I had left my little girl, Judith, with Mum until we would be settled in. It was a heartbreaking time but we thought that it would be best for my little girl.

Barry was only five months old and I was still breastfeeding him so he had to come with us. We were to be taken to our work camp by lorry and we were to be picked up on the Gulgong Road that ran past Mum's house.

At five o'clock on a frosty winter's morning we all stood in our gateway, wrapped in our rug. One of the other men kept the young children amused by blowing big puffs of his breath into the cold, frosty air. [.....more to come(I hope) -John Imrie 25/3/2020]