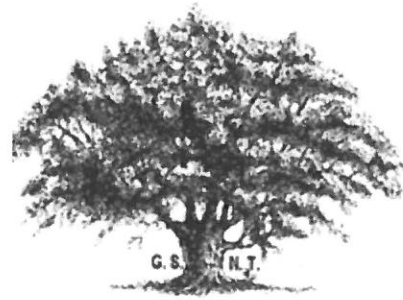


progenitor



Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

The Family History Place



MARCH 2019

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FRONT COVER:

Darwin Post Office and Residence after the bombing February 1

Eileen Marie COSSONS née GADEN

(6 Jul 1928 to 2 Mar 2019)

By any definition, most people would describe our mother Eileen as a strong-willed woman that never complained about her lot in life - problems were to be experienced, dealt with and you moved on – there was no time to wallow in self-pity as there were always other people worse off. In part, this was a product of her family circumstances and the hardships and adversity that she experienced in life. To better understand this view, we need to take a journey through her life.

Eileen was the middle child of seven born into the buffalo shooting family of Hazel Frederick GADEN and Ada Mary GADEN née SMITH, who, at that time, were located at Marrakai on the Adelaide River. Her mother came to Darwin by lugger a few weeks before Eileen's birth on 6 July 1928 just up the road at the old Darwin Hospital in Packard St and they returned to Marrakai shortly after the birth.

The early years were idyllic for a toddler out bush. Plenty of siblings and Aboriginal children to play with while the family were out shooting for the dry season and then town life in Darwin during the wet season. In those years, buffalo shooting provided a good income and the family lived

well. Money wasn't needed out bush as you grew everything and lived off the land and in town, after buying the essentials for the next season, you 'blew' the rest!

By 1937 the family were still buffalo shooting but also had a house (and that term is used loosely) with some acreage at Grove Hill that was used for subsistence living. It meant that Eileen's mother didn't have to spend the whole shooting season out bush.

Life as the family knew it came crashing down in March 1937. Eileen's father was diagnosed with leprosy and, once the authorities knew, was taken away in the back of Police truck from Grove Hill for the Channel Island Lazarette. There were no fond farewells and to top it off their house was burnt down which was the traditional treatment for leper dwellings.

Following this, the Doctor came and inspected Ada and those children at home who all tested negative but were subject to regular tests over the next few years.

Meanwhile, in Darwin, Madge, who was still at school at the Catholic Convent as a boarder, tested positive to leprosy. Ada was called for and after she arrived in Darwin, Madge was taken from the Convent and immediately ferried to Channel Island in the Leprosarium's launch. Madge was just over 16 years of age.

At the time of Hazel and Madge's incarceration, they were the only 'white' lepers on Channel Island. This fact was reported in just about every newspaper in Australia (Madge was mentioned by name and Hazel was nearly always simply referred to as her father or the buffalo shooter).

So, in September 1937, Ada moved to Darwin to be nearer her husband and eldest daughter. There was very little social security in those days and for a married woman with no husband and 6 other children (the youngest being about 3 years of age), life was extremely tough. At the time of Hazel's incarceration, she was given an allowance of £2 per week to cover all outgoings for her and the children (it was Eileen's job to go in by bike to collect it). As a result, a community fund was established to help the family. While appreciated, it was limited. Eileen's eldest brother Neil then became the family breadwinner at about 15 years old, and continued to support Ada and Madge for the rest of their lives.

At about this time, the family was basically ostracised by the town due to the leprosy – this is when you found out who your real friends were! People did literally cross the street to avoid contact.

The Government provided Ada with a house in Salonika where Saint John's College is now located and she raised her family there. This was the first house that Eileen's family lived in that had a concrete floor. Being buffalo shooting bush nomads, floors were made of ant bed with mostly paperbark roofs and walls supported by posts and poles!

During Hazel's incarceration from March 1937 up to the Bombing of Darwin in February 1942, Eileen and her siblings were expelled first from the Catholic Convent and then Parap School because a government official told the schools that all other children would be removed if they stayed at these schools. From there, the children went to Darwin High and were there when this official left town. Fr HENSCHKE then came and saw Ada to tell her that the kids could recommence at the Convent.

Meanwhile on 24 Jun 1940, Eileen was on a bike that was hit by a car near the Daly Street Bridge and suffered a double fractured base of the skull, internal injuries and developed spinal

meningitis and as a result of this accident had to learn to walk again. This effectively ended her formal schooling.

The Bombing of Darwin was the next significant event in the GADEN family lives. It resulted in the Army seconding their house in Salonika and the family being evacuated.

The evacuation process strengthened the feeling that they were not part of normal society due to the leprosy.

When the family was evacuated, they were put on the train to Larrimah in a separate carriage to everyone else – 'you lepers can't mix with the rest!' On the train were Ada and 5 of her children, including Madge. Eileen's father, Hazel, was not a well man and elected to go to Jindare Station near Pine Creek and spent the war years there with his brother Jack GADEN. Neil and Frank stayed in Darwin when the rest of the family were evacuated.

When the train got to Larrimah, the GADEN family were all put into a separate truck and driven to Alice Springs. Again, there was no mixing with any of the other evacuees. For this part of the trip, each person was issued with 2 blankets, an enamel plate, mug, knife, fork and spoon – food and ablutions were best described as functional!

On arrival in Alice Springs, the family were not taken to the staging camp with the others but were billeted in the maternity ward of the Alice Springs hospital for a week (in isolation),

then taken by the Ghan (train) to Adelaide. There was no guard at the hospital and the family was free to go and come as they pleased, but back on the train into another separate compartment and with a guard! For 6 days, this compartment had Ada, the 5 children and the guard living in it - rather cramped to try and sleep – and they were not allowed to mingle.

The family spent 1942 and 1943 moving between Adelaide, Sydney and Broken Hill staying with various family members and friends before ending up in a broken-down home in Manoora, SA in about mid-1943. Manoora was bitterly cold in winter with no heating and the only warmth were the two blankets each family member was given at Larrimah – these were lugged all around Australia like security blankets. Ada would pad the blankets with newspaper at night to try and get more warmth for the children. Eileen never forgot that winter and often talked about how cold and bleak it was!

As you can imagine, Eileen always thought this whole experience was character building to say the least!

During her time at Manoora, Eileen worked as a 'nanny' before working as a 'spreader' at the flax mills at Auburn, SA, for about 3 months while the season lasted. This involved catching a ride on a truck at 4 am each day over to Auburn and returning home about 7pm each night on the same truck – pretty demanding for a 15 year old. Eileen also worked at the Post Office, Manoora, SA, and remained in that employment until the family returned to the Northern Territory, around early 1944.

Back in the Territory, the family initially lived in Pine Creek, with Eileen working for the North Australia Railways in Katherine and would travel down on the train every Monday and come home every Friday. Later, she was the manageress of the local Co-op Store in Pine Creek. This was a ration store for evacuees and situated in the main street not far from where AH TOY's present-day Sidney William hut Store is located and remained in this position for the rest of the period that they lived in Pine Creek. Jimmy AH TOY's store did not exist in those days.

On the family's return to Darwin, they eventually moved back into their Salonika house and this remained Ada's home until around 1965 [my memories – hopper windows, mosquitoes and green ants!]

On their return to Darwin, the family did not experience the same degree of open stigmatism to the leprosy – perhaps this was due to the war and people had other things on their mind as well as many of the people concerned had been evacuated. Despite this, the damage had been done to the extent that no one in the family would talk about this episode in the family history. It was treated as though it never happened and was essentially a deep dark bitter family secret that was never to be discussed for about 50 years.

In Darwin Eileen worked as a waitress at Antony's Cafe, situated on the Stuart Highway, Stuart Park then as a general hand at the Worker's Club office, Darwin and later as a shop assistant in Burnett's Newsagency & Sport Store on the corner of Knuckey/Mitchell Street.

Eileen's life changed again on Boxing Day 1948 when she was thrown into Berry Springs on a Girl Guides outing and suffered 4 crushed vertebrae. Part of her treatment resulted in her being packed in sand bags for three weeks, then put into a body plaster, and then in and out of hospital for treatment for a few weeks.

Eileen ended up being in this full body cast with a hole cut over her stomach to allow her to breathe for about 9 months. After the body plaster was removed, she went back to work for Burnett's Newsagency but unable to continue this employment because of her back problem and went to work for the Department of Health at the Darwin Hospital Administration building, first as a clerk and then as a switchboard operator. In 1951 she transferred to the NTA Records Section, Cavenagh Street, Darwin.

In December, 1950 Eileen met Len COSSONS, a newly appointed member of the Northern Territory Police Force as of 14 December 1950, at his first motor vehicle accident on the Salonika Railway crossing and greeted him with the famous words 'is this your first accident Lennie' as Len was trying to look serious and act as though he knew what he was doing!

Another interesting recollection from around this time was about Eileen's brother Frank and how society still viewed leprosy. Frank was home on leave (serving in Korea) and asked Ada and Eileen whether Len 'knew about Dad and Madge as he might not want to marry you!' Eileen did reassure him that she had told Len and they were still getting married!

They survived these episodes and were married in St Mary's Star of the Sea Church on 23 February 1952 with their honeymoon being spent on the road to Len's new posting at Lake Nash – how romantic was that?

Lake Nash Police Station is situated about 100 miles south of Camooweal, QLD, on the NT/QLD border on a cattle station owned by the Queensland National Pastoral Company at the time. The newly married couple were supplied with a 1-ton Chevrolet utility, with a field petrol order book and their personal effects were expected to fit into the back!

While at Lake Nash, Eileen gave birth to her first two babies, both stillborn, and it was where they started to form life time friendships with people from the pastoral industry that survive to this day.

In this environment, Eileen was a true woman of the outback, providing constant support as Len's helpmate and by providing voluntary health care in various outlying communities. Infant

delivery, stitching cuts, treating snake bites, feeding travellers and prisoners - Eileen performed all this and more, using only the most basic of equipment.

The COSSONS remained at Lake Nash until early 1953 and were then transferred to Pine Creek for the years 1953-1955 where I was born in Katherine in 1954 (Eileen was in hospital for 6 months before his birth and not allowed to move), before the family was transferred to Harts Range for the period 1955-1961, with Judith being born in Alice Springs in 1955, and a further two children both of whom died shortly after childbirth.

The police station at Harts Range could best be described as rustic - it consisted of 2 corrugated iron clad lined rooms with ceilings and a verandah all around which was divided up into various living areas, bathroom, kitchen washing-up area, refrigerator area, radio transceiver room, bedroom, official office, lounge room. Apart from the bathroom these areas were partitioned off with curtains or items of furniture. The verandah was covered with a sheet of corrugated iron laying on its side from the ground up and then the rest was covered with flywire. Canvas blinds were provided to prevent sand inundation.

Water and power were constant problems and there were certainly no luxuries like fans!

The three things that stand out in my mind about Harts Range was the amount of sand and how few trees there were due to the extended drought at that time, the sound of the wind through the Athol pines during night time toilet visits to the two drum flaming fury (picture this through the eyes of a 5 or 6 year old) and how perfectly attuned to the environment the Police Station was – whatever the temperature was outside, it was the same inside, if not slightly worse!

Despite all of this, Eileen and Len often spoke fondly about Harts Range and only left because they knew the kids needed to go to a real school.

The remaining years of police duty saw the family shift around the NT in what seemed to be 4-year stints at Alice Springs (1961-1964), Darwin (1965-1969), Alice Springs (1970-1974), back to Darwin (1975-1980) before returning to Alice Springs (1981-1983) where Len retired on the grounds of ill-health from the NT Police Force effective from 28 May 1985 holding the rank of Assistant Commissioner.

During her period in Darwin (1965-1969) and then in Alice Springs while we were away at boarding school, Eileen obtained employment at her brother Neil's butcher shop, the Nightcliff Meat Supply; St John's College on a voluntary basis in 1966-1967; St. Phillips College, Alice Springs as secretary/pay clerk; NTA Library, Alice Springs; Department of Mines & Energy, Darwin and Alice Springs and remained in this employment until her retirement on the grounds of ill-health on 29 October 1984.

In 1975, when cyclone Tracy struck Darwin, Eileen, Len and Judith sheltered beneath the family home which was wrecked by the storm. As a senior police officer Len was very busy. Eileen and Judith moved into the police headquarters and set up a kitchen that, like Topsy, grew and grew. At its peak over 200 people at a time were sitting down for a meal. You can imagine the organisation that took, but as one person wrote when she retired from the public service - 'When Eileen organises it, it stays organised.'

Apart from being a very competent organiser, Eileen was also very good with her hands. She didn't listen to music or go to the movies but she was always making things – from cooking, cake decorating, pottery, dressmaking, floral art, quilting, etc.

After Len's death in 1996, Eileen's health began to deteriorate and, after a series of falls and an extended stay in hospital, she made the decision to move to aged care where she spent the remaining years of her life.

I will close by asking you to look around at the various service stained glass windows. Eileen and a lady by the name of Viola PRITCHARD decided to raise funds to have them restored following Cyclone Tracy damage. Both the lady's houses were turned into cake production houses and they would sell them at every weekend Mass at the Cathedral until all were sold, and heaven help you if you tried to walk past them without buying one! Anyway, they were so successful that they actually raised enough to have the windows fixed and put a significant chunk towards a new PA system. Well done ladies.

On that note and in recognition of a true pioneering woman of the Territory – rest in peace Eileen, you've earned it!

DARWIN'S WAR

Contributed by Joy Davis

In 1939 there a build up of Service personal in Darwin, but to the civilian population, the town remained the same. With the Japanese advance from Indo China down towards Australia and their attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941 it became clear their sights were on Australia. In early December the Australian War Cabinet decreed that women, children, the aged and sick were to be evacuated from Darwin. If Nurses or other women employed in essential services wanted to stay, they could do so.

The evacuation began in December 1941 and ended two days before the first air raid on Darwin on 19th February 1942. Left in Darwin after the evacuation there were approximately two thousand residents, of whom the majority were males.

Many ships arriving in Darwin had loaded Dutch evacuees and some Japanese prisoners from the Philippines. Darwin Evacuees were put on these and other ships and planes returning to the Southern States. Others went by train to Birdum and then overland to Adelaide. Many lives changed forever, families were split until the war was over and some never got back to how they were before the war started. Some members were killed or injured, and when this happened it was days, weeks and in one case years before their families heard of them.

In 1942 Darwin was a supply base and transit camp for troops, aircraft and ships moving north to the war. Defences for the town and harbour were minimal.

The raids on 19 February were the first two of sixty-four raids against the Darwin area and its

nearby airfields, which bore the brunt of Japanese attacks on mainland Australia.

Prior to the bombing it would appear that both the Navy and the RAAF had reports of aircraft heading for Darwin, but they were never acted on. The Navy had the first from John Gribble, a Coastwatcher who stated "a large number of aircraft" (*Australia's Pearl Harbour*). Father John McGrath of the Sacred Heart Mission radioed a message at 9.15 am on 19 February 1942 from Bathurst Island to the AWA Coastal Radio Station who in turn, advised (at 9.37 am) RAAF Operations in Darwin that "an unusually large air formation bearing down on us from the north-west. Identity suspect." (*Northern Territory News 13 April 1999*).

It has been well documented that this message was received, but never acted on. If either of these messages were taken seriously the residents of Darwin would have had about 20 minutes warning. With some warning the Armed Services would have been more organised. In the first attack there were 188 Japanese planes and in a second raid 54 bombers launched against Darwin.

When these attacks came, those manning anti-aircraft artillery performed bravely, but there were too few to prevent massive damage being inflicted. The airport was heavily damaged, houses were destroyed, and administration buildings gone, essential services like the hospital and police coped the best way they could, working around the clock to help others. In the chaos and within twenty-four hours of the bombing the army placed the town under Martial Law and the remaining civilians were told to evacuate.

Also looters were on the rampage, the worst were the armed forces. Family homes that had escaped the bombing did not escape the looters and personal family possessions were either taken, destroyed or left to the elements.

Those there, well remember how the houses, hotels etc were looted, not even Government House escaped. The looters did not stop there, whilst nurses and doctors, and policemen worked without sleep the looters were busy ransacking their homes. Others who were trying to maintain contact with the outside world like the Radio Operator and what was left of the Post and Telegraph staff also suffered additional personal loss by looters.

After the raid the word was being passed around that they were to "go bush". It seems there were many interpretations of what this meant, in the book, *Darwin 1942*, it was reported that one man had made it to Melbourne in thirteen days. For those days this was remarkable, others turned up in eastern capitals.

The original order for the men to seek shelter outside of Darwin was passed by word of mouth, no doubt as this order was repeated other words were added, which would have caused confusion. It took weeks to round up the servicemen from out of the bush around Darwin.

All accounts of the bombing of ships in the harbour give praise to the men and women who were

on Board. It seems amazing that any survived. After the bombing Johnny Wiltshire & a mate in their small boat pulled injured, burning oil & petrol soaked civilians and sailors from the water and carried them to shore, and repeated this many times.

On 19th February 1942, the Japanese made two air raids on Darwin, the first at about 9.58am, then the second at 12 noon. At the end of the raids 21 allied naval and merchant ships were sunk or damaged and major buildings destroyed.

First to be hit by the bombs were the wharf area and ships, Police Barracks, Post Office, Government House and the Administration Offices.

Residents of the town were going about their daily business, in the Magistrate's Court a case was being heard, the Curio Cottage had opened for business, it was owned and operated by Jack Buscall, who was bed ridden and conducted all his business from his bed. Clients served themselves, Buscall had mirrors mounted so that he could observe his clients as they browsed. He wrapped the goods and took the money and Father William Henschke did the daily banking.

After the bombing all Jack Buscall was worried about was whether Father Henschke got to the bank in time with his money. After the raids Jack refused to leave, but the Army lifted him, bed and all onto the tray of a truck then drove him around town to see the sights before going to the airport for the trip south.

(Australia's Peral Harbour).

When the Japanese flew towards Darwin there were many perceptions by the residents of what they were actually looking at, some thought the "Yanks had arrived". Trooper Burns, who was on Casuarina Beach warned that the "Japs are here". When questioned how he knew, he said they had "bloody great red spots on them" (*Australia's Pearl Harbour*), others watched the planes fly in and thought they were dropping leaflets until they saw the flicker of the sun on the metal and knew then that these were indeed bombs, yet another perception was they were our planes and just having a 'dog fight'. Others thought they were allied planes returning from a bombing mission north.

The reported exact time of the first raid varies, depending on whose account of events you are reading. The Post Office clock stopped at 9.50 am, others reported the raid as commencing at 9.58 am. Certainly this latter time seems the most consistent time of commencement.

The Post Office was in Mitchell Street; it was very busy from the time the doors had opened at 9 am. The four telephonists were exceptionally busy that morning. The Post Office and the Postmaster's residence next door received a direct hit. Nine Post and Telegraph staff died as a result of the first raid, as well as the daughter of Postmaster Hurtle Bald.

On Duty at the time were Postmaster Hurtle Bald and his wife Alice (Telephonist), Archibald T.R.Halls (Telegraph Supervisor), Arthur Wellington (postal Clerk), Telephonists sisters Eileen

and Jean Mullen, Emily Young, Freda Stasinowsky. Iris Bald the Postmaster's daughter was visiting that morning she was employed by the Taxation Office and had stopped at the Post Office to see her parents on her way back to work from the Library.

Hurtle Bald had dug a hole in the ground of his garden, it contained two halves of a corrugated iron water tank, this was his shelter. In this shelter were Hurtle Bald, his wife Alice, daughter Iris, Freda Stasinowsky, Eileen and Jean Mullen, Emily Young and Arthur Wellington. When the bombing commenced Archibald T.R.Halls was using morse code to speak with Chief Transmission Engineer in Adelaide, Frank O'Grady, he broke off transmission by the word "Sec there's another raid, I'll see you shortly" (*Australia's Pearl Harbour*). Halls never got back to O'Grady, he was killed after being in Darwin for just five days.

Walter Rowling the Telephone Foreman had been wounded in the direct hit on the Post Office, but died later on board the '*Manunda*' making a total of ten.

Bald's son, Peter, attending school in Adelaide was due in Darwin for Christmas. His plane was requisitioned so he never made it. Thus Peter became the sole surviving member of his family. He was staying with his Aunt in South Australia when he was told of his parents and sister's deaths. (*Australia's Pearl Harbour*).

At least 250 people were killed and an estimated 300-400 injured in the 19 February raids; figures vary depending on whose account of the bombing you are reading. At the time the censors understated the casualty list, and exaggerated rumours of widespread panic by both service personnel and civilians were circulated.

Forty-five ships were moored in the harbour at the time of the first air raid. Reports of at least 173 people on ships in the harbour were killed. More died later of wounds. The '*Manunda*' a passenger liner, had been turned into a hospital ship for World War 2. She was painted white and bore the markings of a hospital ship, large red crosses on each side. At least twelve people on board the *Manunda* died of wounds or were killed. This figure varies from 12 to 19 as previously explained. Sister Demestre who served on the ship was one of those killed.

Harry Hawk and William (Bill) Duke, morse code operator and a technician, established contact with Adelaide four hours after the raid (*NT News 19 June 1995*). William Duke's wife was on her way to Port Augusta when the bombs fell on Darwin and she did not know for days if her husband was still alive. (*NT New. 20 Feb. 1992*).

Methodist missionary Rev. Leonard Kentish was an army padre attached to the Port Darwin garrison. Naval authorities installed a radio at Mr. Kentish's Goulburn Island Mission and gave him responsibility for sending Japanese shipping movements to Darwin. He was on the "*Patricia Cam*" when it and others were sunk by a Japanese floatplane in January 1943. Six men died in the water and when the plane landed, the Japanese crew with pistols drawn, forced the clergyman to board the aircraft. He was beheaded at Dobo in Aroe Island less than two weeks later. It was not until July 1947 that his wife learnt of his fate. (*NT News 17 Feb. 1992*).

Joseph W. Nichols held twenty-six government appointments, one of which was the Registrar of BDMs, Joseph and Deric Thompson loaded into trucks all the BDM registers, along with the law library and records from the Supreme Court. These valuable records were taken out of town and unloaded in the bush onto galvanised iron and covered with tarps. Arrangements were made to take them to Alice Springs where they remained until the end of the war.

A late party saved John Coleman from becoming a war statistic. The party meant he was running late the morning he was supposed to deliver a proof of the Darwin phone directory to the local postmaster. The appointment was for 10 am but by this time the Post Office had taken a direct hit in the first raid on Darwin. (*NT News. 18 Feb.1992*).

Les Penhall said when the air raid started he ran for the cliffs in front of the Post Office. A bomb landed right behind him, it would have been less than 50 yards, the blast hurled him over the cliff face. He buried himself at the bottom of the cliff until it was all over. He was 18 at the time and said he was terrified.

Reg Rattley, a Telephone Technician tried to get into the Postmaster's shelter when the first raid began, finding there was no more room, he left. Back at the Exchange he was driven out by bombs that exploded outside the window. He ran towards the cliff, but as he was running a bomb exploded behind him and he was lifted up and dumped in the bottom of the cliff and landed near Les Penhall. Both men survived their ordeal.

Every year in each city as well as other places where there are people who lived through the bombing of Darwin, gather at cenotaphs and at the General Post Office in Adelaide (where so many of the postal staff hailed from), to remember those who lost their lives on the 19th February 1942.

THEY DID NOT RETURN

By Toni Osborne

Many Australian families sent sons, brothers, fathers and uncles to the First World War and there were very few families that escaped the war without knowing someone who did not return and our family was no exception.

Clarence John Bambach was born in 1890 at Seaham, north of Newcastle in New South Wales, the son of John Bambach and Matilda Riley.

Clarence was a bushman working bullock teams in the area, felling timber, mending fences and tendering for repair of roads.

The family operated a wine bar and post office at Euwylong, just north of Raymond Terrace.

Clarence enlisted on 11 December 1916. Registration number 6604. He departed Australia 7 February 1917, arriving in England in April.

Following training with the 5th training he joined 20th battalion in August 1917. Just one month later he was killed in action.

His battalion was engaged in heavy fighting concentrated around Nonne, Polygon Wood and Zonnebeke.

The Germans had manned several large concrete block houses containing machine gun nests and the 20th battalion, fighting in flooded trenches, were caught in the crossfire.

Clarence Bambach was one of 264 casualties of this battle and he was awarded British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Clarence is one of thousands of diggers remembered on the Menin Gate

William James Best

William James Best was born in 1894 at Gunnedah in north west New South Wales the son of William John Best and Maria Agnes Beer.

William enlisted, along with his brother Thomas Patrick Best, on 2 February, 1916 at Armidale. The brothers then became part of the hundreds of enlisted soldiers that become known as the Wallaby March to Sydney prior to embarking overseas.

William became part of the 33rd Battalion and embarked on the troop ship Marathon on 4th May 1916 and became part of the thousands of Australian diggers that fought on the Western Front.

On 8th August 1918 Sergeant William Best was involved in an incident near the village of Hamel and was consequently awarded the Military Medal:

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during operations against enemy positions south of the Somme east of Hamel . On 8th August Sergeant Best led his party, which was temporarily cut off from the rest of their party owing to dense fog, through Accroche Wood . Twice he rushed enemy strong points, killing two men and capturing twelve. With only one man he rushed a post in Rat Wood and captured the garrison of 6 men. This non commissioned officer displayed initiative and determination and led his men with splendid courage and dash. He also did very good work in re organisation and consolidation.

William James Best was killed in action two days later on 10th August 1918 at Proyart near Perone, France. He is honoured on the wall of the Australian National Memorial at Villiers-Bretonneux.

SIXMILEBRIDGE

a small town between Ennis and Limerick Ireland

By June Tomlinson

Copied from the Clare County Library website http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/sixmile_history.htm there are other references at this link.

Sixmilebridge owed its existence to the river and as the importance of the river diminished so did that of the village. When Bunratty Bridge was built in 1804 Sixmilebridge was no longer on the main road to the West. Like most Irish villages, Sixmilebridge has unrealised potential. It is architecturally attractive with three squares and a green and the bridge over the river is still the main focal point. Set in a picturesque area, frequented by many visitors, possessing accommodation suitable for industry, trade and tourism and, most importantly, having a proud past,

In 2015 we visited Sixmilebridge – we had been there before and the sun did not feature in our visits, it was cold and raining. I find this place of great interest; it was like we were stepping back into a picture where we left it. Nothing appeared to me to have changed, in places I have visited before I look for changes but none to look for this time.

We drove into Centre of Sixmilebridge, over the small bridge going towards the square, past the Duck Pond complete with its own duck house next to the river. The very wide street meant that parking or traffic was not a problem. We again visited the “The Cozy Cottage Café”. We needed to thaw in the warmth of their room, people came and went and it seemed like the place was always filled to capacity, as someone left there was always someone just coming in the door to take the empty

table.

View of the square from the Police Station



In the O'Garney River stood “The Miller Returns” sculpture, it is near the Café, it was placed in the river in 2001, the sculpture is by Shane Gilmore. It is very eye catching, the very strong looking Miller carry-

ing his tools of trade and the water swirling around him, the rain did not stop tourists getting out of their cars to take photographs.

I wanted to find the local cemetery and on an old map I had, marked the Police Station in the town square but it was no longer there, instead the sign on the building said it was the Credit Union. The Police working in this building would have had full view down the street of the town square including the river.

Previous Sixmilebridge
Police Station



As I got out of the car I noticed the line marking, I have a laugh many a time in Ireland I have seen fronts and houses being painted whilst light rain is falling, it might be the way things work there because it rains often. It reminded me of another Irish sign when we were leaving a village – the road sign said 100 km – then about two metres on was another sign “drive slowly”??

Line marking at its best



A couple of false starts later driving away from the Square we found the Police Station along Shannon Road. I was looking for a real police station but this was a house turned into one and only I spotted a small sign I would have missed it. We asked for directions to the cemetery.

We found a cemetery on Limerick Road Sixmilebridge. We nearly missed it, it was behind a low stone fence, the cemetery name was missing or perhaps it was never there. The parking area had space for a couple of cars only. The gate to the cemetery was closed but not locked. All the graves were facing the roadway, some were right up to the stone fence, so you could not walk in front of the grave. Irish people do some things differently, the grave sizes seemed to be small medium and large and some extra large.



All graves facing the roadway, some on the fence line

The Cemetery is named "Sixmilebridge Graveyard", it is like no other I have seen before, the placement of some of the graves left me bewildered, because some graves had no pathway or walking space between the graves, visitors to the cemetery would have to walk over other graves.



Graves are close and various sizes

My grandmother immediately came to mind. Every Sunday she would take us to the Field of Mars Cemetery in Ryde (NSW), to visit all the family graves fixing flowers and making sure all graves were picture perfect. My sister and I were always reminded under no circumstances were we al-

lowed to walk on anyone's grave, there were no short cuts to be taken, follow the path was the instruction. Well in Sixmilebridge Graveyard some graves had little direct access to them.

There were some very old graves towards the back of the cemetery some with indecipherable headstones, but the cemetery looked cared for and it was obvious people visited graves in this cemetery.

Leaving the Sixmilebridge Graveyard we headed towards Newmarket-on-Fergus and noticed a road sign "Relig Cemetery" of course I had to visit this cemetery.

This was the Ballysheen Graveyard. The Graveyard had a gate at the entrance with the name of the cemetery, on the right was uneven ground, it was like the side of a small hill, old graves in no particular order, in fact they were very close together.

An interesting side trip of cemeteries.

Inside the gate

Older Section of Ballysheen Graveyard





Examples to the right of the gate



SixMileBridge No2 by June Tomlinson

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUxD8xyTZ3o> - I just found the caption for my man in the water and guess where it was - Six Mile Bridge - it is 16.1 miles to O'Brien's bridge - we actually went down a laneway type road from O'Briens Bridge. The carpark shown in this youtube is where we parked our car - on the other side of the curved brick wall is where there was a little shop, which I thought we were buying a sandwich from, only could have two people in the shop at one time, but we were directed upstairs (they were just wide enough to walk up) into this quaint little room - wonderful baked dinner we had for lunch, we walked over to the shops.

I have looked through all counties we drove through for this man in the water, then I started back to where we started to have stopovers as we made our way to Clare.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBdYvYfv3w8&feature=related> this youtube clip is exactly as we saw it, it was raining cats and dogs and the river was so fast.

<http://www.clare.ie/town/view/sixmilebridge-631.html>

Sixmilebridge, or Droichead Abhann Uí gCearnaigh, derives its name in both languages from the bridge over the O'Garney river which flows through the village. Donough O'Brien, the 4th Earl of Thomond, built the present bridge in 1610. From then, up to 1804 when the bridge at Bunratty was built, traffic between Limerick and Ennis had to pass through Sixmilebridge.

The first element of the Sixmilebridge name derives from the fact that the village is approximately 6 Irish miles from Thomondgate in Limerick. The Irish mile, which is 2240 yards in length, along with the Irish acre and the Irish perch were introduced during the Cromwellian land distribution (post 1652). The earliest recorded use of the Sixmilebridge name dates from 1681 when Thomas Dineley noted the name in his diary.

The village is fortunate in having wide streets and large squares. The upper, or western, part of the village was laid out by the O'Briens in the 16th and 17th centuries. This was, and is, the administrative part of the village containing the police barracks, courthouse, bridewell, post office, churches and the school. The O'Briens lived in Cappagh Lodge, a farm house just outside the village. The Eastern side was laid out by the levers in 1733 and was the commercial part of the village. It contained water powered mills, a brewery, a market house and a fair green. Street and square names may be seen on dated stone plaques. The levers lived (and continue to do so) in Mount levers Court, a beautiful Queen Anne style house.

A remarkable fact about Sixmilebridge is that during the 18th century, it was a river port where goods were exported and imported by boat from the Oil Mills, a short distance south of the village. Exports from the Oil Mills were rape seed oil and later soap, manufactured at the Mills. Remains of the quay walls, warehousing, the soap factory and stone mill wheels may still be seen.

The village is also fortunate in that many of the old buildings have been preserved and have found alternative uses. The former Church of Ireland church has been converted to an award-winning library, the courthouse is now a childcare facility, the market house contains auction rooms, the police barracks are now a credit union and the former Woolen Mills may be converted to apartments, subject to planning permission.

Modern Sixmilebridge is now one of the major population centres of Co. Clare. The native popu-

lation has been augmented by new arrivals from all over Ireland as well as from continental Europe. New housing estates have recently been built and more are under construction on the outskirts of the village. New shops have opened and professionals have set up their practices to cater for the increasing population. The village has flourishing GAA and soccer clubs, a Youth club and a Folk club, to name a few of the leisure- related activities.

