

HELEN ADAM.
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AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH MRS. LESLIE
OF FLEMING ST. ISLINGTON ON 22- 10-1986.

Mrs Leslie and her mother, Mrs Fanny Hipwell, remained married until the deaths of their respective husbands. Mrs Hipwell for approximately seventy years, Mrs Leslie for seventeen years. Both women should have been supported in the raising of their large families, however, circumstances did not allow it. Mrs Hipwell's husband was a shearer who followed the seasons of his trade, going from shed to shed and often going interstate. While at home for relatively short periods of time, Mr Hipwell proved to be a burden for his wife. Mrs Leslie did have the support of her husband until the second world war, when, unfortunately he returned a war neurotic. He died in 1951 after spending the majority of his last years in Concord Hospital and ^{the} Morisset Mental Institute.

Mrs Hipwell came from a well-to-do family on the Liverpool Ranges. She was privately tutored, and had servants at her disposal. A kind, gentle lady, who was respected by all who knew her.

Robert Hipwell was a shearer, who, at one time was employed by Miss Howard's parents. Their marriage was not easily accepted by her parents. Mr Hipwell was popular amongst his own circle of friends he was a top shearer, and at one time won the top award for his trade; the Golden Scissors Award. He passed his time on the circuit by drinking and gambling. Constant with the Australian ethos of 'mateship' he was revered by his male companions. His portrait hangs in the saloon bar of the Imperial Hotel along with ~~the~~ portrait and the life story of Jimmy Governor, a murderer, who had terrorized the Upper Hunter earlier this century. When the Imperial Hotel changes management, or is sold, one of the conditions of the sale is the continued display of Mr Hipwell's portrait. Peter Finch, an actor, while visiting Singleton for the making of the film Eureka Stockade, found Mr Hipwell an intriguing old man, a reminder of the colonial days. Mr Finch made arrangements with the management of the hotel to supply Mr Hipwell with Rum until he died.

Money for the support of Mrs Hipwell and her children rarely came from Mr Hipwell. Mrs Hipwell was forced to take in washing to feed and cloth them. In the early 19th. century, when women's rights were limited, Mrs Hipwell attempted to leave her husband, only to be sent back by her doctor, her family and her minister. As late as the 1940s, Mrs Hipwell was washing army uniforms for the Singleton Army Camp, Mrs Hipwell was then in her seventies.

Mrs Leslie, though cared for for the first seven years of marriage, never knew what money her husband did or did not have. And when the supporting pension came after he had enlisted in the Air Force, she never knew what happened with it; she believes it was paid into the bank- account of his families property. Under pressing circumstances she left her in- laws property and began to work to support her children. She purchased an old rundown, three room house and built the extensions herself. Her father, who was then an old

man, held the large beams while she nailed, and also gave her assistance to set in a stove.

Mr Leslie returned from the war with Malaria, and was an alcoholic; a product of the neurosis. Until the war Mr Leslie *ran* drank. He had been a hard worker, a good son and a devoted husband and father. He became a violent man while drinking and had to seek help for his problem. He entered Concord Hospital for three years, while there he received a large amount of shock-treatment. His condition remained the same. After signing himself into Morisset Hospital for twelve months Mr Leslie ended his own life; believing his family would be better off.

In one of Mr Leslie's attempts to take up his life again, he purchased his families property. He became incapable of running it and the work and management fell to his wife. She now had to physically run the farm as well as raise six children. Apart from her home duties she shared in the milking of approximately seventy cows twice a day, feed pigs, ploughed paddocks, repaired machinery and travelled 17 miles to town for the doctor or on business.

After her husband sold the farm Mrs Leslie held a variety of jobs; as long as she could support her children. She kept a boarding house later in her life to help her youngest daughter; whose husband had been killed, and her daughter was disabled. Eventually Mrs Leslie turned her boarding house into a half-way house for the emotionally handicapped. In her sixties Mrs Leslie was caring for 16 of the emotionally handicapped people, she taught them how to handle their finances, buy their own clothes, and instructed them on how to find their way around Newcastle.

One of the many questions ^{asked} in womans history is the vulnerability of women in the early half of this century. How did woman raise their children without the physical and financial support of their husbands? The account of these women's lives may supply a small piece of information for the puzzle.