

Kedron Brook in the 1930's

Some recollections of local resident, Robert Dunlop, as a youngster growing up in the Grange in the 1930's, as recorded by David Walters.

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By the 1930's the area had been well and truly opened up by timber-getters and remnant sawmills were the only reminder of past times. The tanneries, a slaughter house and knackery were all in operation, but Kedron Brook itself was still a crystal-clear stream connecting a series of waterholes and abounding with life.

There were two swimming holes in the creek: the big one was near the end of Wolverhampton St and the little one about half a kilometre upstream. The big one was quite shallow and the little one was about twenty-foot deep. Only the big kids who could swim would play in the little hole.

On the way to the creek for a bit of fun we would chase the wild, unbranded cattle that roamed through the Grange forest area. Holding the tail of a fleeing poddy calf could provide some hair-raising rides. If the mullet were in season they would swarm up river. A little bit of dough, a fly hook and some patience would often result in a good feed. During the depression men would fish the brook and shoot pigeon and duck along the banks for food.

Turtles were common and boys would leave dead ones on an ant nest and come and collect the neatly cleaned shell some time later. Platypus were regularly seen in an old dam near where Blandford St is today. Very large eels (up to six inches in diameter), freshwater prawns and loobbies could be caught.

All these activities were carried on upstream of Webster Road, for downstream it was the fiercely protected territory of the Lutwyche mob. Conversely, the Grange mob would thump any outsiders they found near the big hole.

Of a Saturday afternoon all the "flash alecs" would gather at the creek near the big hole for a two-up school. Stakes were high at a shilling a time and a youngster could earn a penny "cockatooing" for the school.

Flood times were particularly exciting and Kedron Brook was noted for its regular and forceful floods. Illegal jaunts down the swollen creek were popular, but quite dangerous for the local tanneries used flood times to release poisonous effluent stored in dams. Submerged trees were another hidden danger.

During the summer storms rainbows were very common up the creek and many expeditions were embarked upon to find the pot of gold. Perhaps it is only chasing rainbows but it seems worthwhile trying to restore the area so that it once again can take on an active role in our lives and our children's lives, and provide some healthy outdoor alternatives to "pre packaged" entertainment.