

# progenitor



***Genealogical Society of the***

***Northern Territory Inc.***

***The Family History Place***



***MARCH 2023***

# GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY INC

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**FRONT COVER:** L-R Johan Vandewalle, Mitchell and Lex Lowry, Tom Heyman, Giovanni Meganck and Enda Van den Broeck . Pictured at the memorial of Brothers in Arms Westhoek, Belgium.

Further to the story of the Hunter Brothers from Nanango, Queensland printed in September 2018 edition of progenitor.

## ***BROTHERS IN ARMS***

The following are the words of Mollie Millis, whose mother Daisy was a Hunter, a long-term Nanango family. Mollie is 96 and videoed her speech to over 1000 people at the memorial park. Her words were streamed around the world live.

*"Hello everyone.*

*I'm sending a big GIDDAY from the land Down Under.*

*I'm very excited for the upcoming inauguration of the Brothers in Arms Memorial Park which is really a wonderful tribute to all Brothers who died in war."*

Mollie Millis was made aware of the ABC radio call to relatives to offer DNA samples to eventually identify the remains of the fallen five. It was Mollie's DNA that directly assisted the authorities to identify Jack Hunter in 2006 after being discovered by gas workers in a shallow grave under a road on Westhoek Ridge at the Western Front, Belgium. Eventually three Australian diggers, who paid the ultimate price, were identified.

The day before the inauguration it had been raining and the volunteers of the Brothers in Arms Memorial Inauguration committee were pensive while still very busy preparing the site for the unveiling of the statue. The day of the inauguration was a glorious day with the sun behind our backs to the north east, the clouds had a slightly wispy shape, reflecting the cool breeze felt at the park. Winter heralded its beginning in this part of Europe.

My son Mitchell and I were taking in the view of the park and enjoying the speeches which were numerous however important as many people had been involved to make this day a reality. From the amazing speech by Bill Gibbins, Australian and major benefactor reiterating to the crowd that,

"I am happy the job is now done" to the statue's creator another Australian, Louis Laumen, who was unable to travel however had many kind words regarding the project.

Mollie completed her speech by saying, *"I feel honoured to have played a small part in this story and to have represented the Hunter family as just one of many, many families of all nationalities who saw their sons and daughters go off to war"*.

Applause filled the park as a number of special guests removed a multinational flag from the bronze statue which depicts the love and respect between two brothers in arms, two Nanango brothers. My personal thoughts at that moment were of Jim Hunter. What a proud man he would be in the realisation that his act of love towards Jack during a time of catastrophic destruction would affect so many people on this day 105 years later.

So many pieces to a large human jigsaw. Tom Heyman, Enda Van den Broeck and Giovanni Meganck gas workers who in 2006 stopped excavating a trench through a road once human remains were found. Johan Vandewalle, who notified authorities to complete a full archaeological dig which eventually uncovered five Aussie soldiers buried sometime after the commencement of the battle of Polygon Wood on the 26 September 1917.

Johan has been the driving vision behind the Brothers in Arms Memorial Park. The Not for Profit organising committee who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes for the past 16 years to ensure the memorial became a reality. Andy Malengier, the well renowned but humble landscape architect has excelled in the design of this park. Throughout Flanders he has created other beautiful park scapes. Let's not forget the thousands of donors who could not make it to this part of Belgium on this occasion but whose gift have helped make this memorial a reality.

I remember with joy the words of one of the Memorial Committee who said,

*"The child has now been born, we just have to help it grow"*

If you would like to be involved, donate or one day visit the Brothers in Arms Memorial Park please contact me, I would be pleased to help.

*Lex Lowry Mobile: 0404 873 489 Website: [brothersinarmsmemorial.info](http://brothersinarmsmemorial.info)*





## Brothers in Arms Memorial, Westhoek, Belgium.

**NOVEMBER 1929**

### THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

*One man's shoulder, another man's thigh  
The unknown soldier, here I lie  
Rest and quiet is all I seek,  
Letting the chambermaid statesmen speak,  
Letting the peace that they begot  
Rot in the quick earth as I rot,  
Letting the Peace that they declared  
Fall in the pit my bones have shared,  
Letting the kings and queens go by  
One man's shoulder, another man's thigh.*

## **70th Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific - Commemorative Mission in September 2015:**

### **Transcription of Len Seto's memory:**

Leonard (Len) Seto worked as an 18-year-old clerk and lounge waiter before he enlisted in the Australian Army in December 1941. His decision to enlist was a combination of a desire to do his duty and a search for adventure. Len served in New Guinea as a signaller with the 2/11th Field Regiment.

Len has many memories of his service during the Second World War, both good and bad, funny and serious. One memory which stands out is the journey on a small ship to Bougainville from the New Guinea mainland. One night the ship encountered a heavy storm and Len and his fellow servicemen were forced to tie themselves to the rails of the deck to avoid being washed over the side. All on board were relieved when the storm abated, but in the morning light the Captain realised the ship had been thrown off course and into enemy waters. Their course was quickly corrected and the ship reached its destination.

Another clear memory is the day the Japanese surrender was announced; Len remembers it well because he was under fire at the time. Bullets were flying all around and while trying to stay as low as possible on the ground Len heard the phone ring. The person on the other end of the line, from headquarters some forty miles behind the line, told him the war was over, and the Japanese had surrendered. Len's swift reply was that the person from headquarters might want to inform the people firing at them of the news.

Len returned to Australia in April 1946 and took his discharge in May 1946. After the war Len pursued a career in signwriting and later passed his skills to the next generation of apprentices as a TAFE teacher. Now retired, Len's hobbies include carpentry, art and drawing; he also makes time to minister to the sick in hospital. He is also an avid squash player and has won many titles, including a silver in the 70-75 years bracket of the 1994 World Masters Games held in Brisbane. Len and his wife Hazel have been married for more than sixty years and together have four children and four grandchildren.

### **'The Last Darwin Defender?', by Paul T. Seto.**

'What did you do in World War 2, Daddy?' is a question many children once asked their fathers. The replies could vary from 'None of your business', to 'I do not want to talk about it', to 'Not Much'. Very rarely does a war veteran want to talk about 'What Really Happened' and certainly almost never to people who were not there.

In our case my father gave his four children various and often different snatches of information. To the question: 'Were you in Darwin when it was bombed?' the answer was: 'Yes. It was a bit sticky there for a few days.'

Of course, we can now balance the normal post-war reluctance to talk, especially when combined with the Secrecy Act and wartime media censorship, with existing declassified official and unofficial surviving records.

Actually the Imperial Navy and Army Air force sent bombing raids over Darwin from February 1942 to June 1944. and many hundreds of people were killed or wounded.

Such documents also reveal that on 10 December 1941, Leonard 'Len' SETO, enlisted at age eighteen years and seven months, at the Water Street, Fortitude Valley, in Brisbane, Queensland and later given the service number: QX 39496.

The 'X' part of the prefix means that the person was a volunteer. A fact that Dad has been very proud of all his life. This volunteer status was visible on all their unit patches which had a surrounding grey border. This visual marking is in contrast to 'The Chockos' (the conscripted 'chocolate' soldiers, who the volunteers said, 'melted in the sun.')

Townsville: 'Yorkforce', in June 1942, as Signals section attached to 17th Field Regiment (24 of the 25 pounder field guns). Townsville was bombed in July 1942.

Darwin: Len arrived in June 1943 as part of the Signals section attached to the 5th Field Regiment. 'We were placed right in the town area, on the cliffs overlooking the harbour, just in case of an invasion.'

'Boys will be Boys'. As all the civilians, especially all the unmarried girls, had been moved out of Darwin town, the young men took to competing against and showing off to each other. One such exercise was in the speedy digging of the large bomb-proof pits to house the radio sets and signalmen operators. For protection these pits were roofed with large tree lengths and the wider the girth the better. This is how Dad acquired his 'war wound', an inguinal hernia. One big tree too many.

One of his favourite memories is of the Catalina flying boats being moored at the base of the cliffs. Such graceful aircraft as they did gliding landings on and takeoffs from the peaceful harbour waters. If the Squadron received an incoming air raid warning, the Catalinas would take off and hide further down the harbour. The ships moored in harbour were not so nimble.

As some of the R.A.A.F. airfields were down the main inland highway that is where the enemy bombers often headed. When they were finished their missions, whether the airfields were found or not, the bombers would then head back up the highway and over Darwin, drop any remaining bombs, and head off to their various bases.

Our Airforce would send out pursuing aircraft, as would be expected, but also send some fighters out in a wide arc so that the R.A.A.F. fighters would intercept the enemy in a pincer movement, pushing them away from their bases. Using this tactic many enemy planes would eventually run out of fuel and crash into the unforgiving sea.

On 15 September 1944, Len, as a member of the Signals Section attached to 2/11 Australian Field Regiment, left Darwin on H.M.A.T. 'Katoomba', for life, or death, 'in parts unknown'.

The war service of Signalman QX 39496 consisted of 1,522 days, with 568 days being outside Australia in various active battle zones including Lae, Markam Valley (PNG), Bougainville, (Solomons) and then at Rabaul on New Britain guarding Japanese Prisoners of War and supervising their repatriation back to Japan. He was eventually discharged back in Brisbane on 15 May 1946.



Len went onto a long career as a professional signwriter and later as a TAFE teacher for the technical course on signwriting which he first had to write.

In 2015 he was selected as one of the seven WW2 veterans which formed the Australian government's 70th Anniversary Victory mission to PNG and Pacific Islands. 'We were treated like heroes everywhere we went.'

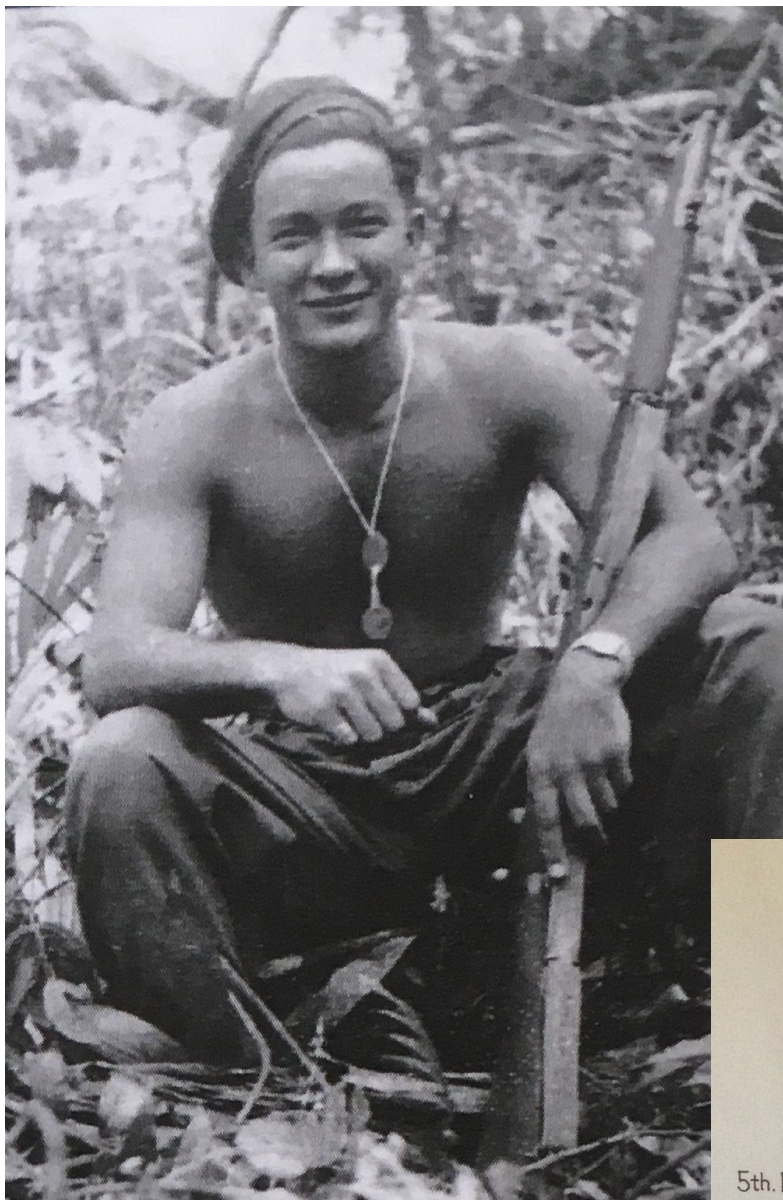
On 11 April 2023 Len will be 100 years of age, and is still in generally good health in his own home. He is still a proud 'self-propelled' war veteran with sharp observation and hearing skills. Even though his hearing is impaired by being around big loud guns for years, he says the 'selective hearing' option has proved to be very useful over the years.

Resources:

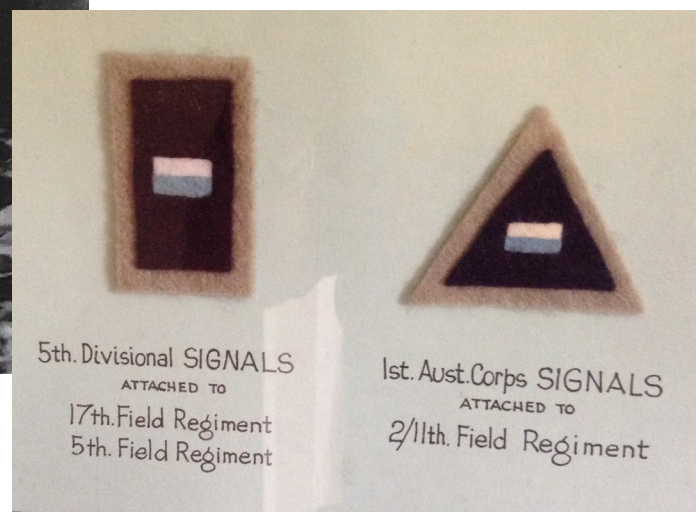
Private files and papers.

Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

AWM Booklet, published 1980, and '1942 air attack on Darwin' painting by Keith Swain.



**Leonard (Len) Seto**





## **KATHERINE DURING WORLD WAR 11**

### **National Trust of Australia (NT) Katherine Branch.**

**Volume 1, June 2002**

### **KATHERINE BOMBED IN JAPANESE AIR RAID**

In a daring air raid penetrating 300 kilometres inland, nine aircraft of the Japanese Navy flying from Timor bombed Katherine on 22 March 1942. One Aboriginal man, Roger, was killed, Noel Hall was injured. The Katherine Aerodrome, thought to be the main target of the raid, was largely undamaged.

At 12.20 on 22 March 1942 nine Mitsubishi G4M1 'Betty' Bombers of the Japanese Navy's Tokao Kokutai, 23<sup>rd</sup> Koku Sentai, which took part in the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, appeared over Katherine aerodrome, circled and left. Eyewitness Dorothy Hall said 'they came back about a quarter of an hour later and let us have it'.

An estimated 91 60kg bombs were released during the raid, 84 were said to be anti-personnel "Daisy Cutters" and 84 fell on the main target, the Katherine Aerodrome. Local farmer Bert Nixon reported "I'd heard American and Australian planes, but these were different. I thought, 'It's got to be Japs' and when I looked up, there they were, nine of them in formation coming from the north-east."

At Knotts Crossing a PMG line party including local identity Henry Scott were narrowly missed by bombs. Other bombs fell near the hospital, the Gallon Licence Store which still bear shrapnel holes and two landed near Manbulloo.

Anne Cox recalled "there were six men working out the front. They suddenly raced down our driveway and over our fence in the bush. We knew something was wrong and came outside. We heard an unusual drone, planes were easily spotted in the eastern sky, they circled the town three times, they bombed the aerodrome."

This was the only air raid on Katherine and the most southerly raid conducted against the Northern Territory.

### **CURTIN'S COWBOYS – UNIQUE MILITARY UNIT**

Due to its central location Katherine was chosen as the base for the North Australian Observer Unit (NAOU). Comprising 600 men, many of whom were chosen because they had good bush skills, they were grouped into three Field and one Headquarters Company. Headquarters were situated near where the Katherine South Primary School now stands.

Established as a bush commando unit in 1942, the NAOU had the huge task of coastal surveillance from Derby in Western Australia to Normanton in the Gulf of Carpentaria and inland to Halls Creek, Alice Springs and Cloncurry.

The NAOU was a horsed Unit, highly mobile and had considerable firepower. The 600 members of the three Field and one Headquarters Company were the largest mounted unit the Australian Army had ever assembled with 2,200 horses and donkeys and a number of small boats.

The Unit established observation posts on major waterways such as the Victoria and Roper Rivers to guard against Japanese invasion. Personnel manning these posts experienced severe iso-

lation and had to depend on their own resourcefulness to provide food and shelter for extended periods.

The North Australia Observer Unit, also known as Curtin's Cowboys or the Nackeroos have acquired legendary status based on the privation they suffered and the innovative means they created to fulfil the task of surveillance and providing an 'early warning system' over the most remote and isolated areas of northern Australia during the war.

## **KATHERINE IN THE WAR YEARS**

At the end of the 1930's Katherine had a population of about 250 but in a few years it changed from a cattle and railway town to a large, strategic military base.

The road (a two wheel track) north to Darwin crossed the Katherine River at Knotts Crossing and followed the Overland Telegraph Line to Pine Creek and on to Darwin

By 1941 Katherine was bulging at the seams under military command as it became a major supply and maintenance centre, and more so in 1942 after the bombing of Darwin. In late 1941 the Australian Army was sending troops to Katherine for training and support units and headquarters were established. The road north was soon incapable of handling the large number of U S Military convoys of up to a mile long. With bull dust up to the axles, the convoys sent up plumes of dust making them easily noticeable and prime targets for enemy aircraft, a situation which gravely concerned the US military.

Roads near camps were sealed and by the end of 1942 the road to Darwin was sealed but many Australians believe 'the Yanks' built the entire north – south road.

In fact the various Australian State authorities undertook the job and construction of the stream and river crossings. The first road bridge over the Katherine River, now known as the Low Level Crossing, was constructed by the NSW Department of Main Roads.

When wet season flooding closed the low level bridge, road traffic used the railway bridge.

By the end of the war 'The Track' was sealed from Alice Springs through to Darwin.

Civilians, particularly women and children, were evacuated to southern cities following the bombing of Darwin on the 19 February 1942.

Men employed on essential projects remained and played an important role with operations such as the North Australia Railway and the PMG in support of military operations.

Local farmers like Bert Nixon and Lee's of Esmerelda Farm near Pine Creek supplied farm produce in season. This helped alleviate the ongoing problem the Army faced in obtaining adequate supplies of fresh fruit and vegetables to feed the thousands of military personnel in the area.

## **FEEDING THE TROOPS - 1943**

Faced with the need to feed an 'Army' and with supplies of fresh meat from the south difficult to procure and transport, the Army turned to local sources and contracts for meat supply.

To slaughter the locally supplied cattle the Army constructed the Manbulloo Abbatoir in 1942 near the Katherine River on Manbulloo Station.

The complex comprised 46 buildings including two mess huts used by engineers servicing the facility, chilling rooms, barracks, messes and poultry yards.

Cattle purchased from stations around Pine Creek, Mataranka and nearby Manbulloo Station were moved to the abbatoir by Aboriginal stockmen.

By late 1944 abbatoir through put reached 700 head per week.

The 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Field Butchery Platoon was one of the units stationed at Manbulloo Abbatoir which slaughtered and chilled meat for dispatch to units of the three services.



### **D55 Gunner William Paul Cesar (1919 – 1995)**

William Paul Cesar was born in Darwin on 25 June 1919. He was the third son of Elias Cesar (1872 – 1938), a Filipino seaman and diver who had come to Port Darwin in 1896 under the Indentured Labour Scheme, and his Portuguese wife Elena nee Dos Anjos, 1875 – 1941.

In Darwin on 28 July 1941, Bill and his brother Basil volunteered for the part time Australian Military Forces – giving their surname as “Cesar”.

They were at that time bond labourers with the Commonwealth Railways.

Basil and Bill were appointed as Gunners, and received the consecutive Army numbers ‘D54’ and ‘D55’. They served in the 18<sup>th</sup> Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery (which had been created on 20 August 1940).

They underwent basic military training at Winnellie Camp and then manned coastal guns as part of Headquarters Darwin Fortress (Darwin Garrison) at Lee Point, Casuarina Beach and Dripstone Caves, defending the approaches to Darwin.

After the Bombing of Darwin in February 1942, Bill and Basil joined their mother and eldest sister in Darlinghurst, New South Wales.

In March each year, the Artillery Foundation of the Philippines Incorporated (AFPI) celebrates the anniversary of the founding of the Philippine Artillery in 1937. At the same time, we take the opportunity to honour the Filipino – Australians who have served with the Royal Australian Artillery.

Three served in Darwin during World War 2, before the Bombing of Darwin. William Paul Cesar was born in Darwin on 25 June 1919, the third son of a Filipino seaman and diver. He manned coastal guns in the period before the Bombing of Darwin.

## **BROTHER PAUL**

I knew him first as Brother Paul, later known as Father Paul but in my research have discovered that he was not 'Paul' at all. He used to preach at St Francis, Church of England, Batchelor, when I was part of the congregation in 1988.

There was no resident minister although the church was connected to The Church of the Good Shepherd (aka St Fred's of the carport) at Bees Creek. As I remember it, Brother Paul came once a month to preach and the services on the other Sundays were taken by different lay preachers from other Protestant denominations. Brother Paul converted to Catholicism and then we didn't see him anymore.

I wondered about his life before we knew him, and what happened afterwards. As the Church in the Northern Territory was under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Carpentaria from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and ministry in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs was carried out by the Bush Brothers, I thought I'd start there.

I discovered that R.A.F. Webb (Brother Paul) had written a history of the Bush Brothers entitled *Brothers in the sun: A history of the Bush Brotherhood*. This gave me his real name: Rex Alexander Francis Webb.

Armed with the correct name, I could then track him down via England & Wales Births 1837 – 2006, finding his birth in Middlesex in 1932. On the flyleaf of the book mentioned above it outlines his life before coming to Australia. He 'served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1955, attended Ely Theological College from 1955 to 1958 and was ordained deacon in 1958. He was priested in 1959 ... and served as curate of Holy Trinity Church, Millbrook, Southampton, from 1958 to 1960.'

In Find my past, his Sea Departure Card from England to Australia is dated 3 December 1960. His date of birth is given as 14 August 1932 and his occupation that of 'clerk in holy orders'. His address in the United Kingdom is given as "The Beeches", Micheldever Stn. NE Winchester. Hants, England.

The flyleaf information continues: 'He 'was a member of the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd from 1960 to 1974. He served as a Bush Brother in the parishes of Bourke and Brewarrina in NSW, Tennant Creek and Katherine in the NT and Winton in Queensland.'

Electoral Rolls give an indication of where Webb was once he was in Australia. In 1961 he is listed as Rev. Rex Alexander Francis Webb, Brotherhood House, Dubbo. He was registered to celebrate marriages. In the early part of 1963, he is a clergyman, at The Rectory, Brewarrina then later, a clerk at Box 42, Tennant Creek. By 1968 and 1972 he is a priest at St Paul's Anglican Rectory, Katherine. In 1977 he is a student at St Mark's College Townsville.



In his death notices he is called Fr. Paul Webb. The Reverend Doctor 'Paul' Rex Alexander Francis Webb, member of the Royal Air Force (UK), served in Egypt, Bush Brother, Anglican Priest, University Lecturer – James Cook University, Northern Territory University (CDU), Hospital Chaplain and Relief Military Chaplain, Author, Catholic Priest.

Evidence of his authorship is given in the previously mentioned *Brothers in the sun: A history of the Bush Brotherhood* as well as titles such as *Indonesian Christians and Their Political Parties 1923–1966. The Role of Partai Kristen Indonesia and Partai Katolik*,

*The Australian Burma Friendship Association* acknowledged his friendship and support to the people of Myanmar. I remember him often including the plight of the Karen people in his sermons.

An article in the *NT News* dated 12 September 2012 acknowledged that he was an 'ardent defender of basic human rights' and that he laboured 'tirelessly on behalf of migrants, refugees and detainees.' An example of his actions in this sphere was reported in the *NT News* on 20 September 2011 when three asylum seekers went missing as they attended church. While Webb denied knowledge of the Vietnamese fleeing, he did say that he would like to open the doors of the detention centre and set all detainees free. 'He visits Catholic detainees every week.' He had been ordained into the Catholic Priesthood in 2003.

Brother Paul (as I knew him) died from cardiac failure on 7 September 2012 at Royal Darwin Hospital, after being there for about three weeks.

## **BOOK REVIEW: Further reading on the life and times of a Catholic Priest**

If anyone is interested in the life and times of a Catholic Priest then I suggest you try to get a book *The Light of Other days* by Rev. Father J. McKEY.

I had no idea these priest were so busy. The book is a month by month Diary of everything that happened to the Diocese of Warwick, Qld and beyond.

The book names parishioners, all the young boys who entered the priesthood and the girls who became teachers, entered as Lay Missionaries etc.

Visiting Priests are named who came from overseas. Those who were sent to W.A. and everywhere else in Qld, N.Z. etc. Those who had died, some parishioners who married in the "The Priests House".

Mentioned are who won 1st place for best Floats in parades etc.

6000 people attended the Passion Play at Queen's Park.

Money and whole properties [Mrs O'Ragan is one named in 1966 pg 123] that were bequeathed to the Church.

List of Warwick Girls who joined the Sisters of Mercy from 1878 -1969

Priests who were ill and what hospital they were in.

First Sisters arrived in Warwick in 1874

Another List of Warwick girls who have joined Religious Orders - some went to New Zealand, others to all parts of Qld.

No Index, but a Treasure Trove of everything. Amazing.

## BOOK REVIEW by Ruth Sheridan

*Great trek across Australia: Milner droving pioneers* by Russell Pugh is a thoroughly researched and well-written history that relates the achievements of brothers Ralph and John Milner who were the first to find a droving route from Adelaide to Darwin in 1871.

The book concerns details of the droving expedition during which Ralph Milner's wife died and brother John was killed by natives at Attack Creek and the privations suffered when they were held up for several years by severe drought. Milner was also able to restock the supplies of the Overland Telegraph Line employees.

This is more than the story of their droving exploits. Pugh outlines the early life of the three brothers, their arrival in Australia and taking up of land at Colac in Victoria. The third brother, James, subsequently settled in New Zealand. Following his droving exploits, Ralph Milner moved to NZ to support his brother's widow and children. They married and had further family.

We learn of the other members of the droving party and their later lives. These included Ashwin, Brown, Kyrke, Lamb, Pybus, Thompson, Wooding, Charlie, and Fannie. In addition, there is a section on the search for the location of John Milner's grave.

The text is enlivened by many photos, both historical and contemporary. Many maps are provided to follow the route taken. It is clearly indicated when some of these show telegraph stations that hadn't yet been built when the party went through.

This is an excellent resource, filling a gap in Northern Territory history as well as being a useful family history.

## BOOK REVIEW by Ruth Sheridan

*Italy & Australia: an asymmetrical relationship* edited by Gianfranco Cresciani & Bruno Mascitelli, is a series of essays designed as the editors claim, 'to set straight some aspects of the Italian-Australian relationship.'

The opening essay outlines the history of the two countries and the different periods of Italian migration to Australia. The next looks at cultural relations after the Second World War. Australia's imperial obligations to Italian migrants, 1883 – 1940 are thoroughly presented. There follows Australian-Italian relations in World War II, Mussolini's Australian campaign of 1935 -1936 and trade relations.

This is a fairly academic read. Each essay has an extensive reference list. Biographical notes about the authors are included. There is an index present. This reader found it useful to clarify some misconceptions and illuminate some aspects of previously unknown Australian history.

For family historians, it could provide useful information about why ancestors came to Australia and their experiences depending on official policy.

## BURRUNDIE CEMETERY

Burrundie Cemetery is located at Latitude -13.518112      Longitude 131.705932 on

Mount Wells Rd. According to the NT Place Names Register the locality 'takes its name from the historic mining town of Burrundie which was surveyed by the South Australian Government in 1884 as the second town of the Territory after Palmerston (now Darwin). The town of Burrundie was centred on a railway reserve on the line between Palmerston (Darwin) and Pine Creek some 12 miles to the south. The Overland Telegraph Line staff were based there, as was a police station, a circuit court, and a hospital.'

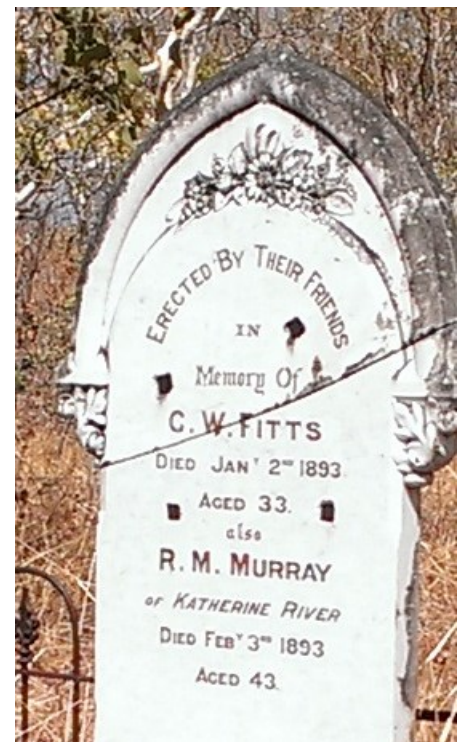
It is thanks to the work done by Vern O'Brien in his series of Cemetery Books published by the Genealogical Society NT that I can flesh out the stories of some of the people buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

There are several gravestones that record who is buried here. These include that of G.W. Fitts, R.M. Murray, and **Ruth Beckwith**. Sadly, signage has been erected about Beckwith (whose father was Station Master at Burrundie) which has incorrect information. It claims that she died of amoebic dysentery aged 6 months, but NT Birth, Death and Marriage records show that she was aged 6 years (24/02/1895 – 23/03/1901).



**George Weston Fitts** was the Postmaster and Station Master at Burrundie when he died aged 31 at Burrundie on 2 January 1893 according to the NT Genealogical Society's Pioneer Register, where details are drawn from the NT Death Index.

Fitts<sup>1</sup> had been working in the Port Augusta Telegraph Department until his appointment at Burrundie 1 March 1892. He had married Charlotte Ann Jaques at Port Augusta in 1883 and had at least 3 children at the time of his death.



**Robert MacKellar Murray** was born in Adelaide on 12 June 1849. He married Jane Louisa Hammond in North Adelaide in 1871. They arrived in the NT in 1873 and he was employed at Katherine as Telegraph Station manager in 1875. He died at Burrundie Hospital on 1 February 1893 while on sick leave from Katherine from complications of a long illness.

According to Vern O'Brien, the following people were buried in an area several miles from the place now known as Burrundie Cemetery:

Name	Death Date/Place	Cause of Death	Notes
Ah Lin aka Ah Sun	01/09/1885		Labourer
Macklin, William <sup>2</sup>	03/04/1886	Blood loss after arm amputation	Miner
Carpenter, William	18/09/1888	Infant, 7 mths	
Ah Kwong	10/11/1888	Labourer	
Gin Fong	29/11/1888		
Ford, Stanley	17/12/1888	Burrundie Hospital Kidney disease	Labourer OT Line
Cleary, Mary Ellen aka Elleso	17/01/1889	Childbirth – twins	Burial Palmerston Cemetery
Ah Koon	18/01/1889	Severed legs	Labourer
Wecklin, Charles aka Wechlin	05/05/1889	Burrundie Hospital Chloroform overdose	Labourer
Cheong Wong	14/06/1889		
Young, Tom	27/06/1889	Crushed legs	Labourer
Ah Lim	02/08/1889		Labourer
Lin Hen Ah	17/08/1889		Labourer
Johnston, Sydney	09/09/1889	Burrundie Hospital Complications after leg amputation	Labourer
Milward, Joseph	11/10/1889	Mutilated testicles	Railway ganger
Chering	09/02/1890		

Other people buried at Burrundie Cemetery died as a result of accidents, disease, lack of access to medical assistance, complications during surgery, assault, childbirth and natural causes.

Examples of these are:

### Accidents

The *North Australian* dated 6 October 1888 reports that ‘a man named **Sydney Johnston** died at the Burrundie Hospital last week. Deceased met with an accident by which one of his legs was broken, and his medical attendant found it necessary to amputate the injured limb. The operation was successfully performed, but mortification afterwards set in and caused his death.’

According to the *North Australian* newspaper account 12 January 1889 ‘A Chinaman named **Ah Koon** died at Burrundie on January 8th from the effects of an accident at Deary's cutting between Burrundie and the Union. Deceased was engaged pushing a heavy wagon up the wagon-rails when he slipped and fell, the wagon passing over his legs. The left leg was completely severed from the body below the knees, and the right nearly so. The ganger and others did their best to staunch the flow of blood, but the man succumbed about an hour after the accident while being conveyed to Burrundie.

**Wong Yum**, Chinese born ca. 1853 was a miner who died at Pine Creek on 11 August 1911 when he was thrown from a buggy. His address at the time of his death was near Burrundie. He is possibly buried at Pine Creek.

**Goon Tack** aka **Goon Tak** was 40-year-old a miner from Canton, China who died when hit by a fall of rock at Mount Wells Tin mine on 23 January 1914.

An **Unknown Chinese miner** died in a mining accident on 24 March 1917 and is buried at Burrundie Cemetery.



An **Unknown Indigenous Australian** in the employ of McGregor died on 22 June 1914 at Burrundie when he was thrown from a horse.

**Ah Sue**, a Chinese miner born circa 1860, who had been in Australia 32 years, died at Mount Wells on 19 June 1917, from shock incurred after a mining accident.

**Tom** aka **Thomas Young**, a labourer, born ca. 1841, died at Burrundie on 27 June 1889.

## Disease

**Nong Kow** aka **Wong Kow**, gardener, born circa 1854, died of fever at Deane's Camp near Burrundie ca. 23 December 1908.

**Minnie Lambert** (nee Simpson) wife of Frederick Lambert (married 1889) died from an 'abcess on the brain' on 19 November 1889 at Burrundie.

According to the *Evening Journal* (Adelaide, SA: 1869 - 1912), Monday 10 December 1888, page 3 **Stanley Ford** recently from Borroloola, and formerly employed in the overland telegraph construction, attempted suicide at Burrundie by cutting his throat, He, however, died of kidney disease on Friday<sup>3</sup>.

The *South Australian Government Gazette* describes him as 59 years of age, 5ft. 9 in. high, dark hair and whiskers, slight build. He is buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

## Complications during surgery

**Charles Wechlin** aka **Wecklin**, a labourer, born circa 1867 died during an operation from an overdose of chloroform on 5 April 1889 at Burrundie Hospital. He was described as a native of Germany, 5' 6" tall, fair complexion and hair of slight build who had been in the NT for about a year.

## Assault / Murder

**Song Hee** aka **Song Ah** aka **Ah Song**, a miner born circa 1849 at Singapore was murdered at Knight's Creek approximately 2 February 1914. He had arrived in Australia circa 1874. The *NT Times and Gazette* reported that his body was found in a humpy about 2 miles south of Deane's Camp & about 200 yards from the main road.'

**Unknown Chinese** was speared to death at Deane's Camp on 6 February 1914. His burial place is probably Burrundie Cemetery.

## Lack of access to medical assistance

**Joseph Milward**, according to the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, Friday 18 October 1889, page 2 'was employed on the railway line, at Burrundie, [and] had some quarrel with a Chinaman. [He] received a vicious kick in the groin. He was taken to the Burrundie Hospital in great agony and was quite unfit to travel. At the Hospital, it was impossible for the man to obtain proper medical assistance, Dr. Ternau being stationed in Palmerston, and the poor fellow, whose agony might have been relieved, and whose life could in all reasonable probability have been saved, became another victim to the callous and cold-blooded action of the authorities, who most im-

properly and unnecessarily removed the Medical Officer from the Burrundie Hospital.' Milward is buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

Missing from these lists are the **Infants and Children** who died young. These include:

**Dorothy Jean Grayland Bird** aka **Dorothy Jean Grayling Bird** born in Wallaroo, SA on 12 January 1900 to parents George Bird and Mary Grayland Andrews died aged 2 at Burrundie on 10 February 1902. Her father was a district foreman. They left the area by 1907.

**Ruth Beckwith** (already mentioned).

**William Mackie** born circa 1885 died of dysentery at Burrundie on 4 March 1886, aged 7 months.

**William Carpenter** (already mentioned), son of Christopher Carpenter and Elizabeth Wood-  
en, died at Burrundie on 18 September 1888.

**Priscilla Barbara Jephcott**, daughter of Ernest Jephcott and Priscilla Barber, was born 26 August 1897. She died at Burrundie 6 October 1897. Her father was in turn engineer, fitter, and district foreman in the railways.

### Other Causes of Death

**Mary Ellen** aka **Elleso Cleary (nee Toohey)**, wife of John, died at Burrundie on 17 January 1889 from complications of **childbirth**. Twins were born on the same day that she died – one, named Ellen Margaret Ann Cleary survived until 14 February 1889. There is no record of the name of the other twin. The family were living at Pine Creek where husband John was a ganger for O & E Millar's gang. Mary Ellen rests

at the Palmerston Cemetery in grave 52 and her twin in grave 54.



The words on the grave read:

*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord – of your charity pray for the soul of - Ellen Mary – the beloved wife of – John CLEARY – died at Burrundie 17<sup>th</sup> January 1889 – aged 26 years – R.I.P.*

**Hen Ah Lyn** aka **Yee Ah Lyn** born ca. 1839, a labourer living at Burrundie, died on 11 August 1889 at Burrundie. He was buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

**James Seymour** aka **Segman**, is described by the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), Thursday 15 July 1915, page 14 as aged 77, about 5ft. 10in, high,

dark complexion, medium build, grey hair, a miner, ' native of New Zealand, died February 9, 1915' (at Burrundie). He is believed to have died of **natural causes**. He had lived in Australia for 42 years.

### Unknown Cause of Death

Ethnic Chinese, **Ah Chew**, was a carpenter born ca. 1864. He was a carpenter who died at Burrundie on 5 July 1890 and is probably buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

**Lee Sam**, also Chinese and a miner, is believed to have died on the train at Burrundie on 28 July 1903, aged 64 years. His usual place of residence was Boomleera Siding<sup>4</sup>.

Chinese man, **Moo Pow** aka **Ah Pow**, born ca. 1857 was a miner who died at Mt Wells on 18 December 1902. He is possibly buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

**Fong Gin** aka **Fong Gun**, born ca. 1853 died at Burrundie on 29 November 1888.

**Ah Lin** aka **Ah Sun** died near Burrundie on 1 September 1885. The *South Australian Government Gazette* had a notice from Coroner Nash published in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* dated 12 December 1885 stating that 'there was no need for holding an inquest.'

**Wing Choong** aka **Wing Chung** aka **Wong Choong**, a labourer, born ca. 1856 died at Burrundie on 14 June 1889 at Burrundie.

**Ah Yon** aka **Ah You**, a Chinese miner born ca. 1866 died at Deane's Camp on 28 December 1907. He is probably buried at Burrundie Cemetery.

**Lou Foo**, a Chinese man, died at Burrundie on 15 March 1927.

**William Mackie**, a miner from Perthshire, Scotland, aged 45 died at Burrundie on 3 April 1886. He was buried at Macarthur River near Borroloola. A **William Mackin** (see Cemetery Book 1, p.12) or **William Macklin** (Pioneer Register quoting source as Cemetery Book No.1) died in March 1886 at Burrundie and is believed to be buried at Lot 205 Burrundie. O'Brien speculates that the earlier burials could have occurred at Lot 205, within the town across McMinn's Creek to the north-west of the railway station.

### References

1 NT Death register records him as Fith.

2 See comments later in article

3 At Burrundie Hospital on 7 December 1888.

4 Beside the Mt Wells Rd, between Spring Hill and Union Reef.

### Sources

NT Place Names Register

NT Births, Deaths & Marriages

SA Births, Deaths & Marriages

Northern Territory Cemetery Book No. 1 / compiled by Vernon T. O'Brien, published 1994 by The Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

Pioneer Register / The Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

*South Australian Government Gazette*

*The North Australian*

*The Evening Journal* (Adelaide)

*The Northern Times & Gazette*

## **Did you know Tony Thorpe aka Antony James Thorpe (1959-2017)?**

The Genealogical Society has a number of photographs and certificates which belonged to him. We would like to pass them on to family. From my research and Thorpe's documents and photos, I have compiled a short biography.

Antony (Tony) James Thorpe was born on 30 June 1959 to parents Alfred James Thorpe and Florence Pearl nee Fuller. According to the baptism card in the collection, he was baptized on 4 August 1959. One of the photos in the collection is captioned 'Tony December 1963 4 ½ years old.' A confirmation card is dated 1971 Goondiwindi.

Electoral rolls for 1977 and 1980 show Tony and his parents living at 26 Queensland Rd, Casino. He is described as a student. A photo album inscribed 'for my mum 'n dad - Borrooloola photos, a selection during 1982 by Tony Thorpe' indicate that he was teaching at Borrooloola in the Northern Territory at this time. Another album has colour photos of aboriginals and landscape with some captioned on the back such as 'Five mile on the McArthur River where I caught that shark' and 'The Dinny Family.'

The next I found of Tony Thorpe was an entry in LinkedIn dated 2016 where he describes himself as a Lecturer – Preparation for Tertiary Success at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. He is living in Gunn, a suburb of Palmerston. He acknowledges his 'battle with leukaemia.'

He also mentions working part time for the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges & Education. He says he is keen to get back to the Minecraft Maths Project and also mentions the Xanadu Maths Facebook page. He mentions his study of theology by distance education through Charles Sturt University, hoping to complete Hebrew 1 and Introduction to Theology in 2017 which would complete the study he had begun in 2013. He mentions the novel he is writing about Rosie Waddibungera, too.

Thorpe was unable to complete his plans, dying on 22 September 2017.

The rest of the collection includes certificates, documents and photographs from his mother's life. Some of the names mentioned are: William Gladstone Moore, Ida Mary Thorpe, Frank Joseph Thorpe, Florence Pearl Fuller, Lydia Lavina Fuller (nee McGufficke), Glen Norman Fuller, Marlene Carol Thorpe and Bernard Francis Wilson.

Ruth Sheridan