

# ST ALBANS AVENUE OF HONOUR



## REMEMBERING 1918

Joseph Ribarow  
2018

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**Front cover**

Images of St Albans' volunteers who served in WW1.

*Lest We Forget*

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## INTRODUCTION

The St Albans Avenue of Honour is part of long-forgotten local history from a century ago, when St Albans was a small and dispersed rural district that was starting to form a village identity in the post-Federation decade. The Overnewton Estate subdivision from 1905 had brought in new settlers so that by 1910 there were at least 28 farms in St Albans. The Mechanics Institute Hall and Library was built in 1906. By 1910 St Alban the Martyr Church of England was built and the Presbyterian Church in 1912. George and Edward Mottram took over the general store in 1912 when Mr. Aylmer retired. The quarry was opened and was about the only non-farming work available at the time. Rumors were that a regional abattoir was likely to be located near St Albans and some land speculation occurred because of that possibility, but it never happened. The population of St Albans was about 200 people. St Albans was a small and quiet place and there was no reason to believe it would change significantly.

On 4 August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany and next day Australia declared it would join the "mother country" in defending her shores. Australia's Prime Minister Mr. Joseph Cook, offered an expeditionary force of up to 20,000 and estimated that up to 40,000 partially-trained troops could be available if necessary. This was the start of Australia's involvement in the First World War. The Navy was the first of the forces to engage with German shipping in the Pacific in September, while the first Australian and New Zealand troops landed in Alexandria, Egypt, in December, and together formed the Anzacs. The spirit of the Anzacs at Gallipoli has of course become central to Australia remembrance of the horrors of war and the bravery of the men and women who fought for the national cause in defence of democracy and freedom.

The men and women of St Albans responded to the call as did many thousands throughout the country. Although it is hard to quantify, perhaps one in five or six of the families in St Albans answered the call with a member who enlisted for overseas service – it was mostly men from the area who served overseas though some women also went through the nursing units. Other people did war work from their homes and daily lives, whether through supporting Red Cross efforts, buying war bonds, knitting socks or raising funds to buy tobacco for "the boys at the front". The war in Europe ended on 11 November 1918 when Germany surrendered. Australia had sent about 330,000 troops: over 59,000 were killed, 150,000 were wounded, and 4,000 captured as prisoners.

The Australian troops started returning in 1918 and the people of St Albans, as elsewhere, welcomed back the survivors and decided to establish a permanent memorial to the fallen and the surviving volunteers. Alexander Dickson who

was with the St Albans Progress Association, wrote to Keilor Council about planting an Avenue of Honour in Victoria Crescent for personnel who had served overseas, and requested Council's assistance with tree-guards and name plates etc, to be used in connection with the avenue. The proposal was agreed to and completed.

Unfortunately, over the last century nearly all of this history has been lost and forgotten – the trees, the name plates, and nearly all the names – until just one name remained in local memory and that was Alex Gustav Menesdorffer.

The St Albans History Society raised the subject of the forgotten Avenue in 2010 through the Brimbank Leader when Jack Sheridan and George Power were interviewed. They wanted to have the avenue replanted to honour the lives of St Albans residents lost in various wars and to acknowledge the social history of the place. They identified that the avenue lined the western side of Victoria Crescent. George Power, who grew up on the crescent, had distinct recollections of several trees with picket guards and name plates commemorating local soldiers from World War 1. Water had been the biggest problem at the time because residents relied on tank water. The trees were kept alive for decades and were still there in 1960. Regarding the memorial plaques, George Power remembered only one name – Alex Gustave Menesdorffer.<sup>1</sup>

Because St Albans in 1918 was mostly under Keilor Council, people have looked there for details of the missing names of war veterans. According to Alie Missen's "Sydenham Memorial Moments" there were two Honour Boards held at the old Keilor municipal offices with WW1 names. The smaller one of these boards includes 22 names and at least 15 of these appear to be St Albans residents of that era, so this could have been the basis for the St Albans' Avenue of Honour. The other names on this board appear to be Sydenham residents. The logic for them to have been included in a joint list is that Sydenham and St Albans were both part of the Maribyrnong Riding of the old Keilor municipality.

Searches of newspaper reports and historic images of the area give some clues. The Avenue of Honour trees were definitely planted along Victoria Crescent between East Esplanade and Arthur Street. In the 1930s there were 9 established trees on the western side of the crescent, confirming that some of the trees had already perished in the first decade. In the 1940s the avenue trees did not extend all the way to Arthur Street and there were about 7 established trees on the western side of the crescent. In the 1950-60s there were about 12 trees on the western side so replanting must have occurred.

What happened to the nameplates? Nobody

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<sup>1</sup> Information from article by Paula Maud, "Past Traced for St Albans Avenue" Brimbank Leader 25 March 2010.

knows. One possibility is that they were removed for safekeeping and then lost when the road was being rebuilt, as happened with the Braybrook Council's own Soldiers' Avenue of Honor:

*"The name plates which were taken from the trees are now in the shire engineer's office. The book, in which the names and positions of trees were entered, has not yet been found."*<sup>1</sup>

A similar thing might have happened on the Crescent as in 1932 there was talk with Keilor about the bad state of the road when Cr. James Henry Stevens mentioned that:

*"Victoria Crescent was in a bad state. There were numerous pot-holes in it. This road, he said, was a feeder to several other streets and was extensively used. He would like to see it repaired. It contained more houses than any other street, therefore more rates were collected; also trees were planted there making it the Avenue of Honor."*<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, Stevens' motion to have two loads of road metal delivered for the residents to repair the street was defeated, because Council was concerned about the legal consequences of paying for the repair of private street schemes.

The matter was revisited in 1940 when Keilor Council was beating the bounds and at St Albans Mr. McKechnie criticised new roads including Victoria Crescent:

*"He explained that the St. Albans people were desirous of continuing the trees comprising the Avenue of Honor as far as Arthur Street. He said if the council would provide the guards, residents would provide the trees, and undertake to keep them in order."*<sup>3</sup>

This time the request may have been successful as by the mid 1950s there were about 18 trees along the crescent with gaps, so some replanting must have occurred, but it is impossible to know if any retained name plates. One assumes not.

This collection of articles is about the St Albans' Avenue of Honour from 1918. The names on Keilor's honour board for the Great War have been reviewed and 16 people were identified as the likely candidates for the original Avenue of Honour. The names were then checked against National Archives of Australia records, St Albans State School enrollment records, and the TROVE digitized newspaper records.

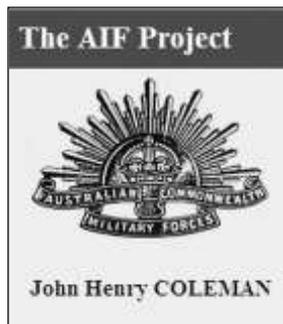
There were other people with local connections who served overseas and were not on the 1918 honour board, probably because they were no longer living in the district. These names include Thomas St Albans Padley, William McElwee, Steven McIntyre, Herbert Henry Parry, and the Makin brothers (James, George, and Percival). There could be others.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 August 1934 p4

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 13 May 1932 p2

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 October 1940 p7

## COLEMAN, John Henry



John Henry Coleman (1889-1980) enlisted in 1915 at age 27 years. He embarked from Melbourne in November 1915 and served overseas as a driver with Field Artillery Brigade 2, Reinforcement 12. He was discharged in June 1919 and was

awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and Victory Medal. He returned to Australia on 9 March 1919.

The Coleman family came to St Albans circa 1905 and is another of the pioneer families about whom there is little recorded, especially about their personal lives. Their first listing in the local papers was in 1905 with the notification about the allotment of Block #11 of the Overnewton Estate to "H. Colman" of Glenloth, who was most probably Mr. Henry Coleman of Glenloth.<sup>4</sup> This selection was so far west along Taylors Road that it was in the Rockbank Estate. Later records show that Henry Coleman and his family settled closer to St Albans at blocks #41 and #42, which were immediately west of Malcolm King's farm on the corner of Taylors Road and Kings Road. Some of the local history recollections are somewhat ambiguous as it appears that people have referred to the father and son interchangeably.

Henry Coleman had married Mary Cameron in 1886. She was born about 1862 to Cosmo Cameron and Mary Morrison of Dowling Forest by Ballarat. Henry and Mary lived for a time near Wycheproof where some of their children were born. They had four children:

- William Henry was born and died in 1886.
- Mary Ellen, known as Nellie, was born in 1887 and died on 13 October 1948. Little is known about her personal life. She came to St Albans at the age of 18 and thus did not attend the local school. She trained in music and passed some of her theoretical and practical examinations in 1913. She used her musical skills to play the organ at the Presbyterian church services and also at weddings that were held there and where she was known as "a friend of everybody". She was also good at baking biscuits – she won prizes for jellies and biscuits in 1928 and won the top award at the Royal Melbourne Show in 1937.
- John Henry Coleman, known as Jack, was born in 1888 in Wycheproof. He was aged 17 years when he arrived in St

<sup>4</sup> Glenloth is near Wycheproof.

Albans and started working as a farmer. He joined the Australian Imperial Force in July 1915 and served overseas as a driver with the 4th Division Artillery. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. He was discharged in June 1919.

- Sarah Margaret "Babs" was born in 1891 and died on 23 February 1961, aged 69 years, and is buried at Footscray. She came to St Albans at the age of 14 years and thus did not attend the local school. Nothing is known about her personal life.

Henry Coleman was a Keilor councilor from 1911 to 1925. He was a founder of the St Albans Presbyterian Church that was built about 1912.

Jack Coleman never married. He attended the social life of the district through the church and the social functions at the Mechanics Institute Hall. Colin Missen recalls that transport was a problem in the early years and that Jack would allow neighbours the use of his horse and cart if they needed to go shopping.

Jack Coleman was probably a member of the Loyal St Albans Rechabite Tent.<sup>1</sup> Meetings were sometimes held at the home of William Hounslow and other members of the Tent included Alice Errington and James Blount. They would arrange meetings for young people and encourage them to adopt temperance.<sup>2</sup>

Locals recall that Jack Coleman managed the old family poultry farm and ran a few cows as well, but the full extent of the farm operation in its latter stages is forgotten. Jack was unfortunate enough to sometimes lose a number of fowls when some thief came in the night and stole them. This had happened to other poultry farmers in the district so it was not an isolated case and must have been a frustration.

Jack Coleman acquired title to the property in 1968 and at that stage the area was still open farming land. The old Coleman selection was still mostly open land in the mid 1970s when Les King's neighbouring property was being sold and subdivided and the new residential development was about to expand past Kings Park Estate. The Burnside Heights development started in the 1990s and is now a thriving neighbourhood with over 6,000 people.

John Henry Coleman was the last of the three siblings to die, on 6 March 1980, at the age of 94 years. He came to St Albans in 1905 as a teenager, so had made a contribution to the district for all his adult life. Surprisingly little is known about the family despite their long residency.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 5 June 1926

<sup>2</sup> The temperance pledge by the Band of Hope society was: I promise by Divine Assistance to abstain from all intoxicating liquors as beverages and to discountenance all the causes and practices of intemperance.

## DEAR, Elias Edward

Elias Dear (1899-1972) enlisted in 1916 and served with the 5th Battalion 22nd Reinforcements at Ypres, Belgium, where his father was killed.

Was Elias a little parsimonious with the truth? His AIF enlisting document states he was born in Brunswick, Victoria, circa 1897, but the genealogy records suggest otherwise. Elias Bowles Dear was born on 4 March 1899 in Brentwood, Middlesex, England, the oldest of five children. His parents were Elias W. Dear (1880-1915) and Emily Fanny Bowles (1879-1914). The SS Norseman passenger list of January 1914 for departees heading from London to Australia indicates that Elias Dear was a 16-year-old farm labourer travelling on his own. He was later known as Elias Edward Dear.

Elias enlisted with the AIF on 1 July 1916 and gave his permanent address in Australia as being c/o Mr. J. Evans<sup>3</sup> of "St. Aubans, Victoria". Elias served with the 5th Battalion, 22nd Reinforcement. His unit embarked from Melbourne on 25 October 1916 and was at Ypres in 1917. He was wounded in action in September 1917 with a gunshot wound penetrating his lung and left arm. They were serious injuries that required surgery and he was assessed to have total incapacity. He returned to Australia 24 January 1918 and was discharged 11 April 1918. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

It's unusual to note that his mother died in England in October 1914 and that his father enlisted in March 1915, served in France, and was killed on 23 April 1915 at Zonnebeke, Ypres, Belgium. Might these events have been the catalysts for Elias junior to enlist from Australia?

In 1920 Elias Dear married Vera Loveday Warren. She was born in Kaniva, Victoria, in 1900 to Charles James Warren and Agnes Mcnay. In 1923 Elias and Vera Dear were living in Truganini Street in Carnegie. Their daughter Audrey Joyce Dear was born 4 January 1923.

Elias Edward Dear died in 1972 at Heidelberg, at age 74 years. Vera Loveday Dear nee Warren died in 1977 at Bentleigh at age 77 years. It is difficult to prove a substantive link with St Albans, but he was definitely a WW1 veteran.



<sup>3</sup> It's not clear who he was, perhaps Samuel James Evans.

## McCRAE, Alexander

Alexander McCrae (1879-1948) enlisted in 1916 and served in France with the AIF 29th and 5th Battalion. He was born in 1879 at Baringhup West, Maldon, Victoria, to Alexander McCrae snr and Margaret O'Donohue.

Alexander McCrae senior was born about 1827 in Inverness-shire, Scotland, the son of Donald McCrae and Mary Chisholm, and emigrated in 1854, which was the gold rush era.

Margaret O'Donohue was born about 1845, the daughter of Timothy O'Donohue and Margaret Murphy.

Alexander McCrae and Margaret O'Donohue married about 1870 and gave birth to about 10 children between 1871 and 1887, all born at Maldon: Mary (1871-1896), Margaret (1872), Ann (1874), William (1875-1878), Catherine (1877), Alexander (1879-1948), Cathleen Cecelia (1879-1948), Honora (1881-1945), Ellen (1883-1949), and Cornelius (1887).

Alexander senior started working as a miner and ended up as a farmer, a fairly normal transition for that era of settlement. He died on 5 January 1906 at the age of 79 years, so he had been a colonial pioneer for over 50 years:

*"A well known and highly respected resident of the Maldon district, in the person of Mr. Alexander McCrae, senr., farmer, of Nuggetty, expired at his residence on Monday evening, at the age of 79 years. The deceased, who was born at Inverness, Scotland, had been ailing for some time, the cause of death being bronchitis and heart failure. He arrived in Victoria about 1854, and after mining for a short period took up land at Baringhup West, and subsequently at Nuggetty, where he successfully carried on farming pursuits up to the time of his death. By his unassuming manner and sterling qualities, he was esteemed by all. A widow, five daughters and two sons, are left to mourn their loss."*<sup>1</sup>

He must have been successful as a farmer because he left an estate of £2,188 in realty and £435 personally to his wife and children.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander jnr enlisted in 1 May 1916 at age 36 years. He was single and was listed as being a mechanic with expertise in agricultural machinery. At this stage his father was already deceased and his next of kin was his mother, Margaret McCrae, of St Albans on the Bendigo line.

Alexander served overseas in France as a Private with the AIF 29th and 5th Battalion. In June 1918 he was injured and hospitalised suffering from trench fever. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Margaret McCrae nee O'Donoghue probably moved to St Albans after her husband died in 1906 and was staying with her daughter Margaret at Lota More, which was probably the home of the

Beck family which they had rented out for the time they were living in Oakleigh. Margaret died on 22 September 1918 at age 73 years:

*"On the 22nd September, at her residence, Lota-More, St. Albans, Margaret, widow of the late Alexander McCrae, Baringhup West and Maldon; dearly loved mother of Mrs. J. Bahen, Mrs. H. M. Woodcock, Mrs. F. Watson, Lilian, Ann, Nora, Alexander (A.I.F., on active service), and Cornelius; aged 73 years. May her soul rest in peace."*<sup>3</sup>

It is not clear if Alexander McCrae jnr was living in St Albans after he returned from the war, as by 1919 he was at Burewand Street Sunshine before moving elsewhere.

In 1920 Alexander "Bay" McCrae applied for a selection on the Soldier Settlers "Elderslie Station" Scheme; it was near the South Australian border. He was one of 35 applicants allotted a share of 37,000 acres of land on 8 April 1920. A commemorative stone at the Langkoop Memorial Hall records the names of all the successful applicants.

In 1923 Alexander McCrae married Hilda Constance McNamara. She was born in 1898 in Poolaijelo, South Australia. Her parents were Michael McNamara (1856-1936) and Eliza Jones (1867-1928). The father's family is traced back to 1825 in Ireland – they came to Australia prior to 1856 and lived around Adelaide and Naracoorte. Eliza Jones was born in Casterton Victoria about 1867. Alexander and Hilda McCrae raised two sons and three daughters.

Alexander McCrae died in June 1948 at Dergholm and was buried at Bairnsdale in the Presbyterian section.

THIS COMMEMORATIVE STONE RECORDS THE ALLOTMENT OF 37,100 ACRES OF LAND, THEN KNOWN AS ELDERSLIE ESTATE, TO WORLD WAR I VETERANS ON 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1920

### THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS WERE:

ANSON A	KEALY A
BENNETT J	LAMOND A
CAMPBELL M	MACKAY F
CAPLEHORN W	MARTINICH P
CATCHLOVE K	MASON A
CLEARY J	McBAIN P
CRABTREE D	McCRAE A
CROUCH H	McDONALD J
DAVIS F	McGREGOR A
DOUGLAS W	MILLARD W
DUFF J	MINTO C
FALCONER F	MURRAY J
FALCONER J	PEACH J
FUTERIEAL R	PHILLIPS A
GRUMMETT C	TURNBULL A
HANDLEY F	VICKERY M
HUNTLY V	VIRGO P
JOHNSON R	

<sup>1</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 18 January 1906 p5

<sup>2</sup> Weekly Times 15 September 1906 p23

<sup>3</sup> Age 23 September 1954 p1

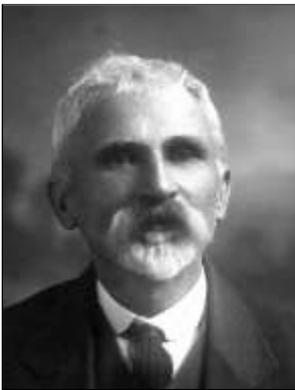
## MENESDORFFER, Alexander



Alexander Gustave Benjamin Menesdorffer (1891-1974) enlisted in 1916 and served with the 10th Infantry Battalion in France. He was discharged in July 1918 and awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal for service to his country. His parents were Alexander Ladislois Menesdorffer and Esther Jane Farmer who came to St Albans about 1900 and settled in Elizabeth Street.

Alexander Ladislois Menesdorffer was born in Gollnetz, Hungary, on 26 January 1856. His father was Tobious Menesdorffer and his mother was Ellen Norah Nedezky.

Esther Jane Farmer was born on 18 June 1857 in Richmond and grew up in Essendon. Her father was Thomas Stafford Farmer from Leicestershire, England, and her mother was Margaret Jane Cartmill from Co. Armagh, Ulster UK (Ireland)



It is not known when Esther Farmer became acquainted with Alexander Menesdorffer had trained as a mining engineer and had immigrated to New Zealand before settling in Australia, moving around Geelong and some suburbs of Melbourne. They married on 12 November 1888 at the Church of England in Moor Street,

Fitzroy. Alexander

The Menesdorffer children included Gladys (born c.1888), Bertha Malvina (1889), Alexander Gustave Benjamin (1891), Thomas Victor Stafford (1894), and Charles Henry (1901).

Alexander Gustave Benjamin Menesdorffer, the older son, was born 29 November 1891 and went to the St Albans primary school in 1901 and left in 1906. In 1914 he was working as a wood machinist for Cox and Co. of Racecourse Road, Newmarket, and was operating a wood shaping machine when he severed a couple of fingertips and sued for damages. He was awarded £150.<sup>1</sup>

He enlisted in Victoria for service in WW1 but was rejected because of the missing fingertips, so he went interstate and tried again. He enlisted in October 1916 in South Australia under the name Alexander Gustave Menesdorff and was accepted. He embarked overseas in December 1916 and served with the 10th Infantry Battalion in France

where he received shrapnel wounds to his hand resulting in losing a couple of fingers. He returned to Australia in May 1918 and was discharged in July 1918 in South Australia. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his service to his country.

After returning from the war he married Myrtle Alice Selway in 1919 at the Church of Saint Mary



Magdalene in Adelaide. It seems that once moving to South Australia, Alexander adopted the Menesdorff surname and the family there has been known by that name ever since. Alexander and Myrtle's children included Clive Thomas George<sup>2</sup> (1918-2010), Cavaliera Mary (1921-2012), Dorothy Myrtle<sup>3</sup> (1924-2012) and

Stella (1926-1927). Clive and Mary attended the St Albans primary school between 1925 and 1927.

At this time Alexander was working as a mechanic. He is probably lucky to have survived the 1920s, because in November 1925 he went to hospital for treatment after feeling a severe pain in his leg and suffering from heart trouble – he was told that he had been bitten by a snake.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1930s he became the Secretary of the St Albans Unemployment Committee and wasn't afraid of being outspoken. It was the 1930s and the Depression was impinging on many people's lives – there was very little government support available for the many people who lost their jobs. In April 1931 Alexander openly criticized the Keilor Shire Council:

*"The St. Albans Unemployed strongly object to the proposal of some Keilor Shire Councilors to hold the Presidential dinner this year. In the opinion of the committee they consider it a disgrace in times such as these to spend money on one hilarious night when there are hundreds of children within the Shire of Keilor half starved, half clothed, bootless and in general misery."*<sup>5</sup>

Alexander Gustave Menesdorffer has a special place in St Albans history because he is the only serviceman whose name is remembered as being included in the St Albans Avenue of Honour.<sup>6</sup> Records of the Avenue of Honour have been lost and the details almost completely forgotten, but it was a row of trees planted along the western side of Victoria Crescent. George Power, who grew up on the Victoria Crescent, remembers there being trees with picket guards and plaques commem-

<sup>1</sup> Argus 3 December 1914

<sup>2</sup> Clive Thomas George enlisted in 1940.

<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Myrtle enlisted at Adelaide: service number 107446, place of birth Lismore. Details not available.

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 November 1925 p7

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 April 1931

<sup>6</sup> George Power, Brimbank Leader 25 March 2010

orating local soldiers who served in World War I. Maybe he remembers Menesdorffer's name because at the time it was probably unusual for an Australian avenue of honour to include such a German-sounding name.<sup>1</sup> Residents kept the trees alive for decades and they were still there in the 1960s but no one remembers exactly when the memorial plates disappeared.<sup>2</sup> Alexander Menesdorffer's name is included in the Keilor Old Shire Hall Honour Roll (First World War).

Alexander and his young family were in St Albans during the 1920s and two of the children, Clive and Mary, attended the St Albans primary school. The family returned to South Australia in the 1930s and later they moved to Port Noarlunga.

Clive Mensdorff became a partner in a small commercial net fishing business. He enlisted for WW2 service in October 1940 at Noarlunga, South Australia, and by 1944 was serving with a tank unit in Darwin about the time that it was bombed by the Japanese and was injured in one of the Japanese bombing raids. He may have been the sole survivor of his platoon and spent about two years in the Repatriation Hospital recovering. He also had an A class electrical license and did the wiring in a lot of fishing boats in the 1960s. He married Audrey Ruth Tugwell in 1947 and they had three children: Lynette, Daryl, and David. Clive died on 22 March 2010 at Kingscote, Kangaroo Island.

Mary Menesdorff was born on 31 October 1921 at Elsternwick but grew up around Adelaide and went to Unley High. She followed in her grandmother's footsteps by becoming a seamstress. In 1941 she married Murray Fitzpatrick who was in the Air Force. They moved to Strathmore in Sydney and Mary worked with a group of women repairing the parachutes of Australian airmen. After the war, Mary and Murray moved to Fitzroy in Melbourne and Murray worked as a painter with the Aeronautical Research Laboratories at Fisherman's Bend. They later moved to Reservoir. They raised three children: Brendan, Keryn, and Stephen. Mary died in 18 May 2012 at the Maffra Hospital at age 90.

Alexander Gustave Menesdorff died on 16 January 1974 aged 83 years at the St Vincents Hospital in Adelaide and his body was cremated at Centennial Park, Pasadena. Alice Myrtle Menesdorff née Selway died on 12 September 1980 the age of 85 years and was buried at Torrensville in Adelaide. #

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<sup>1</sup> The German-Australian Aliens of Militarism website identifies him as being born in Austria. Wilhelm Frederick Stein of St Albans experienced a reaction to his German background and his brother-in-law Hermann George Schieferdecker changed his name to Henry George Decker when he enlisted in the Navy.

<sup>2</sup> Brimbank Leader 25 March 2010

## MOTTRAM, George Bingham

George Bingham Mottram (1892-1951) enlisted in 1915 and served with the 46th Battalion. He was wounded in action in September 1916 via a severe gunshot injury to the thigh. He was discharged in May 1917 and was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

George's parents were Edward and Maria Mottram who migrated from England. Edward Mottram senior was born c.1861 in Rusholme, Lancashire England. Maria Mottram nee Bingham was born 1859 at Darnall, Yorkshire. They married on 18 September 1884 at Chorlton upon Medlock, St Saviour, Lancashire, England. It is not known when they migrated to Australia. Their children included:

- Thomas Edward (1887-1887).
- Edward (1889-1972) was born in Brunswick. In 1920 he married Frances Alice May Robinson at St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church; she was the daughter of Catherine and James Robinson who was the local station master.<sup>3</sup> Edward died in 1972 at Bendigo, aged 83 years. Frances died in 1977 at the age of 81 years.
- George Bingham (1892-1951) was born in Brunswick. He and his brother ran the local grocery store during 1912. George is said to have served with the military 1914-1920; he enlisted on 28 July 1915, at age 23 years and 8 months. He worked as a bolt inspector with H. V. McKay. It appears that he never married.

George Mottram from Theodore Street is remembered as having had the first radio in St Albans. He was the son of Edward and Maria Mottram and the North Primary School is now built on the site of their former home in George Street. George was a grocer in Brunswick before moving to St Albans. He and his brother Edward took over the local general store (known as Aylmer's Store) after Mr. Aylmer retired in 1912 due to ill health. The Mottram brothers did not stay there long and in 1914 it became Harry Harrison's General Store.<sup>4</sup>

When some of the young men of St Albans volunteered in 1915, local residents organised a farewell social event, the local men being Private John Coleman, Sergeant Turner,<sup>5</sup> James Wilson, George Mottram, Robert Sykes, and Ernest Roberts. Unfortunately not all could attend:

*"Last week a social was hold in the St. Albans Hall to say farewell to six local recruits, who had enlisted for the front. The result was most encou-*

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<sup>3</sup> Age 2 October 1920 p5. James and Catherine Robinson came to St Albans c.1905. He was station master until 1926. Ref: *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

<sup>4</sup> Recollections of Mary Smith nee Stein.

<sup>5</sup> Sergeant Turner is not included in the St Albans honour roll. No other details available.

raging, as some 200 to 250 people put in an appearance, including Mr. J. E. Fenton, M.H.R., and Hon. A. R. Robertson, M.L.A. Private Coleman and Sergeant Turner were both in attendance, and were splendidly received on being presented with their medals. Privates G. Mottram, J. Wilson, R. Sykes and E. Roberts were detained by the Defence Department, and could not be present.”<sup>1</sup>

George Mottram served his country overseas in the 1915 war and suffered a severe gunshot wound which he fortunately survived. He received the British War Medal and Victory Medal. He was working as a bolt inspector in later life and died in 1951. He collapsed unexpectedly in front of the Mullengers' house in Theodore Street and Mrs. Mullenger brought him inside until the ambulance arrived.<sup>2</sup> His brother Edward Mottram worked with explosives and moved to Bendigo, so none of the family stayed in St Albans after the fifties as the parents had already passed away.

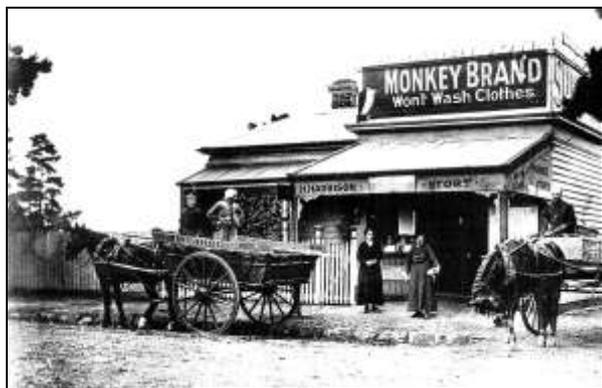
Edward Mottram senior passed away at St Vincent's Hospital on 8 August 1920:

*“It is with deep regret we learn the death of Mr. E. Mottram, a well known resident of St. Albans for many years. Deceased had been ill for only a few days, and was removed to St. Vincent's Hospital on Sunday last, and died shortly after being admitted. The funeral took place on Tuesday last at Coburg Cemetery. He leaves a widow and two sons, for whom much sympathy is felt.”*<sup>3</sup>

Maria Mottram nee Bingham became seriously ill and was conveyed to hospital in 1940.<sup>4</sup> She passed away at St Albans on 31 May 1942.

George Bingham Mottram of Havlin Street Bendigo, the dearly loved son of the late Edward and Maria Mottram, of George Street, St Albans, loving brother of Edward, passed away in 1951:

*“On 16th August, at Heidelberg Military Hospital George Bingham, late 46th Battalion A.I.F. youngest son of the late Edward & Maria Mottram of St. Albans; loving brother of Edward; sincere friend of Rees and Mrs. Williams and children St. Albans. Respected by all who knew him. Aged 59 years. ‘Thy will be done’.”*<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Flemington Spectator 2 September 1915 p6

<sup>2</sup> Recollections of Evelyn Mullenger.

<sup>3</sup> Footscray Independent 14 August 1920 p3

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate Friday 26 January 1940

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 August 1951 p8

## PORTEOUS, Richard Sydney



Richard Sydney Porteous (1896-1963) enlisted in 1914 and served with the 8th Light Horse Regiment in the Middle East. His parents were Lillie and Richard Porteous who were living in Station Avenue with their three children. Richard Porteous senior was from County Cork, Ireland. He was a tall and handsome man with a whimsical Irish charm and talents in photography and art. He had married Lillie Alice Short in 1891 in South Melbourne. She was from Coatbridge, Scotland. They were living in South Yarra and their three children were born in the district:

- Lillie Clarice was born on 31 May 1895 at Armadale and started at the newly-built St Albans State School in October 1900 and left in December 1908. In 1905 she had the distinction of receiving first prize in the Arbor Day celebrations for the best tended tree at the school. In 1915 Clarice married Leslie Noel Connell of Brighton and they went to live in Western Australia. They did not have any children. She died of tuberculosis on 20 December 1925, at age 29 years. Leslie Connell died on 21 April 1940.
- Richard Sydney was born 12 August 1896 at Armadale, started at St Albans primary school in June 1901 and left in March 1911. After leaving school Syd worked as a labourer and jackaroo before enlisting in 1914 and serving in the Middle East. He became a popular author in the 1940s and died in 1963, at the age of 66.
- Sylvia Doris was born on 18 May 1898 at South Yarra, started at St Albans Primary in November 1902 and left in November 1912. She married Ernest Lionel Timson in Brisbane in June 1925 and they had a son, Ernest Richard, and a daughter. Her parents joined them in the 1930s. Doris died in 1967 in Mornington at 69 years old. Ernest died in 1975 in Mornington at age 75 years.

After leaving the St Albans state school, Syd Porteous worked at various odd jobs before enrolling to study art with Fred McCubbin and Bernard Hall at Melbourne's National Gallery Art School. From 1911 to 1913 he studied drawing, anatomy and composition and in the meantime he was studying the characters around him:

*“Old Frederick McCubbin was too polite, too easy going and too genial to make a good teacher. He tended to flatter the good points of a pupil's work*

*rather than point out the mistakes. Bernard Hall was just the opposite. Ruthlessly rude he cared nothing for a pupil's feelings."*<sup>1</sup>

Syd was there for three years but didn't finish the course and ended up working as a jackaroo on a Riverina sheep station.

Syd Porteous enlisted in 1914 and served with the 8th Light Horse Regiment in the Middle East. He was shot through the jaw during the advance on Jerusalem and spent time in the hospital with malaria. He was promoted to squadron quartermaster sergeant in May 1919 and discharged in October 1919. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal.



Syd Porteous and colleagues, 1916. Will McElwee collection.<sup>2</sup>



Syd Porteous 8th Light Horse, 1917. Will McElwee collection.<sup>3</sup>

One of Syd's colleagues in the 8th Light Horse in Palestine was Will McElwee, who was an old mate from St Albans. William "Will" Colin McElwee was born in 1889 and came to St Albans 1904 because his father was the station master in 1904 and 1905.<sup>3</sup> Will and Syd became lifelong mates. Will enlisted in 1915 and fought at Gallipoli alongside Syd Porteous in the 8th Light Horse. Will acted as an NCO with 7th Reinforcements 8th Light Horse Regiment in December 1915, and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. Will McElwee was undoubtedly an 'old' St Albans boy who served in WW1 but his name is not included in the local honour boards because his family left

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Rob Laurent's *Changing Horses* p9

<sup>2</sup> Image courtesy of Carl Johnson per Rob Laurent.

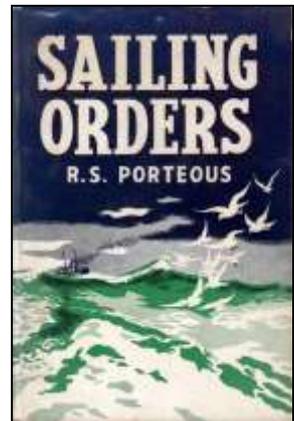
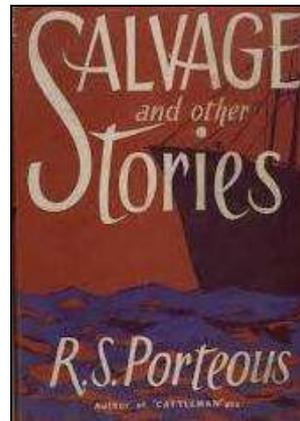
<sup>3</sup> Refer to article in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

the district in 1905 and thus he no longer qualified as a local resident in 1918.

Syd Porteous married Marion Maclaren Paterson in 1927. She died during childbirth on 2 August 1930 having delivered a daughter. Syd remarried on 23 August 1932 to Elizabeth Madge Archer in St Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Rockhampton. There were three daughters from the two marriages: Marie, Sue, and Prue.

Syd served as a merchant marine during WW2. When the U.S. Army assembled a fleet of small ships to carry supplies to troops in Papua and New Guinea. He was Chief Officer in the M.V. Kurrimaru, carrying troops and supplies from Milne Bay to Oro Bay, Buna, Lae, and Finschhafen.<sup>4</sup> He was discharged from the small ships service due to ill health on 6 December 1943.

Syd Porteous began writing stories about his maritime experiences and "Little Known of These Waters" (1945) was published under the pseudonym of 'Standby'. Because of wartime censorship, he disguised his stories as letters to his wife Betty who sent them to the Bulletin for publication.<sup>5</sup> He also wrote "Sailing Orders" (1949) based on his experience in the New Guinea campaign, and this won the lucrative second prize in the Sydney Morning Herald's Competition for war stories.



The Sydney Morning Herald gave him the bold headline of "Grand Old Man of the Sea" and thus applied a sobriquet appropriate to both the author and his main character who is "old and tired and gruff and he has a stiff leg and false teeth, but each succeeding crisis works like a rejuvenating agent upon him."<sup>6</sup> (Predating the better-known celebrity

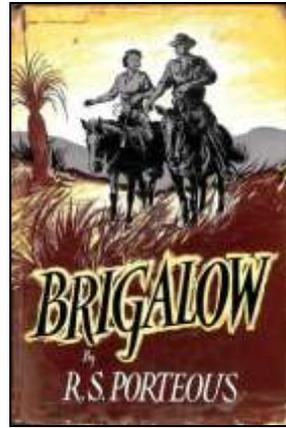
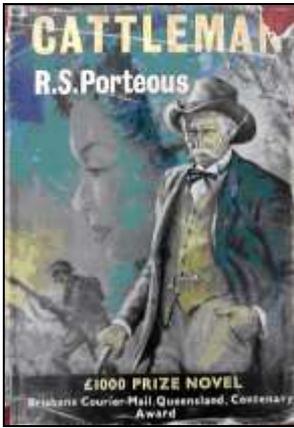


<sup>4</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 18 January 1947 p12

<sup>5</sup> Robert Dixon, *Porteous, Richard Sydney (1896–1963)* <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/porteous-richard-sydney-11445>

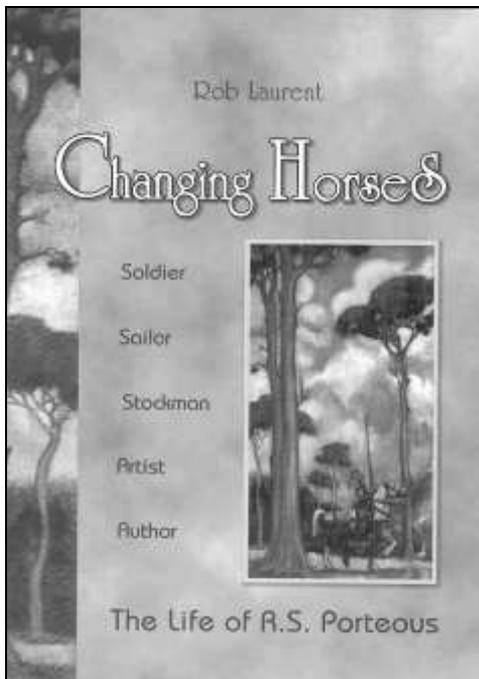
<sup>6</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 18 January 1947 p12

and narrative of Ernest Hemingway.) Syd's later publications appeared in his own name and he became known as Skip Porteous. His output was quite extensive and his better-known grand sagas are *Brigalow* (1957) and *Cattleman* (1960) which received the Courier-Mail's £1000 Centenary Novel award. Overall, he wrote a number of books and about 130 stories and articles by the 1960s.



Syd Porteous died of cancer on 10 April 1963 at his Mackay home at the age of 66 years and was buried at the Mount Basset cemetery with an accompanying War Service plaque.

Skip's biography has been written by Rob Laurent and is titled "*Changing Horses: The Life of R.S. Porteous: Soldier, Sailor, Stockman, Artist, Author.*" (Blue Flyer Publishing, Queensland 2001.) It should be compulsory reading for all St Albans historians to remind us just how a young lad from St Albans at the turn of last century could live such a grand saga and write about his adventures in a world that was enormously bigger than his little boyhood village.



## ROBERTS, David Ernest



David Ernest Roberts (1895-1985) enlisted in 1915 at age 21 years and was a member of B Company, 22nd Battalion, 6th Brigade, Lewis Machine Gun Section. He fought at Bullecourt, Pozieres, Broodseinde, St. Quentin and Messines. He was badly wounded through the chest and lungs with shrapnel. He

was awarded the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

His family on the father's side is traced back to David Roberts born in 1827 at sea in Bermuda West Indies. He settled in Victoria and married Emma Redfern in New Town near Maryborough. David Ernest Roberts snr was the first of their three sons, all of whom were born in Maryborough. He married Elizabeth Rachael Wright in 1894 and their children included David Ernest jnr (1895), Edgar Eli (1897), and Olive Martin (1900).

The family came to St Albans about 1901 and were living in Oberon Avenue.

- David Ernest Roberts jnr was born on 19 February 1895 at Kensington. He enrolled at St Albans primary in February 1901 and left in October 1908. (His father is listed as a quarryman.) David married Annie Boyd (1898-1960) of St Albans, a daughter of Emily and Jonathan Boyd who came to St Albans during the Overnewton Estate sale in 1905. They had a son Jonathan Ernest "Jack Roberts (1925-2011). (Their son is the Jack Roberts that Mary Smith refers to in her oral history stories.) David Ernest Roberts died in 1985.
- Edgar Eli born was on 31 January 1897 at Newmarket. He enrolled at St Albans primary in August 1901 and left in December 1910. (His father is listed as being a quarryman.) It appears that Edgar never married. He became an engine driver in later life and died in 1979.
- Olive Marion Roberts was born on 26 April 1900 at Box Hill. She started at St Albans primary in July 1905 and left November 1913. (Her father is listed as a farmer.) Olive died at Kensington in 1942. It appears that she never married.

Little is known about David's war experience. He embarked 27 September 1915. In 1917 he was wounded in action on three occasions, including gas, shrapnel and gunshot wound to his right elbow. He was discharged in July 1919 and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. His homecoming was celebrated by the community:

*"Another St. Albans warrior who arrived home last week per the Thasos Montes is Gunner Ernest Roberts, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. D. Roberts, of St. Albans. Gunner Roberts enlisted in, July, 1915, and left for the front about two months later. He was a member of B Company, 22nd Batt., 6th Brigade, Lewis Machine Gun Section, and fought at Bullecourt, Pozieres, Broodseinde, Messines, and St. Quentin. Ernest was badly wounded through the chest and lungs with shrapnel. His disc on one occasion saved his throat from serious trouble. Although bright and cheerful he is still under treatment for his wounds and has lost two stone in weight since he enlisted. He says there is no place like Australia, the home of a good square meal. Private Edgar Roberts, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, is still in England."*<sup>1</sup>

David Ernest Roberts senior died in 1934:

*"One of the oldest residents of St. Albans passed away on Sunday last, in the person of Mr. David Roberts. For three months Mr. Roberts had been suffering from a painful illness, which he endured with remarkable fortitude. The deceased gentleman was born at Maryborough. As a young man he selected land, first in Gippsland, and after his removal to St. Albans nearly forty years ago he continued in the same occupation until he took up business as a hairdresser at Flemington. He was also employed for about ten years at Deer Park. Two brothers survive Messrs Herbert and Frank Roberts; also two sisters, one of whom, Mrs. Hodgkinson, is now 87 years of age. Mr. Roberts was highly esteemed by those who knew him and his loss will be mourned by his family of two sons Mr. Ernest Roberts, of St. Albans, and Edgar also his daughter, Olive. The funeral took place on the deceased gentleman's seventieth birthday. A large number assembled at the home to pay their last tribute of respect, and they, with many others, followed the remains to the Footscray cemetery."*<sup>2</sup>

During the 1960s David Ernest Roberts jnr was living at 96 Market Street in Essendon. He died on 23 February 1985.



## ROBERTS, Edgar Eli

Edgar Eli Roberts (1897-1979) was from St Albans on the Bendigo line. He enlisted in May 1918 and served with the AIF 8th General Reinforcements. He was a single man who worked as a box maker by occupation and was a follower of the Church of England. He embarked from Melbourne in May 1918 and returned to Australia in February 1920. He received the British War Medal for his war service. He was the younger brother of David Ernest Roberts (q.v.) who had enlisted in 1915.

His father was David Ernest Roberts (1864-1934) and his mother was Elizabeth Rachael Wright (1873-1921). Details of the family backgrounds are included in David Roberts junior's preceding article so are not repeated here.

Edgar Eli Roberts was born on 31 January 1897 in Newmarket. He enrolled at the St Albans school in August 1901 and left in December 1910. His connection with the military occurred in 1914 when he was aged 17 and escalated when he enlisted in 1918 and continued until 1920. His military connection was reinstated in 1939 at the age of 42 at Royal Park and continued until 1948 but details of this has not been discovered – it's possible that this was connected with his occupation as a munitions worker which appears to have started in the 1930s.

Little is known about his personal history. In 1935 he was living in Oberon Avenue and working as a labourer. He rode a motor cycle and ran into trouble for driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor. He lost his licence for 6 months which caused him much trouble, as he claimed he was making a living as a prospector at Alexandra and having lost his licence he had to push a bicycle with all his gear the 200 miles there and back.<sup>3</sup> A worse motoring problem occurred in 1940 when he was struck by a car in Elizabeth Street Melbourne and was admitted to Royal Melbourne Hospital with head injuries.<sup>4</sup>

In 1929 he was at Derrimut Street Albion, but in 1936 he was back in St Albans at Oberon Avenue with other family members, and working in munitions. Between 1943 and 1954 he was at Little Bourke Street Melbourne, working as an engine driver. Between 1958 and 1963 he had retired to Yarra Junction. In 1977 he was at 40 Nicholson St Fitzroy, and this might have been his final retirement home as he died in 1979.

Edgar Eli Roberts died 10 May 1979 at age 82 years and was buried at the Footscray cemetery. Other family member are buried there including Elizabeth Rachel Roberts (died 5 May 1921 aged 48 years), David Ernest Roberts snr (died 22 September 1934 aged 70 years), Annie Roberts (died 2 March 1960 aged 61 years), David Ernest Roberts jnr (died 23 February 1985).

<sup>1</sup> Footscray Independent 31 May 1919 p4

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 28 September 1934 p3

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 October 1935 p2

<sup>4</sup> Argus 20 May 1940 p7

## SULLIVAN, Roderick Joseph

Roderick Joseph Sullivan enlisted on 23 March 1916 at Melbourne and served overseas as a Private with the 57th Battalion, 2-5 Reinforcements (April – September 1916). He received a gunshot wound to the chest about March 1917 and was admitted to the 1st London General Hospital on 30 March. He was listed in the Argus newspaper on 24 April 1917 as being one of nation's wounded troops. He returned to Australia in July 1919 and was discharged on 30 November 1919, an effective period of service of 1,348 days of which 1,196 days was overseas service. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Very little is known about him.

Roderick was born in Port Pirie in South Australia. He was single, a Roman Catholic, and a farm labourer who enlisted at the age 18 years 9 months. His mother was Eileen Sullivan of St Albans and at the time of enlistment his father had already passed away. Eileen's presence in St Albans is difficult to trace definitively. There was an Ellen aka Nellie Sullivan who was working as a domestic at Farquhar McRae's farm from 1911 probably through to 1916 but it is not known if they are one and the same.<sup>1</sup>

After returning from his war service, Roderick was living in Boundary Road St Albans in the 1920s. He may have married Vena Elizabeth May Bennett in 1920.<sup>2</sup> She was born on 21 June 1900 at Walhalla to Arnold Bennett (1879-1943) and Ada May Paul (1883-1956). The marriage seemingly did not last and during 1926-27 Vena was living with her two children in Footscray whereas Roderick apparently moved to South Australia looking for work. There was a hearing at Sunshine Court in 1929 regarding child maintenance where Vena withdrew the maintenance claim and Roderick was discharged.<sup>3</sup> Vena and Roderick Sullivan were divorced by 1929.<sup>4</sup>

In 1947 Roderick might have been living in Bendigo as his postal address was 14 Williams Street, Long Gully. In 1959 he was living in Perth, Western Australia, from where he wrote to Army Records in Canberra asking for a duplicate of his discharge papers as the originals had been destroyed in a fire in 1943.

It is not known when Roderick Sullivan died. He appears to have been unsettled after the war, as happened to many veterans, and one hopes that at some stage the family might have reconciled their differences.

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<sup>1</sup> St Albans primary school enrolment records – Ellen's daughter Nellie Sullivan was born 9 October 1901 and enrolled in St Albans state school in 1911 from the Roman Catholic school in Carlton.

<sup>2</sup> BDM records of Victoria – her name listed as Vera.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 February 1929 p3

<sup>4</sup> Genealogy records indicate that Vena divorced Roderick Sullivan in 1929 and married Frederick Boyd Ratcliffe. She died on 3 August 1998 at Nathalia.

## SYKES, Robert



Robert Andrew Sykes (1882-1965) enlisted in the A.I.F. in July 1915 at the age of 33 years. He embarked with the 9th Reinforcements in 1916 aboard the HMAT Warilda. He had been in France for five weeks with the 1st ANZAC

Entrenching Battalion when he was admitted to the hospital suffering with deafness. He was evacuated to England and then returned to Australia and was discharged on 11 March 1917, so he'd spent nearly two years overseas on service with the AIF. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal.

The family history in St Albans starts in 1905 when two adjoining blocks of the Overnewton Estate were allocated to a father and son combination. Block 48 was allocated to Alexander Sykes of Swan Hill and Block 49 was allocated to Robert Andrew Sykes of Swan Hill. Their selections were on the north-west corner of Main Road West and Station Road, one and a half miles west of the St Albans railway station. The next block west was on the Kororoit Creek and that's where Dale's piggery was established.

Alexander Sykes established a dairy and poultry farm on the north-west corner Main Road West and Station Road and named the property Pine Park. In 1881 he married Mary Elizabeth Banton, who was the daughter of William Banton and Jane Edwards whose family backgrounds are unknown.

Alexander and Mary Sykes raised several children: Robert Andrew (1882-1965), Arthur James (1885-1904), Albert Henry (1887), Charles Walter (1889-1918), Eleanor Mary (1892-1893) and Daisy Eleanor (1894-1956).

Robert Andrew Sykes was born about 1882 in Berwick. He established a poultry farm in Boundary Road between his parents' farm on Station Road and Dale's piggery along Kororoit Creek.

After the war he returned to his St Albans home and must have been a competent farmer because in September 1922 he won a prize at the Royal Show for "Algerian Oats grown by a returned soldier".<sup>5</sup> He was nearly killed in the same month:

*"Mr. Robert Sykes, of St. Albans, had a wonderful escape from death at an early hour on Tuesday morning. He was driving a wagon load of hay across the railway line at St. Albans at about half-past 5, when he was run down by a goods train. The wagon was smashed to matchwood and the*

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<sup>5</sup> Weekly Times 30 September 1922 p11

*hay strewn along the line for a considerable distance; but Mr. Sykes and his horses escaped without any injury whatever. When the wagon was struck the front portion of it was jammed against a semaphore. This prevented the vehicle from being carried along the line. Instead it was cut in two, and the driver was fortunate enough to be seated on that portion that the engine left behind.”<sup>1</sup>*

He was a member of the Footscray Rifle Club for several years and did rather well:

*“That brilliant shot of the miniature range, Mr. R. Sykes, a farmer, by the way, at St. Albans, put up a wonderful performance at Footscray recently, when he shot an 80 possible, and, continuing, got 20 consecutive bulls eyes before getting a 9. He is one of the leaders in the championship.”<sup>2</sup>*

Mary Elizabeth Sykes née Banton, died on 21 March 1927, at her Pine Park home, aged 68 years. She had been ill for a long time and was buried at Footscray cemetery.

In 1932 Robert Sykes experienced an annoying surprise that one hopes might have happened very rarely in small rural communities with their image of bucolic harmony:

*“When Mr. R. Sykes happened to have a look at his cultivator during the week he found that some thief had stripped it of all moveable parts. Apart from the cost of the repairs, much inconvenience was caused.”<sup>3</sup>*

Alexander Sykes had decided to withdraw from farming and subdivided his Pine Park estate. He died on 30 September 1933, aged 80 years; a St Albans resident for nearly thirty years. In 1934, his property was bought by Mr. Mochrie, but it is known if the new owner was Mr. George Mochrie who founded Sunshine Cabinet Works in 1919.

In 1935 Robert Sykes was also closing down his farm. He'd sold the property and consequently was holding a clearing sale of 150 sheep, 50 cattle, 15 horses, hay and everything else.

The family had been living in St Albans for thirty years and would have seen a lot of change over that time. When they came the local population was about 120 people, and in 1937 it had reached 600 people and they were mostly located on the Keilor side of Main Road. Most of the area south of Main Road to Furlong Road was under crops or used for grazing, slowly disappearing on the Sunshine side where some of the manufacturing industries were being established. Electricity was connected to central St Albans near the railway crossing in the thirties but was not extended to the farming outskirts till much later.

The old Sykes' farms were later acquired by the Urban Land Authority and developed into the Movelle Estate during the 1970s. The Movelle primary school was built there but these days the area is considered to be part of the Kings Park neighbourhood.

## SYKES, Walter

Charles Walter Sykes (1889-1917) of Pine Park, St Albans, enlisted in May 1915 at the age of 25 years and served with AIF 24th Battalion, 2nd Reinforcement. His unit proceeded to Alexandria and disembarked at Marseilles. He was transferred to AASC (Australian Army Service Corps) as a driver. Charles Walter Sykes was killed in action in Belgium on 9 October 1917.

The Sykes' Pine Park farm was on the north-west corner of Main Road West and Kings Road north side. His parents, Alexander and Mary Sykes, had several children: Robert Andrew (1882-1965), Arthur James (1885-1904), Albert Henry (1887), Charles Walter (1889-1918), Eleanor Mary (1892-1893) and Daisy Eleanor (1894-1956). Other details of the family backgrounds are included in the preceding article about Arthur John Thomas so are not repeated here.

Charles Walter Sykes was born about 1889 in Malvern, Victoria. He lived with his parents at Pine Park, St Albans and worked as a farmer. He later moved to Gwelo Street Tottenham and worked as a quarryman. He enlisted at age 25 years 6 months and said that he had previously applied to join the Melbourne Police Force but was rejected as unfit for reasons unknown to him. He was mustered to the Seymour camp before embarking. He served with the AIF 24th Battalion, 2nd Reinforcement, and was killed in action on 9 October 1917 at the Battle of Poelcappelle in Belgium. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. His name was listed in the Weekly Times' Roll of Honour for persons killed in action.<sup>4</sup> A memorial plaque and a memorial scroll were sent to his father, Mr. Alexander Sykes.

It appears that he never married, as he left all his possessions to his sister Daisy Eleanor Sykes.

Daisy Eleanor Sykes was born on 21 November 1894 in Tyntynder, Swan Hill. She was admitted to the St Albans Primary School from 1906 to 1908, after which she worked at home on the family farm as her occupation is listed as "home duties". She later acquired a couple of properties in central St Albans<sup>5</sup> so perhaps she became "a woman of independent means". Little is known of Daisy's life in St Albans or what happened afterwards. Some local recollections suggest she may have taken up nursing and possibly served overseas, though no record of this was found at the National Archives of Australia website and the electoral records generally list her occupation as home duties. She was still resident in St Albans in the early 1930s. She married William Brockley in 1942 and they lived in Dromana. Daisy Eleanor Brockley née Sykes died in 1956 at Dromana, aged 61 years.

<sup>1</sup> Footscray Independent 23 September 1922 p3

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 August 1926

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 April 1932 p2

<sup>4</sup> Weekly Times 8 December 1917 p32

<sup>5</sup> St Albans The First Hundred Years pp6,18

## THOMAS, Arthur John

Arthur John Thomas (1894-1983) enlisted in 1914 at age 20 years 7 months with 3 years' experience as a senior cadet. His occupation was explosives worker. He embarked on 21 December 1914 and served with 6th Battalion 1st AIF as a signaller. He was promoted to Sergeant in July 1916. He was wounded by a gunshot to the hand and admitted to hospital on 10 February 1917.

Arthur returned to Australia on 22 January 1919 and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory medal.

Arthur John Thomas was born in Collingwood in 1894. His parents were Henry Joseph Thomas and Mary Ann Odonnell. His siblings were Henry Martin (who was born in Collingwood 1896) and Ellen "Nellie" Mary (born in Camberwell 1898).

Mary Ann Thomas nee Odonnell died in 1898 at Camberwell at age 30 years, and she possibly died in childbirth. Her father was John Thomas Odonnell and her mother was Ellen Mary Martin – they were St Albans residents.

On his AIF enlistment papers, Arthur Thomas nominated his brother, Henry John Thomas, care of the St Albans Post Office as his next of kin – and presumably this means that his brother Henry Martin was using the name Henry John Thomas.

Arthur did not return to St Albans after the war. In 1919 he was staying at Elizabeth Street Melbourne and at rooms in Parers Crystal Palace, Bourke Street Melbourne. His sister Nellie was based in North Richmond.

He married Margaret Ella Morrison in 1920. During the 1930s they were living in Portland where Arthur established himself as a businessman and community leader. He often referred to his war service in his advertising:

*"Arthur J. Thomas (Late A.I.F.) Desires to intimate that he has taken over the town carrying business of McPherson Bros., and hopes that by strict personal attention to business he will merit a fair share of public patronage. Wood, Gravel, Sand, &c., Promptly Supplied. Furniture Carefully Removed. All Kinds of Cartage Undertaken. Estimates Given."*<sup>1</sup>

In 1935 he was using his Farr's premises in Julia Street as a storage depot for petrol and kerosene.<sup>2</sup> It was from here that he ran his Mack's Transport Service, which extended to:

*"Melbourne, Port Fairy, Heywood, Portland. Receiving Depots: Melbourne 148 Station Street, Carlton. Portland 40 Julia Street. Loading Days: Melbourne, 5 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays. Portland Tuesdays and Fridays. All Goods carried insured against loss, breakage or non-delivery."*<sup>3</sup>

In 1938 he was granted a licence extending over the district within a 50-mile radius of Portland for the carriage of livestock.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas nominated for the council election in 1938 and there was some controversy with regard to his nomination procedure<sup>5</sup> and later a technical disqualification because of a late cancellation of a contract he had with Council.<sup>6</sup> He was later successful in his municipal ambitions. He was a councilor when Portland was proclaimed a town in 1949<sup>7</sup> and was Mayor of the Town of Portland from 1951 to 1953.<sup>8</sup>

In 1941 he experienced a serious health scare that required surgery, and he survived the operation quite satisfactorily: *"Although he will be in hospital for some time, his business will be carried on as usual."*<sup>9</sup>

During the 1940s he was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Portland Soldiers' Welfare Group. They held dances and other entertainment functions to raise money in support of ex-service personnel.<sup>10</sup>

In 1944 he was appointed supervising agent for vegetable production with the Department of Food Control over the Portland and Heywood district. Consignors of all goods to the Department of Supply, Food Control Section, were requested to contact him before despatching.<sup>11</sup>

In 1950 he was Chairman of the Portland Waterworks Trust.<sup>12</sup> He also seems to have had a change of career and was now operating as an auctioneer, estate and commission agent from premises in Percy Street.<sup>13</sup> One of the causes he supported as Mayor was the promotion of "mental hygiene" for children when the Director of Mental Hygiene visited Portland to discuss:

*"... a method, possibly by the establishment of a school or institute, to assist spastic or otherwise mentally retarded children. There could be no more worthy cause than this, and I most heartily commend it to all and request that you make every effort to attend and give your support. I shall be delighted to see residents of the surrounding district who are interested in this matter ... and in any other way possible giving our full support to his efforts on behalf of those children who are unfortunately unable to assist themselves."*<sup>14</sup>

In 1967 Arthur Thomas was living at 88 Percy Street Portland and running a business known as Arthur J. Thomas Radio & Electrical Appliance Store. At this stage he was aged 73 years and must have been thinking of retiring.

Arthur John Thomas, late of St Albans, died at Portland on 23 January 1982 at the age of 87 years. Margaret Ella Thomas nee Morrison died in 1984 in Portland at age 88 years.

<sup>5</sup> Portland Guardian 29 Aug 1938 p3

<sup>6</sup> Portland Guardian 21 September 1939 p3

<sup>7</sup> Portland Guardian 21 November 1949 p1

<sup>8</sup> Portland Guardian 9 Apr 1953 p3

<sup>9</sup> Portland Guardian 28 July 1941 p2

<sup>10</sup> Portland Guardian 20 December 1943 p3

<sup>11</sup> Portland Guardian 25 May 1944 p2

<sup>12</sup> Portland Guardian 13 April 1950 p2

<sup>13</sup> Portland Guardian 14 August 1950 p2

<sup>14</sup> Portland Guardian 9 April 1953 p3

<sup>1</sup> Portland Guardian 8 May 1933 p2

<sup>2</sup> Portland Guardian 21 March 1935 p3

<sup>3</sup> Portland Guardian 5 August 1935 p4

<sup>4</sup> Portland Guardian 5 December 1938 p2

## THOMAS, Henry John

Henry John Thomas (1896-1982) enlisted on 10 June 1916 at age 20 years and embarked with 10/14th Battalion, 21st Reinforcement.

Henry "Harry" John Thomas was born in Collingwood in 1896 as Henry Martin Thomas.<sup>1</sup> His parents were Henry Joseph Thomas and Mary Ann Odonnell. His siblings were Arthur John (who was born in Collingwood in 1894) and Ellen "Nellie" Mary (born in Camberwell in 1898).

Mary Ann Thomas nee Odonnell died in 1898 at Camberwell at age 30 years, and she possibly died in childbirth. Her parents were John Thomas Odonnell and Ellen Mary nee Martin who were St Albans residents. Other details of the family backgrounds are included in the preceding article about Arthur John Thomas so are not repeated here.

Henry John Thomas joined the AIF on 10 June 1916 at the age of 20 years and 2 months. He was single, a labourer of Roman Catholic background, living in St Albans, and had previously been a senior cadet living in an exempt area. He did not name his brother Arthur John Thomas as next of kin as Arthur was already on active service – he nominated his friend John O'Donnell of St Albans as NOK. Marginal notes on his application papers indicate that his mother was deceased and his father's whereabouts were unknown. Mrs. J. O'Donnell of St Albans was his grandmother.

Thomas's grandfather was John Thomas Odonnell and his grandmother was Ellen Mary Martin. They were living in St Albans but it is not known how long they stayed.

Henry John Thomas served with 14 Infantry Battalion 13 to 23 Reinforcements. He embarked on 2 October 1916 on the Nestor from Melbourne and served as a driver with C Company, 14th Battalion, 10/14th Reinforcements.

Henry was injured in action in France on 11 February 1917 with a gun shot wound to the right hand. He returned to Australia on 22 August 1919 and was discharged on 4 December 1919. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The siblings kept in contact and wrote to the AIF base records late in 1919 asking for details about the brothers' return to Australia. At this stage Arthur was staying in Elizabeth Street Melbourne and Nellie was at Baker Street in North Richmond.

In 1921-22 Henry John Thomas was living in St Albans and working as a farm hand. He died on 12 July 1982 at Malvern East, aged 86 years. It is surprising that nothing has been discovered about him in the intervening 64 years.

<sup>1</sup> No trace of Henry John Thomas in BMD records of the time.

## TURNLEY, Grace Evelyn



Grace Evelyn Turnley (1887-1952) enlisted in 1916 with the Australian Army Nursing Service, and served until 1919. She was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Her mother was Emma Bunkin who married Harold Henry Turnley in 1879 and they settled in Shepparton.

Emma was born in Norwood near Adelaide; her father was Frederick Bunkin and her mother was Georgiana Flaxman. Harold was working as an accountant and commission agent in 1884 when he became the secretary of the Mooroopna Turf Club and the Shepparton Turf Club. He was the secretary to the Shepparton Agricultural Society, president of the Early Closing Association and did a lot of work for the Mooroopna Hotel.

Grace Evelyn Turnley was born on 1 May 1887 at Shepherds Flat (Moira). Her brothers were Harold Eric (1880-1923), Gerald Oscar (1883-1965) and Claude Ivan (1885-1943). The youngest brother, Reginald Aubrey, died in his first year (1889).<sup>2</sup>

Harold Henry Turnley died suddenly on 27 May 1892 at the age of 35 years.

It is not clear when Emma Turnley moved to St Albans, but it must have been about 1900 as Emma is included in the Melbourne directory listing of residents for 1902, but her daughter Grace Evelyn had started at the primary school in the previous year. She was admitted to the St Albans Primary school in February 1901 and left a few months later, so she was already about 14 years old when she arrived in the district.

In 1900 Emma Turnley with her son Claude and daughter Grace was living in Biggs Street on a property named "Yatala". The Victorian Municipal Directory records the district having 120 people, a primary school, a post office with two mails daily and that Robert Surridge was the post-master at the railway station.

Local newspaper references about the Turnley family start about 1904 and show that Mrs. Emma Turnley and her children were involved in various activities, e.g. in 1904 Mrs. Turnley was holding a "fruit and fancy fair" at her home in aid of the building fund for the proposed Mechanics Hall:

*"Mrs. Turnley, who was the originator of the movement, kindly placed her home at the disposal of the committee."*<sup>3</sup>

There were other activities of a fund-raising nature. In 1909 with much "ability and energy" Grace Turnley trained pupils from the primary

<sup>2</sup> Argus 26 April 1889

<sup>3</sup> Footscray Independent 24 December 1904

school in recitations, songs and choruses for a concert at the Mechanics Hall. There was a fancy dress night in aid of the Boys' Improvement Society and a Christy Minstrel display for the Ladies' Club return social. In 1911 she was a joint secretary in a fundraiser with a difference when the dancing went on all night as no one could go home because of the rain: "*The water came down as if a big bucket were being spilt; roads were flooded, and nobody ventured out till daybreak.*"<sup>1</sup>

Grace's grandmother, Caroline Ann Thrupp, the wife of Henry W. Turnley, died on 7 July 1896 at Nelson Road, Camberwell, in her 80th year, and was buried at Kew.<sup>2</sup>

Grace's grandfather, Henry Wellington Turnley who came to Tasmania in 1826, passed away on 24 April 1914 at the home of his son-in-law, Mr. Mumford, in East Camberwell, in his 93rd year, a colonist since 1826.<sup>3</sup> He was buried at the Boroondara cemetery.

Grace Evelyn Turnley trained as a nurse and passed her examinations at the Alfred Hospital in December 1915.<sup>4</sup> She was working at the Caulfield hospital in 1916 when she enlisted with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) on 27 November 1916. She was aged 29 years and 5 months having already served 3 months with the AIF (previously enlisted 29 August 1916). She was described as being of fair complexion, with dark hair, blue-grey eyes, 5 foot tall, and of Church of England denomination. Her unit embarked from Sydney, New South Wales, in September 1916 and disembarked at Plymouth in February 1917. Once in London she was posted to the 14th Station Hospital at Rouen France arriving 23 February 1917 and five months later she was posted to the 2nd Australian General Hospital. In May 1918 she was a Staff Nurse in a team of 40 nurses and sisters stationed in France at *Nord Pas de Calais, Pas de Calais, Boulogne*. Later in the year she herself was hospitalized for a month with influenza and tonsillitis, then again early in 1918 with dermatitis. She was promoted to Sister in December 1918 and discharged in August 1919. Her awarded medals included the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Unfortunately Grace had missed her mother's funeral as it occurred while Grace was overseas on active service. Emma Turnley nee Bunkin passed away in the Melbourne Hospital in October 1918 at the age of 65, the cause of her death being diabetes. Her body was buried at Shepparton:

*"She leaves three sons Captain Eric Turnley, on active service, and Messrs. Gerald and Claude Turnley of Melbourne, also a daughter, Miss Grace Turnley, who is a nurse on active service abroad. Her husband predeceased her about 25 years*

*ago, and her remains were laid to rest beside his. Mrs. Turnley's general character caused her to be held in high esteem by a large circle of Shepparton acquaintances, and she will be deeply regretted by all who knew her. Her place in the estimation of her Melbourne friends was sufficiently evidenced by the large number of beautiful wreaths which they forwarded."*<sup>5</sup>

Grace returned to Australia in May 1919 and by mid-year was living in Everton Street, Surrey Hills. She might have been a patient of or worked at the Military Hospital in Caulfield.

Grace Evelyn Turnley married Arthur Gordon Nicol in 1921. He was born in 1894 in Collingwood and his parents were Fred Hamilton Nicol and Mary Elizabeth Bonsak. Grace and Arthur's children included Margaret Helen and Ian Gordon.

Grace Evelyn Nicol nee Turnley died in 1952 at Moorabbin at age 65 years and the funeral service was held at the Springvale Crematorium.<sup>6</sup> Her husband, Arthur Gordon Nicol, died at Box Hill in 1970 at the age of 76.

Acknowledgement of Grace Evelyn Turnley's contribution to Australia's war effort was not extensive in her lifetime. When the Keilor Honour Roll was unveiled in 1918 it contained 53 names and later enlistments were added, but not hers. Then in 1930 three more names were added including hers. In 2011 the Keilor Historical Society initiated memorial plaques at the Keilor Cenotaph to honour war veterans and nurses, which now includes Nurse G. E. Turnley. In 2012 Brimbank Council proposed that a road near the Keilor Golf Course be named Turnley Parkway in her memory. Her name is included in the book "*More Than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War 1*" (written by Kirsty Harris, Big Sky Publishing, 2011) but there is no story about her personal experiences.

Grace Evelyn Nicol nee Turnley served her country well and should be remembered well.



Image from Australian War Memorial EO2116. Grace Turnley with group portrait of nurses of the 2nd Australian General Hospital, outside their quarters, France: Nord Pas de Calais, Pas de Calais, Boulogne, 11 May 1918.

<sup>1</sup> Footscray Independent 18 March 1911

<sup>2</sup> Argus 8 July 1896 p1

<sup>3</sup> Argus 25 April 1914 p11

<sup>4</sup> Bendigo Independent 17 December 1915 p6

<sup>5</sup> Shepparton News 31 October 1918 p2

<sup>6</sup> Argus 23 September 1952 p11

## WILSON, Herbert Frederick

Herbert Frederick Wilson (1882-1917) enlisted in July 1915 at age of 33 years and served with the 13th Light Horse Regiment, 7th Reinforcement.

Herbert Frederick Wilson was born in 1882 at Sunbury, Victoria. Alexander was born at Merri Creek Victoria but traces his family back to 1695 in Londonderry, Ireland. Selina was born at Bulla and traces her family back to 1788 in Tyrone, Ireland. Alexander Wilson and Selina Donnelly married in June 1875 at Bolinda Vale, Sunbury, and raised a large family of 4 daughters and 7 sons, including Elizabeth Isabel (1876), William Alexander (1877), Mary Louisa (1878), Herbert Frederick (1882), Mary Louise Florence (1885), Ethel Edith Alice (1887), William James (1889), Walter Alex George Donell (1892), Osborne Henry Clarke (1897), and Alex Edgar (1899).

Alexander was a ganger with the railways and the family must have come to St Albans in 1910 because that is when two of the younger children, Osborne Henry Clark Wilson and Alexander Edgar Wilson, started at the St Albans primary school. Their home was a quarter mile from the school, probably in William street near the O'Donnell property.

Herbert Frederick Wilson married Eileen Myrtle Holden in 1915; she was born in Geelong in 1896 but the details of her early life are not known. At first she was at St Albans before moving to Moorabool Street in Geelong<sup>1</sup> (in July 1916) and then at Railway Place in Newmarket (in September 1917).

Herbert served in France and Egypt with the 13th Light Horse Regiment, 7th Reinforcements. He was later listed as Private Herbert Frederick Wilson of 60th Battalion Australian Infantry.

He was wounded in action on 26 September 1917 in the fields Belgium and died of his wounds on 5 October 1917 at the Third Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. His remains were buried in the Lijssanthosk Military Cemetery at Plot 25, Row D, Grave 10A. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. Little else is remembered about him.

The list of personal possessions that were returned to his wife is rather poignant: "2 discs, pipe, knife, mirror in case, metal rings 3, 2 metal lockets of hair enclosed, 2 badges, rosary, testament, wallet, purse, tobacco pouch, photo, cards, 11 coins."<sup>2</sup>

Eileen Myrtle Wilson nee Holden remarried in 1918 to William Charles (Charlie) Cole. They had a son Leslie Charles Cole who died on 2 June 1961 at Norlane, Geelong. Nothing else is known about the family.

<sup>1</sup> Eileen's parents were William Fred Holder/Holden and Mary Ann Wood of Geelong.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence from AIF Kit Store, London, to legatee Mrs. Eileen Myrtle Wilson; December 1917.

## WILSON, James Edward John

James Edward John Wilson (1894-1954) registered for training in 1915 and served with the 13th Light Horse Regiment, 7th Reinforcement. His brother Herbert Wilson also served with the AIF.

James Edward Johnathon Wilson was born in 1894 at Sunbury, Victoria. His mother was Selina Matilda Sarah Donnelly (1857-1940) and his father was Alexander Wilson (1851-1932). Alexander was born at Merri Creek Victoria but traces his family back to 1695 in Londonderry, Ireland. Selina was born at Bulla and traces her family back to 1788 in Tyrone, Ireland. Alexander and Selina married in June 1875 at Bolinda Vale, Sunbury, and raised a large family of 4 daughters and 7 sons. (Details not available.)

Alexander was a ganger with the railways and the family must have come to St Albans in 1910 because that is when two of the younger children, Osborne Henry Clark Wilson and Alexander Edgar Wilson, started at the St Albans primary school. Their home was a quarter mile from the school, possibly in William Street.

James Wilson married Beatrice Mary Fryer in 1911 at Sunbury (she was from Lincolnshire England) and they had two daughters: Florence Beatrice (1911), and Elsie May (1915-1977). James worked as a railway employee. He registered for training in 1915 and his address was listed as c/o Post Office St Albans. At the age of 21 years he became Gunner J. E. J. Wilson, 29th Battalion 13th Light Horse Regiment, 5th Machine Gun Battalion.

He was wounded in action when severely gassed on 1 May 1918 and hospitalized. He returned to Australia on 19 February 1919 and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal.

It is not known what happened with his young family when he returned though it appears that the marriage was later dissolved. James Wilson married Ruby May Fallon on 14 June 1919 (who was from Horsham, Victoria) and they raised five daughters and three sons. (Personal details not available.)

Alexander Wilson passed away at St Albans on 30 September 1932, aged 81 years. Some railway families stayed only briefly in St Albans because of the itinerant nature of some railway work but the Wilson family stayed much longer.

Selina Matilda Sarah Wilson nee Donnelly passed away in 1940 at Melbourne North at age 83 years.

Beatrice Mary Wilson nee Fryer died at Camberwell in 1953, aged 69 years.

James Edward John Wilson died on 20 July 1954 at the Repatriation Hospital, Heidelberg, at age 60 years, and was buried in the Garden of Remembrance at the Fawkner Crematorium.

Ruby May Wilson nee Fallon died on 16 June 1962 at Heidelberg, at age 67 years.