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Glenhaven

Part One

Interviewee: *Helen Zamprogno, born 1945*

Interviewer: *Frank Heimans, for Baulkham Hills Shire Council*

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Can you first tell me when and where you were born?

I was born in Phillip Street Parramatta and I came straight home to the house at Glenhaven the day after I was born and that's where I lived all my childhood and grew up.

What was your maiden name?

Holland, Helen Mary Holland.

When was that, which year were you born?

I was born in 1945 on the 30th August just after the end of the Second World War my father was pleased I'd been born into a free world, he thought at the time.

Were you the only child in the family?

I was, yes.

Do you know something of the history of Glenhaven because you said you were born here?

A little bit, my family had been there as one of the early pioneer families in the area and had settled there in the late 1880's and my son was the fifth generation at Glenhaven so yes we've been connected with the area for a long, long time.

What was the original name of Glenhaven?

Sandhurst it was called, apparently it was sandy soil they thought but really it was rich black soil and turned into beautiful orchards after it was developed.

Do you who the first settler was that came to this area?

I believe it was Mr Evans, Evans Road is named after that family and it goes off Glenhaven Road. That's what they did used to name the original roads after the early ones that settled the area in the first place.

What did Mr Evans do for a living?

Originally they were all self sustaining little farmlets and it was just the normal farm animals and also orchards, citrus always did very well and a lot of stone fruits, so they sustained themselves by that and as their holdings grew and their trees matured more they were able to send things into market, which of course brought in a few pounds in those days, which made things a lot better.

Can you imagine what those early days would have been like?

Pretty grim I think, it would have been very remote, yes because I can remember my grandfather still had the horse and the sulky and the plough horse and the dray and that was part of my early childhood. I grew up from remembering that right through to the space age now. It would have been a very isolated little community back then and the biggest settlement would have been Parramatta and it still was when I was a child. A day out in Parramatta was a treat, Sydney was just about on the other side of the world, but the little village that we got most of our supplies and everything for was Castle Hill, became established fairly early, it was on the Old Northern Road which was a convict built road that took people north, one of the main roads that went north in the early days of the colony.

Now do you know the earliest date of the settlement of your family in Glenhaven?



Dinner inside the slab house 1955

We didn't get the first land grant, I believe the ground that my great grandfather took in 1888 had first been given to a fellow called Davis but they only held it for a period of less than twelve months I think and then my great grandfather took over that original land grant and the slab hut that was built by Davis on that ground when he had it was still there when I came along in 1945. There's been a new house put in front of that in 1905 but the old slab wattle and daube hut that was there was still part of the family home and that's what I grew up in. I remember it quite well.

That's the house you grew up in?

Yes it was still there.

Now James Holland was the original guy who came out in 1848 wasn't he?

That's correct, yes.

What happened when he died, what happened to the land?

Well the acreage that was there was split between the two sons, his surviving sons one of which was my grandfather and he had forty acres and it was an established orchard and farm at that time so my grandfather just kept on the running of it. My grandfather had married and had four children of which my father was one, the youngest and it was kept by him as a growing concern and I still remember that from when I was little. It was still being run as a farm when I came along.

Your father has a very interesting past too, doesn't he? Tell me a bit more about him?

Dad was a bit of a live wire, he was the youngest of the four children born into the family he was a

big man he used to come in at sixteen, sixteen and a half stone. Being the fourth one, my Uncle Claude he was the eldest son he used to say "he was the scrapings of the pot" I used to say it must have been "some pot" because he really was a big fellow. He was born in Glenhaven too and he was always very passionate about the community and the area in which he lived. He was the picture show manager at Castle Hill for thirty years and ran the local theatre long before these complexes were part of the scene. The little local theatre was also the centre of the communities gathering and he was part of that for a large part of his life and he was also the president of the Castle Hill Chamber of Commerce through the fifties and into the sixties. He was the postmaster at Glenhaven, he was president of the Glenhaven Progress Association, also part of the P & C Association and he was an avid member of the Liberal Party, I can say that he'd skin me if I didn't. He was very widely known.

He must have been Mr Glenhaven?

Well he was some people called him that. He was captain on and off of the Glenhaven Fire Brigade for many, many years so it wasn't unusual to have the fire tender up in our yard being attended to. Everybody came in and ran everything past him, whether things needed to be charged or engines stripped down or fire extinguishers replenished, so it was a real community effort. I can remember our house was always a hub of people coming and going just with what was going on in the area and to me that was just a normal part of growing up.



Glenhaven Bushfire Brigade

Now your grandfather who was a horse breeder is that your paternal grandfather?

Yes it is he was George Holland.

Now tell me a bit about him?

He was also a bit of a character he was a short and stocky man remarkably strong I believe. He was passionate about his horses and his dogs, he used to go hunting and he had blood hounds and he used to have Fox Terrier dogs he bred them and he absolutely loved his horses. I can remember stories back in the thirties of course in the Depression when people were really struggling to survive, grandfather's horses, my uncle used to say "we might have been hungry but the horses had the best feed in the district that could be bought". He used to show them very successfully at all the local shows and also at the Royal Easter Show, he won Reserve Champion for seven years running and they gave him the trophy in perpetuity which I still have, it's one of my treasured possessions. He was also very musical and it wasn't unusual for the community to have get togethers in those days and he played the box concertina, self taught musician and our old fruit packing shed would often be stripped out, cleaned candle wax on the floor and sawdust so they could dance and Mrs Grey's piano would be brought up on the back of a wagon to our old shed and my grandfather with his concertina and Mrs Grey with her piano would provide the music for I suppose the Americans would say a hoedown. But the shed would be transformed and of course all the ladies would come up and bring a plate of something so that was still happening when I was still a child a small child, but of course this grandfather died in 1949, things slowly wound down after that and of course the Second World War had an effect on our family too.

What was the effect of the war?

Well my Uncle Claude was in the army and my father was in the air force and I suppose that altered their perception of things and they weren't as passionate about the farm ad my grandfather had been, so slowly it stopped being worked and they gained employment away from the original property and my dad had the job at Castle Hill with the theatre and my uncle got a job at Howard Auto Cultivators which was on the Windsor Road at Northmead and he went into the agricultural side of selling farm machinery all around NSW which he did quite successfully. But the

focus off the farm slowly shifted and I suppose they came back with a different perspective on life after the war was over and moved on from farm life.

Getting back to your grandfather I believe he was a keen listener of radio serials?

Oh, gosh yes, Blue Hills, Blue Hills I can just remember this and of course it was reinforced with stories he could be out ploughing in one of the citrus orchards of which there were quite a few and they could be quite far flung and my grandmother would go out and go coo-ee like that and he'd hear the coo-ee and he'd answer yahoo and he'd start to run because he knew he only had a couple of minutes to get up to the house because Blue Hills would start and he had to be there and listen to his episode of Blue Hills every day and she'd have lunch ready so he would sit and have his lunch while he listened to Blue Hills and after that he could go back out. I suppose the poor old horse just got left there, I don't know, till he went back after his episode of Blue Hills and resumed doing what he was doing.

What radio serials were you listening to?

Oh, gosh well there was no TV when I was a child so the radio was our entertainment. I can remember coming in and the radio was such a huge piece of furniture, that when you look at these little digitised things we've got these days, it was like a cabinet that sat in the corner of the room and I can remember sitting and putting my back up against it and listening to, oh there was "Hop Harrigan", and Search for the Golden Boomerang" and "Superman" and I used to sweat on all these it was wonderful and of a weekend there was things like "The Top Ten" and "Dragnet" I was allowed to listen to "Dragnet" that was pretty adult. That was part of growing up and it's funny often if you're talking to kids of my generation we all remember our serials, they were very important to us.

You said that your grandfather ran the farm until he died and then after that it wasn't...?

It was worked so much after that. I can remember Dad ploughing and I can remember him ploughing with the last old plough horse we had was Diamond, she was a dear old thing, but she got on in years of course and then I can remember of course Uncle had gone into the agricultural machinery business. I can remember at Howard Auto Cultivators he was always out testing different bits of machinery on our orchard and seeing how they ploughed, how deep they ploughed and how well they turned the soil and how much they broke it up and there was always some critique going on with which machine was the best and I can remember we had a couple of Howard Auto Cultivators sitting in the shed that took the place of horses as I was growing up, so we became more mechanised.

So you must have met Howard did you?

No I didn't remember Mr Howard though I do believe he lived locally.

It was a famous piece of equipment?

Oh the Howard Auto Cultivators, that's right they were in a big way and there was very few farms in NSW that didn't have an item of Howard's machinery in them.

Now because your father was the projectionist at Castle Hill, did you often go to the pictures?

On yes that was my Saturday afternoon



Howard Rotavator at Maroota 1940s

treat, yeah and if they had anything on that was a little bit adult there used to be special matinees put on for the kids on Saturday afternoons. You got two features, a cartoon, the trailers and the serial. Serials were very big when I was a kid and we used to sweat from week to week on whether the hero had really died at the end of the episode the Saturday before and he'd be magically resurrected by the next Saturday that was a very important part of my growing up.

Now we've spoken a fair bit about your father but we haven't spoken about your mother. Can you tell me something about her?

My Mum was born at Northmead and my grandparents on that side were English from the Isles of Scilly, but Mum was born out here. My Mum and my Dad, my Mum used to work at the Sydney Woollen Mill on the Windsor Road at Baulkham Hills and my Dad used to work part time when he started off he did a trade with the Howard Autos and they used to look at each other. She was catching the bus going in one direction and waiting at the bus stop and he would be catching the bus going in the other direction waiting at the bus stop opposite, they used to look at each other, obviously were interested, I'm here. So by chance they went into the theatre at Parramatta one Saturday night, I believe, the Civic Theatre and they were introduced by a mutual friend and obviously it was a successful introduction because they courted for about two to three years I believe and then were married in 1943 and my Mum left Northmead of course where the family home was there and came out to live at Glenhaven and lived the rest of her life out there.

Were there any buses running to Parramatta?

That's right one of Dad's cousins George Deaman ran the Glenorie bus line which was still running and that's what I used to go in and out to school on and it used to go along the top of Old Northern Road so in order to go up and connect with the bus we had to walk up Glenhaven Road to the bus stop at the top of Glenhaven Road and we'd be able to go down to Castle Hill and ultimately to Parramatta by bus if we needed to and it wasn't unusual to see a lot of the residents in Glenhaven walking up to the bus stop if one of the others didn't come along and give them a lift which often happened because everybody helped everybody that was just the way the district was in those days. Everybody knew everybody of course, it was nice.

Was George Deaman the driver as well?

Yes, yes he was and there was a couple of other drivers as well but I can remember Mr Deaman. I used to have to of course we were very proper in those days, I wouldn't have dreamt of calling him George even though he was a cousin, to me he was always Mr Deaman.



George Deaman's buses at Glenorie 1960

Interesting name isn't it, Deaman?

Oh that's right yeah.

How regular was the bus service?

I know there were the school specials in the morning and I know there was the school specials in the afternoon but I don't think it was all that regular otherwise. I think there was probably one during the middle of the day or so, but it really was a little outlying rural area and there wasn't – unless you had a car you – it was difficult because first you had to walk to get to the bus stop and doing the walk up Glenhaven Road and up Glenhaven Hill which was a bit notorious, you were fit if you had to do that regularly.

Did you have a sense of isolation living here?

Not overly, looking back and remembering how quiet it was still when I was a child growing up and then taking that back further now as an adult and thinking how quiet it must have been during my grandparent's day and my great grandparent's day. It really would have been a very quiet isolated little rural community back in those days. And Glenhaven being the side street off the Old Northern Road a lot of people didn't even know where it was. I can remember even going to high school and nobody knew where Glenhaven was so it was sort of just like a little quiet area that was isolated away from a lot of other community.

Do you recall any bushfires at all that you lived through?

Always grew up with the threat of bushfires, living in such a rural area that was still so naturally heavily bushed. I remember growing up with stories of the Black Friday which was the 1939 one when the district was very badly ravaged by fires. And the story of my grandfather and my dad and my uncle walking putting out stumps for weeks after trying to douse things but when the fire shed came opposite the post office that was very exciting because they had a siren and of course a lot of men still worked on their properties being a rural area so whenever there was a call came through to the post office because we had the phone to say there'd been a fire at so and so and could the Glenhaven tender be readied and a crew got together and go I used to have to get the job of getting the key running down the driveway across the road to the fire shed unlocking the fire shed and hitting the siren and as soon as the men heard the siren that would be the key to hustle up and get a crew ready for the tender. I can remember the first tender was an old blitz wagon from the Second World War with a tank on the back. That got upgraded as the years went on and the Baulkham Hills Council provided more funding and that's when the first fire brigade vehicle was there and that was it and that was a great thrill when you'd see the men all gather and put on their overalls and their hats and trundle off to wherever the fire call was. But no there'd been some terrible fires through the district over the years, really, really bad one in 1973.



Historic fire fighting tools at Kenthurst Fire Brigade. L to R: knapsack, foam making branch, branch, 2 stirrup pumps and bucket, 3 breeching pieces, canvas water bag

I think it was '75?

Beg pardon my son was born in '73 and that one I think might have been Australia Day '75, that really bad one came through and there was thirteen houses lost in the area. No lives fortunately but a lot of property damage and that was scary because we went very close to losing the house at Glenhaven, our neighbours who were away on holiday weren't in attendance and we managed to save their house too. A lot of stock were hurt and that was very sad to cope with the aftermath of the fire we were very lucky that that one that we survived it.

Were you involved in that on that day?

Yes we were it's the first time I'd stood in front of a fire. My dad had been there ….. there'd been a fire in the creek between Glenhaven and Castle Hill and the men had been out on the tender babysitting it. It was just sort of being allowed to burn because it was largely inaccessible. He

came home for lunch as the change of crew and had lunch and was going to go back down and relieve the fellows that had relieved them and he looked at the fire and said "I don't think I'm going back, I think I might stay home". We were very, very fortunate that he did because the wind was changing and he could always read a fire, my dad, and the wind did change and instead of burning down the creek it suddenly flared up and was directly behind our property at that point and it came up through the creeks at the back of us and across through our bush and our back paddock. It was just like trying to stand your ground in the front of about six express trains coming towards you, the noise and the heat and the wind, the wind was unbelievable that was driving it and the fire at one stage was behind us and beside us and over the top of us. It literally leap frogged over us and I can remember my dad …… we tried to dampen down as much as we could fortunately they kept the water up to us. We didn't learn until after that other fire brigades in the area had drawn the line at Old Northern Road and were going to try and hold the fire at Glendon(?) and they'd abandoned Glenhaven because they thought we were gone which to some degree we were. That was quite hair raising I can remember the cow tethered on the front garden under the tree and I was watering her and she just stood there - they sense when there's a problem and you're trying to help them. So I was watering the cow as the cinders were landing on her and I was watering the cockies …. we'd opened …..we'd had cockies, Sulphur Crested cockies that we'd had for decades and we opened the door to let them fly out of the cage, thinking they could save themselves that way, but they wouldn't go, so I was watering them. I had an - my son was eighteen months old and my mum was inside with him and dad had only just had a delivery of fuel the week before in the forty four gallon drums in the garage up the back. He was watering the drums and I said "forget about them, if they go up we'll all go up" fortunately they didn't blow, other people in the district lost their drums, but when the fire had passed and we checked these jolly petrol drums, the tops of them had become arched like theHarbour Bridge they must have been within a whisker of exploding so there would have been, I think it was three forty four gallon drums full of petrol in the back of our garage that would have just …..oh well …..we'd have all been still in orbit I think, if they'd have gone. He wasn't going to abandon them he'd just paid money for that so he wasn't going to abandon his petrol to the fire, we were mad.



Historic fire fighting tools at Kenthurst Fire Brigade. L to R: foam making branch, 3 branches, hose spanner, knapsack and 2 stirrup pumps

He was game?

Oh yes brave or crazy we could never work out which.

Let's talk about school again, you've told me a little about Glenhaven School already and how small it was, do you remember the name of the teachers that you had there?

The first teacher that I had when I started which would have been kindy, I think I started in late 1949 because I was born in 1945 and I think I started a bit before my fifth birthday, was Mr Bunker. Mr Bunker was a lovely old man, it was a one teacher school he taught everything from kindergarten through to sixth class. Then he taught for many years and often was at our place for an evening meal because when there was a Progress Association or a P & C Association meeting he would stay there and have his evening meal at our place and then go back down to the meeting with my dad. He retired and there was a Mr MacNeil(?) who was another teacher there but he was only a short term teacher, about twelve months or so. Then we had Mr Kelly, Mr Stan Kelly I used to love Mr Kelly he used to pedal out on a motorised bicycle and he used to have his helmet on and his glasses on and his scarf on and you'd see this man pedalling like mad with this little bike going "zzzzzzzzzzzz" as he went down the road and went up the road after school to get himself

home but he was the last teacher I had at Glenhaven School before I went onto further education at Parramatta High School. That was a big event.

Was it?



Holland family outside their Glenhaven Post Office 1925

So the old house who used to live in that then? Was it your grandparents?

Oh yes that was part of their marital home when they were married in 1905 and of course that was where the four children ….there was my dad's family he was the youngest. The eldest was Auntie Barbara I think she was born in 1913, then there was my Uncle Claude and then there was my Auntie May, that's her picture up there, she was a beautiful, beautiful lady, then there was my Dad he came along in 1923 so my grandmother had four children in that house over a ten years period. Then of course they grew up there and the older ones grew up, married and moved away and my dad stayed on.

And you grew up in the house that they built later on?

That's right and then in 1960 mmh 1962 my dad built a new house up the back which is still there today.

Yet another house?

Yet another house on the same family property.

And did you live in that house as well?

Oh yes I lived there until we moved out here to Oakville actually which was in 1975. I lived in Glenhaven from when I was born in 1945 to 1975 and that was the house that I grew up in.

Now what sort of facilities did the houses have in those days like electricity, did they have water?

There was when I came along, but I can still remember going outside to get the water from the tap I mean we didn't have tap water inside. The toilet system was the old pan system and of course it was an orchard and it was quite easy to dispose of and quite good for the orchard. But that was the system that we grew up in and I can remember the original old ice chest, I can remember grandma getting …. the ice man used to come with his big block of ice for the ice chest. Then I can remember dad splurged out and bought a Kelvinator refrigerator it was a little boxy thing, looking back on it, but I can remember how exciting it was because then grandma and mum used to make ice cream, home made ice cream, my gosh what a treat but slowly the ice chest got phased out after that. But I can remember a hail storm once, and gosh the hail was colossal and it had really gathered against the wall of the house and it was a foot or two high and I can remember dad out with grandma's instructions saying "get it all up Harry, get it all up", because the ice went into the ice chest and it was a gift. Nothing was wasted everything was used, I grew up in a house……recycling has been in for a long, long time, long, long, long before it's become fashionable now. I can remember the old flour bags when my grandma used to get bulk stores in once a month or so. I mean Coles and Woolworth's weren't down on the corner so everything was bought in, in bulk. I can remember the flour bags that the flour used to come in and they'd be recycled in picking aprons for the fruit or they'd be recycled….I can even remember pillowslips done out of flour bags and cooking aprons done out of flour bags, everything was used, nothing was wasted.

Perfect life?

I can remember sheets used to be topped and tailed and used again and then when they were worn thin they'd be turned into pillowslips or they'd be turned into handkerchiefs, so it was a frugal life style they used everything.

Now you said your grandmother was very good on the lace curtains, starching them, but how did she do the washing? Describe the washing day for us?

Well Monday was washing day my gosh I can remember …..I used to want to hide. Well my job was to pick up sticks and it kept the yard clean, being in a bushy rural area there was always sticks so that kept the yard clean and gave grandma her stick heap so when she wanted to start the boiler up on Mondays there was a ready supply. It was on a frame and the big old copper boiler, oh it was probably as big as our coffee table, would sit there and it would be brought up to the boil and sheets and curtains and clothing would all go into the boiler and be boiled violently. Then I can remember it used to come out into the old wash tubs and then it would be rubberdy dub in the tubs on the washboard and then it would be put in another tub to be blued. They used to get Reckitt's Blue in knobs and that used to make the whites super white. Items that were suitable to be starched would be put through the starch solution and then they'd be put through the wringer to get the excess water out and then they'd be carried in the old cane baskets down to the line. It was quite a production it took all day. Then things used to be brought in and folded and then the ironing would start. I still remember the old irons that they used to put the coals in to heat them it was frightful actually, looking back. Everything had to be sprinkled because it had dried as stiff as a board, and if it was starched, on the line it would have stood up stiff as a board on its own. It had to be damped before it could be ironed so sometimes that used to be my job to sprinkle the water on and then iron straight away. But then I can remember when electric irons came in, we were slowly, slowly moving into the Twentieth Century back then. I think we were some of the last to do it.

It's a sort of a way of life that people can't even imagine today?

Washing day, it was washing day it took the day, it was a procedure.

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