

The Blackwells of Tasmania

Two factors significantly accelerated the development of the colonies of Australia. The discovery of gold in Victoria and New South Wales. This created enormous wealth within these colonies. But the need to supply food and materials to the gold fields themselves probably created wider economic activity. This spread across the strait to Tasmania with the need for timber, grain and foodstuff. The second factor was the various Selection Acts of the 1860's which broke up the large grants of land and the squattocracy.

All the Blackwell forbears with the exception of the Ridge family are post gold discovery arrivals. They came in all types of ships, were middle class artisans or farmers. None of these families settled initially in the Wynyard, Table Cape area but established themselves in their trades in settled towns only to move to Table Cape to select land.

The Journey to the new land

The ships that brought the migrants to Australia were tiny, most being around 300 tons, with a 900-tonner a leviathan. Any large ships would be obliged to wait for months for a back load of wool, skins, tallow and bones, and maybe a case of "natural specimens" (gold).

Owners of the day did not as a rule sail their own ships. Great merchants of the type of Duncan Dunbar, Joseph Soames, R. & H. Green and Money Wigram did so, but generally migrant ships were laid on the berth and taken up by shipping companies or ship owners individually.

There were a number of emigration associations in Great Britain, all under the supervision of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners who were answerable for their actions to the Colonial Secretary.

They made the rules and regulations and selected the persons suitable as tradesmen, shepherds, labourers or (being female, single or widowed) as domestic servants. Often whole families were selected for emigration provided the parents were not more than 50 years of age. Prospective émigrés were brought from country centres, if necessary for examination.

Passage rates from England to Australia were reasonable and in some instances the company would accept a small deposit, the balance of the passage money to be earned in employment in the colony.

In theory the Master of the emigrant ship was in charge of everything but in practice it was the ship's doctor who really exercised command over the emigrants. The Superintendent as he was called was paid a gratuity of 10 shillings and 6 pence per head upon the Government being satisfied with his performance of his duties. The master received 3 shillings and the First officer 1 shilling and threepence. Other officers each received 1 shilling if they showed "attentive, humane and orderly conduct towards the emigrants".

The Surgeon Superintendent was empowered to appoint a Hospital Assistant and an Overseer for each 50 passengers (they received small payments). He was to assemble passengers every Sunday morning for public worship which he was charged with conducting "with all proper seriousness and devotion." Many a medical man established a practice in Melbourne or on the gold fields with his gratuity.

Ships in the emigrant trade were required to be A1 at Lloyds, with a proper height between decks and freedom from vermin, painted white within, ballast to be of washed shingles, and a crew to comprise 5 men and a boy to each 100 tons burden. No explosive were permitted aboard nor any animals save those required for food or milk supply.

Intending emigrants were obliged to produce testimonials of good character signed by a clergyman or "respectable person of note." Age was to be proved by production of Baptismal Certificate.

The Emigration Commissioners must before issue, approve all publications designed towards inducing poor persons to emigrate.

Emigrants were berthed rather scientifically, every attempt being made to ensure that persons of similar circumstances and habits would be kept together, and those who might tend to argue be kept apart. Single men were berthed forward, married couples amidships and single women aft.

The hospital accommodation for women included provision for childbirth and was located in the stern where there was the advantage of help from the widows.

Berths were usually located along the sides of the vessel leaving the middle section for living and eating.

Emigrants were divided into messes and mess men detailed from the number each week. The duty of the mess men was to draw water and rations, to divide them out if required, and to make puddings and similar "community items" for the whole mess.

Passengers were expected to get up at 6 am. And to turn in by 10 p.m. at which time the Purser inspected the vessel to ensure that all lights except the ship's navigation lights were extinguished.

Cooking arrangements aboard ship were expected to be ample for requirements and cooks prepared various extras provided by passengers at the galley at appointed times.

Between meals, hot water was sometimes exchanged for cold for the benefit of the old or delicate passengers.

Before the ship left port the Emigration Officer made an exacting examination of vessel and company. The ship was usually dried docked for the purpose. Provisions were checked and measured, the Certificate of the Master and Officers were noted, and the members of the crew were interrogated individually. They were exercised in some vital part of their duties, for example by being sent aloft to take a reef in a topsail. Boats, gear and equipment were also inspected. On paper at least, every possible precaution was taken for the well being of the emigrants.

Between 1840 and 1855 the rate of migration to Australia increased ten fold. Of the 9245 who sailed for Victoria in 1855, 132 were buried at sea. In 1855 there were sixty one prosecutions for various offences, including the sale of spirits, fraudulently obtaining a passage, insufficient store of water, bad quality of provisions, and lack of medical supplies. In the case of insufficient provisions the amount of the fine imposed was divided among the passengers.

During the gold rush of the 1850's migrant ships were small, The largest vessel to berth in 1855 was the famous "Marco Polo" of 1625 tons and bringing 730 souls. The smallest was the "Isle of Skye" 351 tons with 550 passengers. The average passage time was 105 days. All of the ships were constructed of wood, which meant that their huge timbers and beams reduced the space allocated for passengers. Sanitary conditions at the best, were primitive.

When sailing through the tropics the caulking of the ships' topsides would become shrunken and when later she heeled to the breeze cascades of water spurted through. In bad weather the hatches were battened down for safety and the unfortunate emigrants were truly "cribbed cabined and confined". The "Red Jacket," a first class clipper, went as far south as 40 degrees 36 minutes on her maiden voyage to Melbourne and her passengers were below for 17 successive days. The vessel was so iced up forward that she was down by the head. The fact that she recorded some wonderful sailing times was scant relief for the uncomfortable passengers.

In our day of comfortable travel it is difficult to appreciate the hardships of the conditions experienced by the pioneers of this country. Taking their courage in their hands they ventured to the furthest corner of the earth, to establish a new home in the New World.

John Ridge

It was to Launceston that John Ridge came in 1842, with his wife and three children. In 1830 in London a committee was formed to determine whether or not a mission to Van Dieman's Land should be commenced. In those early days "reports were filtering through of the depravity that existed in the colony. There was little in the way of spiritual education and preaching of the Word of God to counter the wickedness that prevailed."

Into this situation came men such as the Revs. John West, Clem Price, William Wade and Henry Dowling. Henry Dowling became the pastor of the Christ Church Baptist, in Launceston. Henry's son, Henry junior became mayor of Launceston in 1857 and 1861. It was Henry junior who sponsored the migrants, and in particular the John Ridge family, under the Bounty System.

John Ridge, a tailor by profession, was born near Taunton Somerset in 1808, marrying Sarah Steer on 25th. December 1826. On the 10th. December 1841 at 33 years of age, with his wife Sarah and three children John 2, Sarah Ann 5, and Charlotte they boarded the "Corsair" in the midst of a London winter. On board there was a total of 331 souls, 48 couples, 117 single men, single women and 97 children under the age of 14. Henry Dowling is named as the Selecting Agent in Van Dieman's Land. The Journey took 149 days the "Corsair" arriving in Launceston on May 8 1842.

The Ridge family appeared to have made their home in Launceston. Three more children are born in Launceston. Henry arrived on the 17th. May 1843 in Charles St, Launceston, Susan 7th. May 1845, and Joan on the 18th. October 1847 in St John Street. Ann Ridge believes John Ridge was of a progressive nature and although a tailor by trade he came from farming stock and so had that interest as well. On the land he purchased he erected a store. Sarah his wife operated the store which later became the first Post Office. Charlotte his daughter, who married John Ashby White later, ran this store. Mr & Mrs John A. White, at a function to celebrate their Diamond Wedding, describes arriving in Wynyard in 1858. "Wynyard in those days was very much in its infancy. There was only one house built at that time. For some 25 years the couple kept a general store at the corner of Goldie St. and the Esplanade."

But it is Sarah in whom we are interested. . Sarah Ann Ridge born 25:12:1836 married John King Percy 26 years of age on 10 Feb. 1857 in the house of John Ridge, Table Cape. John Percy was the District Constable of Circular Head, but was drowned at the age of 35 at the Western Inlet between Smithton and Stanley. They had five children Lucy, Sally, Mina, James and Ellen.

On 27:4:1869 Sarah married James Cunnings, her second marriage. They went on to have four more children. Charlie, Edie, Bertha, and Ethel. Sarah's Obituary reads:

Old Resident's Death

An old and respected resident in the person of Mrs. James Cunnings passed away at her residence on Wednesday after 18 months of suffering. Mrs. Cunnings, who was aged 72 years, was born in Taunton, Somersetshire, England, and came to Tasmania 67 years ago, when a little girl of five years of age, in the brig Corsair, with her brothers, sisters and parents, the late Mr. and Mrs John Ridge. She had been a resident of Wynyard district for over 40 years. Deceased leaves a husband and family of two sons and seven daughters, to mourn their loss, all being married, except Miss Bertha Cunnings, who watched by the bedside of her sick mother almost the whole time of her illness. Mrs. Cunnings was widely known and esteemed by a large circle of friends for her strict integrity and honoured name. The funeral took place on Saturday afternoon. A large number of friends and relatives followed the hearse. .

Ethel Rebecca (Essie) the youngest of the children was born on 3 February 1877, and married Arnold George Blackwell (Arnie) on 24 October 1900. She died 11 January 1951.

Essie was remembered as being a giggly person. She is said to have taken herself to bed for the last six years of her life, the reason probably being asthma. Essie seemed to have been a powerful woman and Judith Hays maintains quite domineering. Her obituary in the "Australian Missionary Tidings" is as follows:

With Christ

The home call of our beloved sister, Mrs, A.G. Blackwell, on the 11 January, has removed from our midst a kind mother and faithful believer, dearly loved by all the assembly at the Gospel Hall, Wynyard, with which she was connected for 58 years. She was converted at 15 years of age through the preaching of the late Mr. George Groves, from which time she sought to fully obey the Lord in baptism, breaking of bread and assembly fellowship. For upward of 20 years of her life much hospitality was extended to all Christians; and many missionaries and evangelists from many lands enjoyed her care at their home. It was also her practice and delight to be present at the sister's prayer meetings, at which she often ministered the Word with much acceptance, the Lord having graced her with considerable understanding of his Will, and a gift in imparting to others. For the past 14 years of her life her physical fitness began to wane and for the last 4 years she became so weak that she rarely was able to leave her room, although through it all she maintained a bright and cheerful testimony of the Lord until peacefully passing into His presence. The funeral services at their home and at the grave were conducted by Major Roberts Thompson, ministering suitably with much comfort and cheer. A very large number gathered to pay their respects to her memory, and our sympathy and love is extended to her esteemed husband and family, all of whom embrace the truth of the re-union in the Father's Home above.

Wynyard Sister's Class

James Cunnings

We know little of great grandfather James Cunnings. He is buried in the Old Wynyard Cemetery. His tombstone reads:

James Cunnings
Born Glasgow Scotland 1841
Died 1921

Legend has it that he came from South America as a seaman and left his ship. Thomas Keneally in his book "The Great Shame" indicates that whalers often obtained additional crew in South America after leaving New England. His Marriage Certificate records his rank as Ship's Carpenter. The wedding was conducted in the house of the bride at Table Cape in the presence of John Ridge Jun. John and Caroline Ridge. Caroline Ridge was the elder daughter of George Blackwell marrying John Ridge Jun, Sarah's brother, in 1865.

Marriage Ridge - Blackwell

At Longford by the Rev. A. Stackhouse on the 4th July, 1865 (At Christ Church, Longford)

Mr John Ridge (Jun.) of Tablecape to Caroline Elizabeth elder daughter of Mr. George Blackwell of Longford

The wedding was witnessed by George Blackwell and Anne Margetts Blackwell (Caroline's sister)

Caroline was to die in September 1877, aged 33. The Death Certificate states “Inflammation of the lung.” Family lore has it that Caroline had helped move cattle through long wet grass causing her clothes to get wet and then to “to take chill.”

The Diamond Jubilee of the Flowerdale Methodist Church 1891-1951 recorded that the church was built by Mr. James Cunnings and his son, Mr C.E. Cunnings preached at both afternoon and evening services on the opening day. James was fifty at this time, while he was 28 years of age when he married. So between 1841 and 1869 James Cunnings arrived in Australia from Glasgow.

Samuel Deans

Samuel Deans left London on the “Lady McNaughton” on the 10th. February 1853 bound for Melbourne. Samuel was 46 years of age, his wife 39. The “Cyclopedia of Tasmania” record he had two sons and two daughters, but there were 11 Deans children registered as passengers. His occupation was noted as a “farmer.”

Born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in 1841, Samuel died at Boat Harbour in November 1899. In the early days he followed the occupation of wheelwright, carpenter, and joiner at Geelong, Victoria, where he arrived from the old country. In 1857 he became one of the pioneers of Boat Harbour, where he was connected with farming pursuits in conjunction with the business of wheelwright. He was for several years a member of the Table Cape Road Trust, and was very highly esteemed throughout the district. He left a family of two sons, James and John, and two daughters, Tilly and Mary.

The Deans selected land neighbouring the Blackwell property. There is a record of three titles, two of 50 acres each owned by Samuel Dean and fifty acres owned by J.R.Dean. This land fronted the cliff at Boat harbour.

Two marriages occurred between the Blackwell’s and the Deans in 1870. James Dean married Annie Blackwell while on the 4th May 1870 Edwin Orlando Blackwell married Mary Deans. James Dean, born in 1848 helped clear 50 acres of land near the Boat Harbour shop and farmed and lived there all his life. He had a heart attack while attending the Sunday evening service at the Boat harbour Gospel Hall. Mr. Harry Shekleton took him to his home located just up the hill from the hall. He died two days later, on the 24th July 1906 aged 58 years.

The first conference held in Tollymore in January 1873 was instrumental in Mr. James Deans’ conversion. On the day of the conference, he and his wife went to the Wynyard races. James becoming very dissatisfied ended up attending the conference meeting. He was a close friend of Mr. E.O. Blackwell and together they evangelized up and down the coast, in particular from Wynyard to Circular Head. Some time later, while handing out tracts at the Wynyard races, he had to make a hasty retreat when “set upon” by some of the young fellows.

George Blackwell

The 1851 Census records the following in the village of Enderby Leicestershire:

George Blackwell, head of household, married aged 35, occupation miller, born Arnesby Leicestershire.

Ann F Blackwell, wife, married, 32 born Enderby, Leics

George F Blackwell, son 9, scholar, born Markfield, Leics.

Caroline Blackwell, daughter, 7, scholar, born Claypole, Lincs

Tom W Blackwell, son, 3, born Leicester (St Nicholas)

Anne M Blackwell, daughter, 2, born Leicester (St Marys)

Lidia Blackwell, niece, 4 months, born Leicester (St Martins)

Next Door

William Margetts, head, unmarried, 32, farmer of 34 acres, employing two labourers, born Enderby

Mary Langton, servant, unmarried, 19, housekeeper, born Enderby.

5 houses along

John W Margetts, head, married 24 grazier and butcher, born Enderby.

Ann Margetts, wife, married, 27, born Glenfield, Leics

Mary Margetts, mother, widow, 62, n born Husband Bosworth, Leics.

Mary P Margetts, sister, unmarried, 35, born Enderby

Grace Margetts, unmarried, 25, born Enderby, Leics.

Edward Evan, visitor, unmarried, 37, grazier, born Enderby

George Hassal, visitor, married, 52, Independent Minister, born Stamford.

Within six years all of these people departed Enderby village for Tasmania, except Lidia Blackwell, Grace Margetts the visitor Evans and Ann Margett's father and Grace Margetts father-in-law to be, George Hassall

George Blackwell with his son George and brother-in-law John Margetts had sailed on the "Lightning" a clipper ship in January 1855. George was contracted to manage the Newry Flour Mill at Longford the remains of which may still be seen. We do not know if John Margetts or George was part of the contract. George and John's family was to join them in 1857.

The "Sir W. F. Williams" that Edwin Orlando boarded on the 22nd May 1857 was a far less pretentious vessel than the "Lightning" on which his oldest brother George Francis sailed in 1855. The wooden barque "Sir W.F. Williams" of 870 tons departed Liverpool landing at Hobart-town on August 21st after a 91-day sea journey. The "Sir

W. F. Williams was built at St John's Nova Scotia in 1836. Shaw & Co, Liverpool, the owners traded between Liverpool and Hobart-town. The vessel was sold to Polwari, Genoa, Italy in 1874 and renamed the "Margetts D." In 1893 it was abandoned at sea and sunk.

Edwin had plenty of company. He sailed with his mother Anne Frances (36), his sisters Caroline (12) and Anne (7) and his brother Thomas (9). His widowed grandmother Margetts now 69 joined the voyagers along with his uncle William Margetts (39), aunt Mary Margetts (27) and his cousins Thomas Butlin (2) and William Peck (2mths). Aunt Anne Margetts (33) with her son Stephen Peck (3) was on her way to join her husband John who had sailed with George and George junior Blackwell on the "Lightning." A Miss Emma Wood, companion to Anne Margetts, made up the total of 13 in this party on its way to the New World.

The Newry Flour Mill

Newry where the Blackwells lived was a small community near Longford. Norfolk Plains East, which the locals called Pateena or Muddy Plains was so named from the state of the ground over which the first road led to Launceston. Wagons were often two days making the journey from Longford and cases were reported of horses sinking up to their bellies in the mud and of vehicles abandoned for days in its grip.

A book "Longford Past and Present" describes "Coaches used to go to Launceston by way of the ford then across Newry marshes and up Newry hill past the Jew's Harp Inn, which is now known as Newry House."

Newry House, the house that now stands closest to the old Newry Mill site was an inn. On the Friday 13th December 1833 a Richard Lawson was awarded a "License to retail Wines and Spirits" for the Jew's Harp Inn at Fenton's Ford.

Evidently a man named Adams was an owner of the mill. He sold it then to Alexander Clerke, who sold it on to Thomas Affleck. "Longford Past and Present" suggests that the mill was originally built by a man named Badcock.

In 1856 a Captain Butler Stoney describes Longford as "the most thriving settlement in the colony with three steam mills, large grain stores and several good hotels.

An old hand of the Pateena District recalls the time when reapers with the sickle would start the harvest at Pateena and gradually work their way through to Deloraine and then to Kentish District.

The 1866 register of residents for Table Cape indicates that John Margetts, the Deans, and the Ridges had settled on the Cape. However the Macphail's Directory of Tasmania 1867/8 records:

George Blackwell, farmer, Longford,

Henry Blackwell, Bishopsbourne ,

J. W. Margetts, farmer, Henrietta Plains.

On the 26th January 1860 George Francis is drowned in the Inglis River. The Coroners Inquest stating “George Francis Blackwell was accidentally drowned whilst endeavouring to swim his horse across the Inglis river on the twenty fifth day January instantly.” No Blackwells or Margetts were witnesses at the inquest heard before George Shekleton, a man who was to be significant in the Table Cape history. So it would appear that George Blackwell resided in Longford until he purchased his land On Table Cape in 1868.

In 1868 George Blackwell purchased 269 acres for 278 Pounds 3 Shillings and 10 Pence up on Table Cape. The property was to be known as “Springfield.” But tragedy was about to strike the family. On the 29th September 1868 Edwin’s brother Thomas William was drowned. The inquest states “*The said Thomas William Blackwell on the 29th September in the year aforesaid was engaged in driving a calf across the “Ford” at the Inglis River in the County aforesaid and it so happened that the said Tom William Blackwell accidentally casually and by Misfortune fell into the aforesaid River Inglis and in the waters thereof was there suffocated and drowned.*” Tragedy again struck this household the following week. . On the 7th October 1868 George Blackwell died of a heart attack. Caroline now 24 had married John Ridge in 1865 thus Edwin now 17 remained at “Springfield” to support his mother now 48 and his sister Anne.

Edwin’s, two sisters, Caroline and Annie, were given some tuition, perhaps at a girl’s school, but Edwin had no formal schooling and did not learn to read or write until he was about eighteen. Neville Blackwell believes that Edwin learned to read and write from the Bible and that this was reflected in his style of writing. The question still to be answered is who taught Edwin the flour milling trade?

His Father, George dies when Edwin was seventeen, yet Edwin went on to build a flour mill, but it is also certain that he knew how to dress the grinding wheels. Neville Blackwell states that Edwin knew all the tasks of flour milling by age 12 and was adept at black smithing. I suspect he learnt these trades at the Newry Mill, which would support the theory that the Blackwells were at Longford for some time. This is further supported by “The Examiner” notice of 22nd. July 1865 of the marriage between Caroline Blackwell and John Ridge

1870 was a busy year in the Anne Francis Blackwell’s household. Edwin married Mary Dean on the 4th May 1870 while her daughter Anne (Annie) married James Dean. James and Mary were the son and daughter of their neighbour Samuel Dean, born in Londonderry in 1814, he had been a wheelwright, carpenter and joiner in Geelong 1850-1859 moving then to farming in the Boat Harbour district, as mentioned earlier.

Edwin and Mary had eight children all registered as being born at “Springfield” Table Cape, except for Walter whose birth was registered at Boat Harbour. Herbert George the eldest boy was born at 5 am on the 14th May 1873, while Arthur Byron was born 22nd September 1875. Both children tragically died on the 14th May 1877, George’s 4th birthday, possibly from eating poisonous mushrooms. Bettine Reeves Walter’s

daughter says that Mary never recovered from the tragedy, suffering unstable mental health for the rest of her life.

Walter Blackwell recalled with sorrow his mother's grief and his father's efforts to find some haven where she could be at peace. The girls Matilda, Clara and Emma looked after their mother in the home during Walter Blackwell's childhood.

Edwin had an inventive and innovative mind, introducing for instance the use of a plough for tilling the soil in place of hand tools of the past. He developed plans for a treadle-driven sewing machine, which he tried unsuccessfully to patent in the United States, the plans disappearing there. As well he designed, a pea harvesting machine.

Edwin still living at Boat Harbour, set up a flourmill on the banks of Deep Creek at West Wynyard using water as the motive power. A newspaper advertisement appears in the Emu Bay Times 1897:

**Roller Mills, Wynyard Blackwell Brothers
(Late E.O. Blackwell and Sons)**

Beg to notify that they have recently added to their Extensive Plant,
Improved Machinery, and have, now on hand a very superior line of flour,
SNOWFLAKE.

Also first-class stone Flour, Pollard Bran, Barley Meal, and Crushed oats.
Fowl's Wheat always on hand.

GRISTING DONE, 6d PER BUSHEL

This would indicate that the flourmill seems to have been initiative of Edwin with sons Fred and Arnie's involvement but later sold to the two boys. The flourmill at some stage was sold to Stephen Margetts only to be maliciously burnt down in 3rd July 1925 by Herman Thompson.

Edwin may have been involved in a sawmill at Boat Harbour with a Mr Bell. This venture failed at some point. Later a mill was built at Wynyard before World War 1. "Yolla-The First Century" records that an Alvin Gray carted timber to Blackwell's mill at Wynyard, hauling the biggest log at that time which was over 2,000 super feet(4.7 cubic metres).

One of Edwin's tasks was that of dentist in Wynyard. Teeth were extracted in the barn. Once people had committed themselves to having their teeth pulled Edwin would not allow anybody to back out. Walter the youngest child would observe all this activity from the loft in the barn.

A fine horseman Edwin would be called on by the town to round up wild cattle. Legend has it that on a property, where the airport now is situated; he brought a bull under captivity by winding his whip around its tongue. He would ride until the horse was exhausted then on foot chase the cattle down. Neville claims he could charge double rates for farm labouring as he worked at double the rate. When he scythed he

could cut double the rate of others. Neville Blackwell remembers his father telling of Edwin delivering flour to Waratah when the mine was started. This was a four-day trek.

He is rumoured to have ridden to Stanley on his pushbike, to check on some land, a fortnight before he died.

The Blackwells and Deans names appear amongst those listed as pioneer families associated with the interdenominational worship at "Grove Chapel" Tollymore, a prefabricated building brought by ship from Ireland by a merchant, Mr George Shekleton and erected on his property. It is certain that Anne Francis is buried in this now derelict, graveyard, along with Samuel, Annie and James Dean but almost likely are George senior and junior Thomas, Herbert and Arthur.

Tollymore Cemetery

For those interested in the Tollymore cemetery, this is its official Status:

The Cemetery outlined in red on folio 6 is privately owned-it is not crown land. the land has never been included on the roll and as such rates are not charged on it.

It appears to be a private cemetery plot for the Margetts family of Wynyard. the area is partially surrounded by a hedge but there are no headstones. However, there are graves with bodies buried in them; this is obvious when viewing the site (Lou Rae's comment 18 February 1993)

The Land was conveyed to Stephen Ward Margetts (Con. 16/7870-folio 11 and 12) in 1925. Since then all the surrounding land has been sold to other parties. The 86.3.29 area is presently owned by Nigel Leonard Wade and Diana Roslyn Wade(CT 2928/3-folio 3 and 4)

Because the hedge surrounding the cemetery is only partial, the Wade's stock use the cemetery for grazing.

The land can't necessarily be described as abandoned because rates have never been charged and also because the cemetery is still used-by somebody. Suggest we take no further interest in it. Lou Rae will ensure that it now goes on the roll for rating purposes. That should bring the owners out eventually.

Signed K Phillips 22/2/93

Countersigned PWI "No further action required"

Stephen Ward Margetts was born in 1861 and died in 1930. The many descendants of Stephen have not rushed to claim ownership. They were Gordon, Athelstone, Ralph, Ivor and Vernon Margetts.

Between 1867 and 1879 the Christians in Boat harbour received very little spiritual help, but along with other families a monthly meeting was also held at the home of the Blackwells at "Springfield." James Dean was one of Edwin's closest friends and together they evangelized up and down the coast, and in particular from Wynyard to

Circular Head. Edwin Blackwell drove to Sister Creek in a horse and cart from Wynyard on alternate Sundays. "Yolla-The First Century" notes that the first meeting of the Yolla Gospel Chapel was held in Edgar Diprose's home Camp Vale. Later the congregation met in the homes of Thomas Atkinson. Major Roberts-Thompson and Mr Blackwell, leaders from the Wynyard Gospel Chapel, frequently attended these meetings. Herbert Blackwell used to say of Edwin's evangelistic endeavours that he was going down the coast to convert the rabbits!

Neville Blackwell comments that he was seen as a very hard man in business dealings. Having become quite wealthy he lost considerable money when the Florence Mine at Zeehan closed as a result of flooding from an underground river. Bettine suspects that despite his obvious intelligence, he may not have had a strong instinct for business and the frequent moves occasioned by Mary's ill health together with his commitment to evangelism may have militated against success in business.

Bettine's memories of Edwin "are of him arriving at our house on his bicycle. He would sit in the kitchen talking with our mother. We would take turn to sit on his knee, listen to and look at his pocket watch and then he would produce from another pocket a "conversation" sweet, pink, white or yellow. We would read the words from the sweet—"I love you"---perhaps and then he would give it to us."

"Grandfather was a dignified man, white-haired with a fresh clear complexion and a neat, square-cut beard. We thought him handsome. His build was stocky and compact, his manner sedate and his speech measured. He was inventive, independent, strong-willed perhaps even hard, and physically strong. We admired and respected him and loved him too, though I was in awe of him."

Meg Wade, daughter of Walter, remembers Edwin with great affection. He would greet her with a firm warm hug and would pull her face into his large beard. He would always have a penny in his waist coat pocket that the grandchildren knew to find. She thought him just the best of grandfathers.

Prior to Mary's death they lived in a cottage built for them by Walter adjacent to his home. Subsequently Edwin lived in Wynyard with Clara until his death in 1932. Edwin is buried in the new Wynyard Cemetery. It was planned that Anne's body would be moved to Wynyard with her husband Edwin but it never happened.

Tasmanian Post Office Directory

The directory set out E. O. Blackwell's history as follows:

1904 Farmer

1907 Wynyard

1908 Sawmills Wynyard

1910-1914 Sawmills

1916-1918 Manager Tasma Sawmill Co. Detention River.

Arnie possibly joins his father in 1912. He is shown as manager Sawmill Co. Wynyard

Fred is also recorded as Mill manager, Detention River 1919.

As a note of interest the mail in 1891 to Table cape went as follows. 107 miles west from Launceston, by weekly steamer to Wynyard then coach 7 miles

The Margetts

Of all the pioneers that were part of the Blackwell family we know more of the Margetts family than any other of our forbears. The Pecks and Curetons families forbears of the Margetts seemed to have gained land at Enderby and Theddingworth in the county of Leicestershire.

In 1544 land from an Augustinian Priory was granted to a gentleman named Brooke. He was licensed to alienate the land to a John Peck. On the death of John Peck the land was passed to a Richard Peck.

In 1549 the manor of Knossington formerly held by Brooke Priory was granted to John Peck which he continued to hold until 1815.

In 1628 with the death of William Peck his son inherited the house called The "Overhouse" which was perhaps known in the last century as the Walnut Tree house. Was this the house that legend has it that had 52 rooms and 365 windows?

It is recorded that an allotment of 60 acres was made to the Lord of the Manor Job Cureton (Died 1715) who later moved to Enderby.

In 1776 it is recorded that the house of Stephen Margetts was registered as a house of dissenters. The Margetts may have been Congregationalist. In the Knossington Congregational church the name of Henry Peck was initialled on one of the beams, while the last member of the Knossington Church was a Henry Peck who died in 1820.

The parish of Theddingworth was enclosed by agreement in 1713. In 1710 Arbitrators had been appointed to divide the land between the Lord of the Manor, the Vicar, 9 freeholders and 3 others.

Urban influences, which had long been seeping into the countryside, gathered the force of a torrent in the century after 1760. The canals of the eighteenth century and the railway of the nineteenth century along with the hosiery industry attracted an ever-increasing number of landless peasants into jobs that finally severed their lives from the deep roots of the land. The county was predominantly pastoral by 1815, and it was agreed that the depression, which lasted from 1816 to 1837, reacted less severely on the pastoral land than the arable land.

During the eighteenth century largely yeomen farmer graziers who rented their land inhabited Theddingworth. The Peck family who moved to Enderby had a house there. In 1670 the largest house in the village belonged to Thomas peck. It is probable that Thomas Peck from Theddingworth who died in 1756 was the Clerk of Peace for Leicestershire.

Our great great grandmother Anne Francis Blackwell was the grand daughter of Peck Margetts. Peck Margett's will made in 1816 indicates that they were reasonably well to do. The youngest son receives 80 acres of land while Peck's daughter Frances who

marries a Thomas Margetts receives 1200 pounds. William Margetts Anne Francis' father receives 20 pounds, in Peck's will, but the will indicates that he had received property from Peck's brother Stephen Margetts, who has no children. Stephen's will stipulates that the land is to be rented, with the annual rent being paid to Hannah his widow until her death. At this point it appears that through Peck, William will receive the land. The will of Hannah Stephen's wife is fascinating from an historical rather than a genealogical view.

The passengers on the Sir W.F. Williams were not the first Margetts to travel to the new land. Anne's uncle Dr. John Margetts arrives at Hobart and set up practice. He dies on 2 April 1825 aged 46.

It is interesting to analyze the compliment of the Margetts on the "Sir W. F. Williams."

The Captain made notes on the appearance of the passengers:

The eldest was Mrs Margetts 69. This was Anne's mother the widow of William Margetts. The Captain's notes read *Stout, fair complexion, grey eyebrows, false hair.*

Barrie Margetts believes that she was ill from the time she went on board and that there were days that they held a mirror against her mouth to determine whether she was still alive. She died in 1867 aged 79.

Anne Margetts, 33 Anne's sister-in-law, with her son Stephen, the wife of John Ward Margetts who had come to Van Dieman's Land on the "Lightning" with George Blackwell. She is described as a *stout woman, fair complexion, broad face, blackhair, dark eyes.*

William Margetts 39, *Tallish respectable looking, dark hair, large whiskers*

Mary Margetts 27 *Rather redface, dark eyes, respectable looking woman*

Thomas 2.

William 5 months.

This was Anne's eldest remaining brother in the family. Peck the eldest brother had died in 1820 aged three. Mary Langton in the 1851 census is listed as a servant so we presume that William then married her

Mary Margetts, a spinster 38 the eldest of the family.

The 1851 Census records John as a grazier and butcher, while his brother William is recorded as a farmer of 84 acres employing two labourers. After arriving in Van Dieman's Land in 1857, the Margetts family settled on a farming and grazing property in the New Norfolk district. Later, the family engaged in farming pursuits at Hagley and Black Sugar Loaf, Westbury, eventually moving to Wynyard, then a very small settlement. The first farm occupied by William Peck Margetts (Anne Frances Blackwell's brother) was adjacent to the Inglis River. After farming this property for a couple of seasons, they moved to Flowerdale and selected land from the Crown. This property was then virgin forest. William died at Flowerdale on 29 September 1897 and his wife the former Mary Langton, died on 17 January 1914.

They are both buried in the Flowerdale Cemetery. John Ward Margetts is recorded in the Post Office Directory as a farmer in 1892 and a butcher in 1896.

Further details on the Margetts family may be found in an excellent article in “Tasmanian Ancestry 2000” by Marjorie R Margetts

Wynyard

If Henry Hellyer had not chosen Emu Bay as the port serving the Hampshire and Surrey Hills, the Inglis estuary might have surpassed Emu Bay as a thriving port. John King took up two hundred acres on the coast west of the Inglis River. King was followed by many others and by 1850 most of the land west of the Inglis River as far as Jacob’s Boat Harbour was leased. About 1851 a small settlement named Alexandria developed North of the present Table Cape Bridge, and a year or so later Joseph Alexander built a small hotel. In front of the hotel Alexander built Table Cape’s first jetty. More pioneers arrived at Table Cape and Alexandria became a trading centre. In the middle of the 1850’s there was a general store, a draper’s shop, a shoemaker’s shop and a blacksmith, as well as Alexander’s hotel. The small settlement stagnated in the late 1850’s and disappeared in the 1860’s after the first bridge was built across the Inglis in 1861.

The first buildings erected on the eastern bank of the Inglis River were some huts for paling splitters, and two or three cottages built and occupied by the Government Surveyor. One of the first undertakings of the survey team was to lay out the town reserve of Wynyard. In 1853 William Moore and Robert Quiggin arrived at Wynyard with a complete sawmilling plant, which they installed together with stores and jetties, near the mouth of Camp Creek. Moore and Quiggin built up an intercolonial timber trade that at one time, was the largest in the colony.

Although the centre of a rapidly growing area, Wynyard itself grew, but slowly, in the 1850’s and was described as a “poor miserable looking place, nearly the whole covered in scrub and good sized trees here and there. There were no roads-only tracks made by paling cutters- dust in summer and slushy pot holes in winter” and “six or seven houses all told.”

During the Gold Rush years the country of the North West Coast began to be opened up for settlement. This continued despite the falling demand for produce in Victoria after the Gold Rush ended. Though fertile land it was so heavily timbered that it cost more than it was worth to clear it of trees. Some of the trees were over 200 feet high. Instead of felling the eucalypts they were ring barked.

When the trees were dead the thick undergrowth was cut down and burnt in the summer months, then the area between the trees was sown with grass and clover seed and small paddocks were fenced in with logs. The grass flourished and heavy crops of grain, potatoes and other root crops were grown in this rich virgin soul.

Most of this New Forest country was crown land taken up or selected in small sections. The selectors were mainly men who could not afford to buy a cleared farm, but were willing to make a farm of their own by roughing it.

We know nothing of the activities of the Blackwells on “Springfield” or what life was like, however Lloyd Robson in “A History of Tasmania” gives us a glimpse through the records kept of the Easton family of Flowerdale. Their selection was part-scrubbed

but included 180 acres of virgin forest mainly tall stringy-barks up to 15 feet in diameter with forty trees to the acre and Sassafrass and man-ferns to 15 feet. Here too the “roads” were appalling. At night there was endless trouble with tiger cats, which entered the house and took food. To discourage them, two rat traps were set side by side and a bone hung over them from a stick. The cat thus caught was held long enough to be dispatched with the musket.

But tragedy from accidents could strike. In one case a boy was shot when a gun discharged after he hit a tiger cat that was with the stock. A stretcher party carried the body over rough and sodden tracks to the beginning of an unformed road; it was then sledged with bullocks to Flowerdale School and conveyed by bullock wagon to Wynyard.

The house at Flowerdale had no kitchen and the women used a hut equipped with a Devon stove for cooking. There were no bricks and so a wooden chimney 6 feet square was constructed and lined with stones. In the centre the colonial stove was installed. Tiger cats continued to be a great pest, a caterpillar plague took most of the grass, and the chimney kept catching alight so that a ladder always stood against it with a bucket of water at the ready. Some people built a wooden chimney that was lightly attached to the walls of the house so that when the chimney caught fire it could be hastily detached quickly and lowered to the ground.

The chief labour was fencing, keeping tracks clear of fallen timber, scrubbing and burning, sowing seed and ring-barking. The fences were brush, dog-leg and spar; for fifteen years the owner rarely left the house without an axe on his shoulder. Stock had to be brought to the homestead clearing every night because of the danger from limbs falling from the ring-barked trees. Myrtle trees were particularly dangerous because branches fell without any warning, even on calm days. Danger from falling trees could not be under-estimated.

Each autumn a new area of land was scrubbed, sown by hand with cocksfoot seed in the ashes and harvested with a sickle at the end of January. The seed was used for another extension of more land. There were no threshing machines in that district and so flails were used.

Having secured a block, the settler and his family were confronted with years of battling the bush. The first task was to construct a house or hut. Given the abundance of timber, weatherboard dwellings were relatively easy to construct and in the 1870s labourers could be hired for 5s a day in the bush or at 12 s to 15s on a monthly basis. Timber splitters made about 10s a day, however usually working in pairs and splitting the timber with a large blade or shingle knife adapted for the purpose. They were frequently freed convicts who, through their numbers were rapidly diminishing, as they aged, by about 1880.

Nomads with a swag on their backs sought employment far and wide with the customary Tasmanian greeting ‘G’day’ to everyone they met. They were most independent and made a great point of picking and choosing employment. Tasmanian

girls seeking employment had the same attitude, adopting an egalitarian approach, which led them to behave like Joan of Arc dictating the terms of capitulation to a conquered foe.

A typical bush dwelling was made of upright weatherboards with daylight showing between them and was divided into two rooms. The fireplace was built with large stones and occupied one-third of the space. Huge pieces of wood were used as fuel, and a camp oven was suspended over the fireplace by a chain from cross-beams. Food was typically lamb, pork, or beef. Tea was drunk with every meal. Everyone kept dogs to hunt kangaroo, wallaby, possums, wild cats and the Tasmanian devil for the sake of the skins. Green-coloured parrots were a delicacy when baked and everyone in the bush tasted wallaby patties. Clearing of the bush was accomplished by the usual ring-barking after which the trees were left for three years so that the bark could fall. Those who could afford it contracted the work out; clearing 4 acres cost about 3 pound an acre. In the North East all trees less than 18 inches in diameter were first of all scrubbed in early summer so that the timber would be dry for burning. The fire having done its work, the remnants of the trees were piled up for another fire and the roots cleared. Ring-barking cost between 3 shillings and 5 shillings an acre but the plough could not be used while large trees and stumps remained in the ground. Crops such as potatoes, turnips, barley or peas were therefore chipped in with a hoe. Oats were sown with grass and a little clover seed and thus pasture was established.

Fences in the bush were log or chock-and-log, the latter considered preferable. The trunks of man-ferns made chocks 3 or 4 feet long placed transversely 5 yards apart. Logs were then laid on these longitudinally in alternate layers. The dog-leg fence also utilised material at hand. Two short spars were crossed and on them was placed a longer spar where they crossed, but this was not reckoned suitable for boundary fences. Post-and rail fences were more effective than both of these styles but of course demanded cut and squared posts, mortised holes and properly hewn nails.

It was not wise to impound ones neighbours straying stock, because as often as not their own stock was trespassing. Storms were feared because they brought down trees. After one such blow, the paddocks resembled a timber yard, with 170 trees fallen on one property.

Women's Work

"Yolla-The first Century" honours the role of women in the development of a settlement. Fear would have been a constant companion. Bush fires, snakes, lack of medical care especially in times of childbirth, childhood disease and accidents all contributed to a justifiable fear. Because of the chores and distance women did not have much contact with each other and it was a very lonely, isolated existence. The days were long and physically demanding with a succession of chores, which filled every minute. The weekly jobs might have been planned as follows:

Monday was usually washing day. A washboard and soap in the creek were used early on but if a washboard was unavailable they used the flat stone. Later, clothes were boiled in the open air in kerosene tins using soap flaked from a bar of Velvet, Preservene or Sunlight soap. Some women even made their own soap. Clothes were

transferred to a second tub for rinsing then to a third for bluing. For a whiter than white wash, blue water was used for a final rinse.

Tuesday was ironing day. At least three flat irons were used. They were heated in front of the fire or on the wood stove and were far superior to previous irons, which needed hot coals in the base. Irons were continually rubbed with beeswax, which cleaned and smoothed the surface. A piece of hessian was used to remove the wax.

Wednesday was general house cleaning day. Wooden floors were scrubbed with a brush, sandsoap, hot water and plenty of elbow grease.

Thursday was baking day when the “inner man” was provided for. Biscuits, tarts, meat and fruit pies sufficient for a week were baked and stored.

Friday was butter making day. Special pats were used to shape the butter into half and one pound blocks. In the flush of the season eight to twelve pounds was made, some for table use, some for cooking and the remainder put in a crock and salted for winter.

The **Sabbath** was a day of rest, therefore **Saturday** included preparation for Sunday. This included jobs such as shoe cleaning, food preparation, and cutting sticks for fire lighting and carting wood into the wood-box, which was usually situated on the verandah. Cleaning the household silver, brass, taps, and lamps were also Saturday chores. Saturday night was traditionally bath night; the children usually were bathed first. Water was heated in kerosene tins for the tub, which was in front of the fire. Coppers were used in some homes to heat water.

Eggs were often preserved to ensure a good supply during the winter months. Before the advent of ovens, cooking was done on the open fire. Cooking pots were hung over the fire on a hinged iron bar or crane which was fastened to the chimney wall. Depending on the size of the family, bread was made daily or several times a week. In the absence of refrigeration, fresh meat was not kept in any quantity. It was the usual practice when killing a beast to corn a portion, and share the joints with the neighbours.

The Next Generation

Fred

Fred born on 24th. January 1875 is remembered as a kindly older man smoking a pipe and maintaining an extensive and productive garden. He married Maude his wife on the 8th. December 1897 whose people - Rubocks - were bakers in Burnie, made a comfortable home for the family, for her mother who lived with them in her later years and a series of boarders. Mrs. Rubock is recalled as an old lady clad in black, and wearing a lace cap. Meg Wade remembers her sitting in what seems to have been an informal sitting room at the back of the house which was very close to the town centre. It was a special treat for the Walter's children to accompany their mother on occasional visits to Aunt Maude's home.

Fred was physically a very strong man. It was said he could carry a 200 lb. of wheat under each arm, to climb the flour mill stairs and feed the wheat to the grindstone. He worked for some time at the Wynyard sawmill, losing a finger. He was forced out of

employment in the timber industry by the onset of chronic eczema, a maddening and debilitating condition that plagued him for many years. This disorder seemed to be related to contact with sawdust especially that of Blackwood. Loris his granddaughter thinks that Fred was probably a bit of a muddler, but he was also a dreamer: fixer, innovator and an inventor in the days before much thought was given to patents. Fred was also naïve. Fred's garden was massive, a whole town block or two. Loris recalls a story whereby Fred used to "give" to Gregory's Store in Wynyard produce to sell. His son Harry finally stepped in so that he was paid for the vegetables.

Two of the major items on Maude's shopping list was 6 lb of Epsom Salts and 12 rolls of toilet paper. They used prolific quantities of toilet paper and like many people of these days actually drank the Epsom Salts as well as using it to bathe Fred's skin.

Maude was a wonderful cook, but could not give a recipe as she used duck eggs and then added a handful of this or that to balance. As they had two daughter on the farm they had plentiful supplies of butter and extra meat. They drank endless cups of tea "stewed," dark and strong as was the fashion of the day.

Fred appears in the flour milling operation but does not continue in any ownership role in the sawmill.

Fred's granddaughter Loris Mason records that Fred died at his daughter Verle's house in Jackson St, quietly in his sleep, two weeks after his son Harry had a serious heart attack, at age 46. Fred died 7th. October 1956.

The Tasmania Post Office Directory records several career changes for Fred.

1905 Wynyard Sawmilling Co. Wynyard

1906 Land Estate, General Commission agent Wynyard(see Advertisement)

1907 B Mursell Wynyard

1909 Fruit Grower

1910 Fruit Grower

1911 Fruit Grower

1913 Fruit Grower

1918 Mill manager Detention River

1919 Mill manager Detention River.

Arnold

Arnie seems to have been the entrepreneur of the family. It is thought that he was sent to a private school at Burnie while Walter was sent to Launceston. He was involved in the flourmill as a teenager, but we do not seem to know who began the sawmill, or who were the original shareholders. A legend exists that Edwin got out of the flourmill to go sawmilling and the boys were so upset they bought him out of the sawmill. There is no evidence to support this legend. Claims are made that Walter was a half shareholder when he went to World War 1 but may have found himself a third shareholder on his return.

The large mill house was the home of Arnie, his wife Essie and the six children. He became heavily involved in projects such as beekeeping. On 5th March 1924 Arnie

purchased the “Defender.” Under sail she had difficulty docking in the Inglis River so an engine was installed and she was lengthened. The engine was installed in Melbourne, Manufactured by A. McDonald & Co. Pty. Ltd. and was 3 cylinder 7 inch diameter bore with a 10 inch stroke, to produce a speed of 4 knots. The “Defender” was sold on the 23rd. April 1927.

Arnie had an unusual style of drying his timber by racking it vertically. Tasmanian Wood Products was established to manufacture rolling pins, ladies’ shoe heels, wooden bobbins, rollers and handles for push mowers, titan chisel handles and Trojan spade handles.

The mill was finally sold to APPM. Arnold George perhaps saw the mill too much as his own ignoring the claims of other participants in the mill ownership. The mill was sold to the Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd. in 1960 for 38,300 APPM shares fully paid up one pound shares, while Tasmanian Wood Products Pty. Ltd was sold for 510 APPM shares

Arnie was chairman of the Brethren Assembly at Wynyard. It was a mill joke that people would find a word written all over a piece of paper. This would be his new word when he spoke on Sunday morning. Everybody on Sunday morning knew when Arnie was about to speak by the little cough he would make before standing. Somewhat ponderous of speech and inclined to be preoccupied he provided a useful response in times of indecision- “Would you like tea or coffee, Arnie?” - “Er Cocoa thank you.”

In a tribute to AG Blackwell for his 22 years service to the Burnie Marine Board, the “Advocate” reported the following:

Warden Hilder expressed surprise at the announcement referring to it as a “bombshell.” As one of the older members he expressed sincere appreciation of the work Warden Blackwell had done for the board in his 22 years service. Invaluable and business experience had been at the board’s disposal throughout that time. he wished Warden Blackwell good health in his retirement.

Warden Stratton regretted that the board was losing one of the “old hands.” Men like Warden Blackwell had made the board what it was today, and his experience and knowledge would be a loss.

Other wardens supported the remarks. The Secretary expressed his thanks to the retiring warden for his help in his difficult early days as secretary.

Warden Blackwell said he deeply regretted having to leave the board, but medical advice left him no alternative. he felt he had always done his best in the interests of the port and its development, had never spoken hastily and always formed his own opinion at the same time co-operating as well as he could.

“The Advocate” 11:2:1965

Funeral of Mr. A.G. Blackwell, Wynyard

Mr. Arnold George Blackwell, of Wynyard, who died in the Spencer Hospital, had been in ill health for some time.

He was born in Boat Harbor and lived at Wynyard for most of his life. In his earlier years he was in flour milling, and in the early 1900's was instrumental in founding the Wynyard Sawmilling Company, and remained its Managing Director till he retirement in 1962.

Mr. Blackwell spent considerable time and effort in obtaining options for the land, which when submitted to the Government, became what is known as the Forestry Department's Olinda Plantation.

He was foundation member of the North-Western Sawmilers Association. This was formed with other well-know Coastal timber identities.

Mr. Blackwell gave valued community service. He was a member of the Marine Board of Burnie for 22 years years, and till the time of his death, was keenly interested in port development. He was also a member of the Wynyard Fire Brigade Board for many years.

Mr. Blackwell had a life-long association with the Wynyard Gospel Hall where he was Superintendent of the Sunday School for many years.

A large and representative gathering attended the funeral at the Wynyard Gospel Hall and the Public Cemetery. The services were conducted by Mr. A.L. Hamilton and Mr. W. Roberts Thomson.

Pallbearers were K. H. Blackwell, Mr. F. R. Hutchison. A. N. Hutchison, C. W. Stratton, R. L. Hyland, and E. V. Percy.

Carriers were K. H. Blackwell, F.R. Hutchison, A. N. Hutchison, L. E. Wade, R. F. Reeve, and J. C. Ambrose.

The chief mourners were sons Herbert, and Charles, daughters Misses Zilla. and Edith, brother Mr. W.L. Blackwell, daughter-in law, son-in-law and grandsons. His wife died 14 years ago.

A long list of those who sent wreaths follows. Arnold George Blackwell was 86 when he died.

The "Tasmania Post Office Directory" records the following on A.G. Blackwell
1904 -1911 Apiarist Wynyard
1912 Manager Sawmill Co. Wynyard
1913 Apiarist
1918 Manager Sawmill Co
1919 Manager sawmill
1932-33 Manager Sawmill

Matilda born 1881 "Auntie Tilly"

There was a strong family resemblance between Auntie Tillie and her two sisters. All were bright-eyed, dark-haired and brisk, almost sharp of speech. They were capable and upright people, meticulous housekeepers, good cooks, hospitable and supportive of their husbands, family and church.

Aunt Tillie married Robert Hutchison whose forebears were Scottish, fishing and boat building people. Bob came from Montrose Scotland and was a mine winder/carpenter. He worked at the local sawmill during Bettine's childhood he was leader of the singing at the local Gospel Hall, a stickler for correct musical time and a meticulous secretary and treasurer for the assembly. Bob was an avid photographer journeying to Woolnorth with the hunters, but he only shot with his camera.

Clara born 1883 "Auntie Clare"

Auntie Clare married Harry Morgan, a widower with a daughter Ella. Harry was also employed at the local sawmill, subsequently moving to Burnie where he ran a grocery store. Their first two sons did not survive infancy. Aunt Clare was deaf for many years, and was hyperactive, rarely resting. Bettine recalls her undergoing surgery for an enlarged goitre when such surgery was quite hazardous. Bettine comments that these were gutsy women, bearing their losses with stoicism as did so many people in similar circumstances.

Lacemaking was on one of Auntie Clare's special skills. Her deafness caused difficulties in communication; what she heard was not always what had been said which must have made her life more difficult.

Emma born 1884

Auntie Emma married Harold Smith and lived in Launceston. She worked tirelessly for the Launceston Gospel Chapel in Elizabeth Street.

Walter born 1890

The youngest son of the family was like his father, an inventive man, a talented self taught engineer responsible for all the technical work entailed in the establishment of the sawmill and its operation, maintenance and end products. He explored the forest for leases, for millable timber, built roads and bridges, established camps for bushmen, devised kiln-drying processes and rarely had time off. Even the annual Christmas break saw him re-bricking the furnace as soon as the bricks could be handled. Around 1947 the turning plant was burnt down. Either Eddie or AG had not kept the insurance up to date forcing Walter to rebuild much of the burnt out equipment, re-welding laminated knives, and straightening the bed of the lathe. In 1916 he went overseas with the Army Medical Corp spending three years on active service as a stretcher bearer and later an ambulance driver in France and Belgium. For some years later he suffered recurrent breathing problems from gas inhalation.

Walter, Bettine suspects, was a solitary child and became a very private person. There were companions with whom he enjoyed occasional shooting and fishing excursions but these were increasingly rare in Bettine's childhood.

“Salmon and trout fishing in the river nearby, mainly at night, became his interest and pleasure providing much-appreciated treats during the depression years. He loved the trees and flowers of the forest bringing home wild laurel, myrtle fronds, snow berries, waratah for our mother’s pleasure.”

Walter had quite a sense of humour, somewhat quashed in later life as worries and sorrow increased. He married a second time several years after the death of his first wife. From 1972 to 1979 he and Win lived and worked with SIL in Papua New Guinea, building houses, bridges, sawmilling and roadmaking. Walter also was connected with the Wynyard Assembly and in the 1950’s active in the construction of a new building.

Walter sold his shareholding in the sawmill I suspect out of frustration, while I suspect the Arnie side of the family saw Walter as slow and methodical. I would think it close to the truth that Arnie set out to incorporate ownership of the mill into his own family. While he was successful the outcome seems a sad one with Charles gaining management of the mill.

“The Advocate” 27th. March 1981
Death of Wal Blackwell (90)

Wal Blackwell a grand old gentleman of 90, died at Wynyard on Tuesday.

For 51 years he ran a sawmill with his brothers at Wynyard. In 1958 he went to Papua New Guinea to build a sawmill in a remote area of the Eastern Highlands for the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

In 1956 SIL had started work in the country in linguistic research, Bible translation and literacy. There was an urgent need for timber to build houses for translators and other workers.

When Mr. Blackwell was first approached the idea of a 69-year-old man who had been plagued with ill health most of his life, going to New Guinea seemed ridiculous. During World War I he served as a stretcher bearer in France and his lungs were permanently damaged by poisonous gas.

After building the sawmill under extremely difficult conditions he maintained and operated it for nine years.

When he was nearly 80, he and his wife Win retired to Wynyard.

Memories of Loris Mason Granddaughter of Fred Blackwell

Fred Loris' father, Walter her uncle, and Harry her father were close friends. Harry kept a lot to himself and tended to do his talking with Wal , his uncle. All three men had a shed. They used to raid each other's shed when they needed tools. She observed they did so with great regard for each other, and seemed to know what the other wanted.

Walter, Loris comments, was a surrogate dad to Rex, her brother during the time Harry was in the army during World War 2. He took us "bush" when he needed to go out on a Saturday. He would explain how he selected trees to log-the original greenie

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