

## Discovering Greta – Horse Riding and Connections

Sister Greta Towner, was born in country Queensland, her family owned properties in the Blackall area. This objects reflect her life and heritage.

Sister Greta (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) in Killarney, Ireland on leave in 1918, with her is Sister Effie Looker (3<sup>rd</sup> from right) from Tasmania.

**Source:** Sister Effie Looker, [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)



Sister Effie Looker (3<sup>rd</sup> from right) on a horse ride at the Cape of Dunloe, Killarney Lakes, Ireland on leave. Sr Greta Towner 2<sup>nd</sup> from right. 13 September 1918.

### Comment

This image from the collection of Sister Effie Looker on Ancestry.com identifies Sister Greta Towner in a party on horseback at Killarney Lakes, Ireland, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1918. The photo correlates with Sister Towner's war record having her on leave to the United Kingdom.

Interestingly, Sister Effie Looker was from Tasmania where Greta's father and paternal grandmother were born, as were seven of her father's thirteen brothers and sisters. Her older sister Ann Eliza married Herbert C Gillies at Waverley in Tasmania. Did Sister Effie Looker know some of Greta's family? (Sources: *Victoria Cross database and Ancestry.com*)

In another possible familial link, this photo sees Greta visiting the birth country of her mother and horse riding about which the seven-year-old Greta wrote so confidently of in *The Queenslander* in 1899.

1899 A 7-year-old Greta writes to "The Queenslander" about life at Glencoe Station,  
Source: 'Children's Corner.' *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 - 1939), 14 January 1899 p. 57,  
viewed 22 August 2015, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20855302>



Text - Reproduced  
Children's Corner.  
MOTHER'S LETTER.  
DELPHIA.

Dear little Friends,—Last week we said that the very young children in our "Corner" should have a letter all to themselves. I have looked through my back bundle of letters, and have found a few that were written some months ago by very juvenile correspondents. They might have thought that they were being forgotten, but I take care that none of the little missives are destroyed; they are put away until the opportunity comes to answer them.

Greta Towner is a little girl of 7 summers, who lives at Glencoe, and writes very well for her age; she says: — "I am a little girl, 7 years old. I go to school, and am in the Second Primer. We milk five cows, their names are Redmond, Tersy, Roany, Magpie, and Beauty. I go for a ride sometimes with my sister Olive to the wallaby traps. I can ride well. A pet bear got up a tree in front of our house, it stayed with us two days, then it went away. I will write to you again."

#### Comment

A seven-year-old Greta Towner wrote to the *Queenslander* newspaper in 1899 of her life at Glencoe station (outside of Blackall, Queensland) and her love of riding with older sister Olive. Newspaper records show before enlisting and embarking to Egypt in 1915, Greta Towner visited Olive (who moves to Charters Towers, Queensland after marrying Bert Foxlee).

The resonance of this article with the image of Greta Towner on a horse in Ireland in 1918 was not lost on the young students involved in discovering her story. Even today, more than 100 years on, the young students of Blackall continue to ride their horses around the Blackall area – although not to wallaby traps!

A photograph shared by a family member shows Glencoe, the property that Greta writes of in a photograph. The date of the photo is unknown... Who are children in the photo? Is a young Greta there?

Photographs of Greta's parents Greta Towner (nee Hurley) and Edgar Thomas Towner shared by another relative show a similarity between the image of her father and the man on the horse drawn wagon.

When estimating the date of the photo we can see the similarities in clothing to the children in the photograph of Blackall State School staff and students from 1910. Further research into the date that the Towner family took up and then moved from Glencoe to the property Purтора that they selected may also give some indication of the date of this photo.

Is the chimney made from locally made clay bricks? Investigation into this is continuing with bricks from the ruin of the house being compared with those of the Bushman's Hotel in Blackall that was constructed from locally produced bricks.



Greta Towner (nee Hurley) – Sister Towner's mother (date and location unknown – image shared by, Shirley Watts, family member)



E T Towner – Greta's Father (date and location unknown – image shared by, Shirley Watts, family member)



*Glencoe – a property outside of Blackall, where Greta Norman Towner lived. Who are the children in this photo? Photo shared by Pamela Francies, relative of Greta Towner.*



Portrait of schoolchildren (and a dog) at the Blackall State School Blackall Queensland ca. 1910  
(Source: State Library of Queensland, John Oxley Library)

Greta Towner would have left Blackall State School by this time. Could some of her younger brothers and sisters be in this photo?

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