

# progenitor



***Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.***

*The Family History Place*



**Digby "Digger" Tomlinson**  
13-04-1944  
18-12-2023

# GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY INC

Unit 1, Harry Giese Building, 1 Willeroo Street (off Henbury Ave)

Tiwi NT 0810

**POSTAL ADDRESS:** The Secretary Genealogical Society of the NT Inc.

PO Box 37212 Winnellie NT 0821 Australia

**ENQUIRIES:** Telephone 08 89817363 during library hours

Mon, Tues 9.30 -5.15, Wed 6pm - 9pm, Sat 1pm – 5.30pm

**Email:** committee@gsnt.org.au

**Web Page:** [www.gsnt.org.au](http://www.gsnt.org.au)

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**IN MEMORY OF**  
**DIGGER TOMLINSON**  
**AKA DIGBY HAROLD TOMLINSON**  
**AKA HAROLD DIGBY TOMLINSON**  
**Born Perth WA 13.04.1944 – Died Darwin 18.12.2023.**

When someone is very ill you think about what you can do for them to make life a bit better. I never expected my husband of 51 years to be nearing the end until a doctor told us both. Digger's response was typically him, a man of few words "When you gotta go, you gotta go".

I cannot let Digger's passing go unrecorded in relation to his commitment to our Library. Whatever I was interested in he supported it wholeheartedly in every way he could. He worked behind the scenes time and time again.

When the editor of our journal *Progenitor* left, Digger stepped in. I asked him if he would be able to help produce *Progenitor* until we found someone else. He said yes, and then one day some 23 or so years later he said I think you should find another Editor. For my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday Digger bought me a computer. As he was a shift worker, he would use **my** computer during the day and became so proficient in its use it became **his** computer.

We collated the journal together and prepared it for posting stage. Photocopiers did not have a stapling function then, so Digger explored long-armed staplers. The Library purchased one which lasted until the day before the Congress in 2006. A replacement could not be found in Darwin, but Digger managed to arrange with a southern supplier for a replacement to arrive the next day.

We manually collated the journal on our dining room table. Later the round table in the Library was used for this function. There was also stapling, folding, and putting nearly 300 odd journals in an envelope, then sorting by post code. Digger explored a cheaper option for envelopes, hence the plastic bag. Yearly he compiled a list of articles appearing in our journal.

Digger fixed broken items in the library on a regular basis and built shelving when there was next to no money to purchase it. We needed a table, so he started to go to auctions at one of which he found wood that he brought home, sanded back, and made into a table.

Digger was able to bid for surplus furniture from his workplace. In this way he was able to get some solid tables. He won his bid and we used these tables in Cavenagh Street then Smith Street and now Carpentaria.

Digger had experience in setting up camera ready copies for printing of books, helping several people over the years. A Mr Dick Duckworth, a Victorian member of our Library, would come on his yearly pilgrimage to Darwin part of which he would spend days in our Library.

Mr Duckworth had carried out considerable research on Ellis Matthewman Bankin a motorcyclist who perished in Central Australia in 1936. He wanted his research to be printed in book form so that others could learn about schoolteacher Bankin. He discussed printing the book with various printing firms and realised the cost to set the book up was expensive. Digger offered to help him to achieve his aim to get the book printed. This was achieved in 1994.

When the Society put a bid in and were given the 2006 *Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry*, we had registrations close to 400. Delegates from Australia, New Zealand, Wales, Ireland, England, Canada and one from the US came. Digger was very supportive. We both worked on this Congress at home. That is not to say that there wasn't a GSNT Congress Committee - it is just that we did the bulk of the work because I had just retired, and Digger worked shift work.

Although we had received donations and a grant which helped significantly with some of the set-up expenses, GSNT did not have loads of money. What we didn't have was money for IT and printing and all the bits and pieces you need for an event to be successful.

Digger knew a bit about our *Filemaker program*; by the time the Congress was upon us he had become an expert in the program teaching himself as a need arose. Filemaker and the way it was used significantly helped on the admin side of what had to be achieved.

The Congress Proceedings is a book containing overviews of all speaker's papers. Most delegates order a copy with their registration. Digger worked on the camera-ready copy tirelessly. The preparation of the book ready for the printer saved a considerable amount of money.

A delegate from Canada offered to edit the papers. We sold out of the Congress Proceedings within the first couple of days and we reprinted it three times to satisfy orders that kept coming in. For the previous Congresses the Proceedings were made available near to the end of the event usually the last day. GSNT had our proceedings ready to give out on registration day (the first day) which was a massive hit among the Delegates.

Congresses before us had dinners which were very expensive, more often than not. Digger helped me organise the BBQ on the lawns of the Casino which was a real hit. One of the overseas well-dressed guests said she had never been to a BBQ in her life and that this is a great way to socialise. She was impressed like everyone else.

When we needed our Armed Services Section sorted, Digger volunteered. He had a great memory for Armed Services history particularly dates and places. He sorted the books at Caven-

agh Street and when we moved to Smith Street. However, when we moved to the Harry Giese Building, he was not well enough to do this a third time.

Digger loved his family and was always there for each and every one of us. Son, daughter, grandsons, granddaughter, and great grandsons. Gone from our view but never will be forgotten.



## **FROM Australian Ancestors - Family History Research Group**

### **Francois Somme**

112 years ago on April 14, 1912 at 11:40 pm, the Titanic collided with an iceberg and sank in less than three hours on the night of April 14 to 15 at 2:20 am in the ocean North Atlantic causing the death of 1500 people to whom, in these few lines, I would like to pay a very respectful tribute.

The RMS Titanic was the second of three huge, exceptionally luxurious ships built by White Star Line. It took nearly three years to build the Titanic, beginning on March 31, 1909, in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

When completed, the Titanic was the largest movable object ever made. It was 882.5 feet long, 92.5 feet wide, 175 feet high, and displaced 66,000 tons of water. That is almost as long as eight Statues of Liberty placed horizontally in a line.

After conducting sea trials on April 2, 1912, the Titanic left later that same day for Southampton, England to enlist her crew and to be loaded with supplies.

On the morning of April 10, 1912, 914 passengers boarded the Titanic. At noon, the ship left port and headed for Cherbourg, France, where it made a quick stop before heading to Queenstown (now called Cobh) in Ireland.

At these stops, a handful of people got off and a few hundred boarded the Titanic. By the time the Titanic left Queenstown at 1:30 p.m. on April 11, 1912, heading for New York, the liner was carrying more than 2,200 people, including passengers and crew.

The first two days across the Atlantic, April 12–13 went smoothly. The crew worked hard, and the passengers enjoyed their luxurious surroundings. Sunday, April 14 also started out relatively uneventful, but it later became deadly.

Throughout the day on April 14, the Titanic received a number of wireless messages from other ships warning about icebergs along their path. However, for various reasons, not all of these warnings made it to the bridge.

Captain Edward John Smith, unaware of how serious the warnings had become, retired to his room for the night at 9:20 p.m. At that time, the lookouts had been told to be a bit more diligent in their observations, but the Titanic was still steaming full speed ahead.

The evening was cold and clear, but the moon was not bright. That, coupled with the fact that the lookouts did not have access to binoculars, meant that the lookouts spotted the iceberg only when it was directly in front of the Titanic.

At 11:40 p.m., the lookouts rang the bell to issue a warning and used a phone to call the bridge. First Officer Murdoch ordered, "hard a-starboard" (sharp left turn). He also ordered the engine room to put the engines in reverse. The Titanic did bank left, but it wasn't quite enough.

Thirty - seven seconds after the lookouts warned the bridge, the Titanic's starboard (right) side scraped along the iceberg below the waterline. Many passengers had already gone to sleep and thus were unaware that there had been a serious accident. Even passengers that were still awake felt little as the Titanic hit the iceberg. Captain Smith, however, knew that something was very wrong and went back to the bridge.

After taking a survey of the ship, Captain Smith realized that the ship was taking on a lot of water. Although the ship was built to continue floating if three of its 16 bulkheads had filled with water, six were already filling fast. Upon the realization that the Titanic was sinking, Captain Smith ordered the lifeboats to be uncovered (12:05 a.m.) and for the wireless operators on board to begin sending distress calls (12:10 a.m.).

At first, many of the passengers did not comprehend the severity of the situation. It was a cold night, and the Titanic still seemed like a safe place, so many people were not ready to get into the lifeboats when the first one launched at 12:45 a.m. As it became increasingly obvious that the Titanic was sinking, the rush to get on a lifeboat became desperate.

Women and children were to board the lifeboats first; however, early on, some men also were allowed to get into the lifeboats. To the horror of everyone on board, there were not enough lifeboats to save everyone. During the design process, it had been decided to place only 16 standard lifeboats and four collapsible lifeboats on the Titanic because any more would have cluttered the deck. If the 20 lifeboats that were on the Titanic had been properly filled, which they were not, 1,178 could have been saved (just over half of those on board).

Once the last lifeboat was lowered at 2:05 a.m. on April 15, 1912, those remaining on board the Titanic reacted in different ways. Some grabbed any object that might float (like deck chairs), threw the object overboard, and then jumped in after it. Others stayed on board because they were stuck within the ship or had determined to die with dignity. The water was freezing, so anyone stuck in the water for more than a couple of minutes froze to death.

At 2:18 a.m. on April 15, 1912, the Titanic snapped in half and then fully sank two minutes later.

Although several ships received the Titanic's distress calls and changed their course to help, it was the Carpathia that was the first to arrive, seen by survivors in the lifeboats around 3:30 a.m. The first survivor stepped aboard the Carpathia at 4:10 a.m., and for the next four hours, the rest of the survivors boarded the Carpathia.

Once all the survivors were on board, the Carpathia headed to New York, arriving on the evening of April 18, 1912. In all, a total of 705 people were rescued and 1,517 perished.

Today the wreck of the Titanic rests in peace with its passengers, who, silently, still walk on the deck of this liner which shattered the hopes and dreams of men and women, of children who, on their way to New York, wanted to start a new life, a better life but which, aboard the supposedly unsinkable Titanic, took so many lives in the ocean on a starry and icy night. Little by little, the wreck is disappearing but the memory of its passengers will never be forgotten, the sinking of the Titanic was the greatest maritime disaster in history, the symbol of an era that will forever remain in our hearts.

Among the men, children and women who were on the Titanic when it sank was an Australian woman, Evelyn Marsden. I would like to share her story.

Evelyn Marsden was born on 15 October 1883 at Stockyard Creek, Dalkey, Australia. She was the daughter of Walter Henry Marsden (1853-1921), a glazier and Annie Bradshaw (1847-1926) who both hailed from Derbyshire, England. They were married in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire on 13 February 1872 before settling in Chesterfield, Derbyshire where their first two children were born.

Evelyn had two sisters and two brothers, Agnes (born in 1874), Lilian (born in 1875), Thomas Bradshaw (born in 1878) and Archibald John.

The Marsden family left British shores from Gravesend, Kent; they arrived in Melbourne aboard the Durham on 1 October 1877, initially staying in the state of Victoria before settling in Stockyard Creek, South Australia where Evelyn's father took up work on the trains, later rising to become a stationmaster. Stockyard Creek is located 80 km north of Adelaide but is now deserted and in ruins. By 1912 Evelyn's father was the Stationmaster at Hoyleton, a small town about 20 km further north.

In her youth, Evelyn would visit a farm at Murray Bridge, South Australia and whilst there she was taught how to row a boat against the tides and currents of the Murray River. When Evelyn returned to Australia after the Titanic disaster she made her way up to the farm and thanked the family for teaching her to row and handle a boat properly. She was also noted as a proficient equestrian:

"Miss Evelyn Marsden, the stewardess on the ill-fated Titanic, was one of the cleverest horse-women in the district. When living with her parents at Hoyleton she was frequently seen on horseback journeying between Hoyleton, Watervale and Mintaro, and there was certainly no lady rider more graceful, when mounted on a hack than Miss Marsden. As stated yesterday, Miss Marsden was among those saved from the wreck." *The Advertiser (Adelaide)*, 23 April 1912.

Following school, Evelyn trained as a nurse and worked in hospitals in Melbourne. Despite her dedication to nursing, Miss Marsden had a wanderlust and a love of the ocean, and with some gentle persuasion from friends, she was convinced to pursue her passions. She left Australia and appears to have first set foot on British soil in 1908 when on 21 January that year, described as a nurse, she stepped off the Persic and into London following the long journey from Melbourne.

"Miss Evelyn Marsden, the stewardess on the ill-fated Titanic, is a qualified nurse, and while living with her parents at Hoyleton was extremely popular with all classes of the community. She also had opportunities for learning telegraphy which were made the most use of, and before leaving this State had become an accomplished operator. As a skilled horsewoman she has few superiors, and mounted on a lady's hack she could ride as gracefully as any, and clear a fence or water jump with perfect ease." *The Herald*, 23 April 1912.

During her stay in England, Evelyn was welcomed by her extended family in Chesterfield, with which she became close, and she made many new friends and acquaintances. She became engaged to Welsh physician William Abel James (born on October 5, 1879), a ship's doctor on the London-Sydney run and who by 1912 was serving aboard the *Macedonia*. James was born in Llantarnam near Cwmbran, Wales, the son of schoolmaster William John James and the former Elizabeth Ann Brown. The marriage date between Dr James and Miss Marsden was set for later in 1912.

Evelyn Marsden went on to serve aboard the *Olympic* and later survived the collision between that ship and HMS *Hawke* in 1911, she reportedly being close to the impact zone.

When she signed-on to the *Titanic* on 6 April 1912 Miss Marsden gave her address as 7 West Marlands Terrace in Polygon, Southampton and as a stewardess she was paid monthly wages of £3, 10s. Whilst aboard it appears that she shared a cabin with Irish stewardess Mary Sloan. In a letter to family Miss Sloan detailed some of the events and made mention of Miss Marsden:

"I never lost my head that dreadful night. When she struck at a quarter to twelve and the engines stopped. I knew very well something was wrong. Dr Simpson came and told me the mails were afloat. Things were pretty bad. He brought Miss Marsden and me into his room and gave us a little whiskey and water. I laughed and asked him if he thought we needed it, and he said we should. Miss Marsden was crying he was cross with her. He asked me if I was afraid, I replied I was not. He said, "Well spoken like a true Ulster girl". He had to hurry away to see if there was anyone hurt. We helped him on with his great coat, I never saw him again. I felt better after, then I saw our dear old Doctor Laughlin, I asked him to tell me the worst. He said, "Child, things are very bad." I indeed got a life belt and got on deck. I went round my rooms to see if my passengers were all up and if they had lifebelts on. Poor Mr Andrews came along, I read in his face all I wanted to know."

Miss Marsden is believed to have been rescued in lifeboat 16; she was not required to give evidence to either the American or British Inquiries into the sinking and upon her arrival in Britain cabled her uncle, George Robinson of Chesterfield, to inform him of her safety. Back in Australia her anxious parents also received notification of her wellbeing around the same time, many Australian newspapers having initially reported her as among the missing. The telegram they received contained just two, but extremely comforting words:

"Safe. Evelyn."

Shortly after the *Titanic* tragedy, Evelyn was married in Southampton on 27 July 1912 to Dr William Abel James and both soon left British shores, arriving in Adelaide, Australia at the Semaphore anchorage in November 1912:

"Memories of the *Titanic* disaster were recalled on Saturday by the arrival at the Outer Harbour of the *White Star* steamer *Irishman*, which had on board two survivors from the ill-fated liner. Miss Evelyn Marsden, now the wife of Dr James (surgeon on the *Irishman*), is travelling on the vessel with her husband. Mrs James, who at the time of the great maritime mishap was a stewardess on the *Titanic*, is the daughter of Mr and Mrs W. H. Marsden, of Hoyleton (South Australia). When



the Irishman reached the wharf Mrs James went ashore and renewed her acquaintances with many of her old South Australian friends. The second officer of the Irishman (Mr J. Boxhall) was also one of the fortunate ones to be saved from the Titanic, on which vessel he acted as fourth officer." *The Daily Herald*, 4 November 1912.

Her husband took up residence as a doctor at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and they moved into a new apartment in Ruthven Mansions on Pulteney Street. During the first world war Dr James served as a medical officer, being deployed to Egypt and later serving in Britain before returning to Australia in 1919. The couple then moved to the South Australian coastal town of Wallaroo and lived and worked there for 15 months before they moved to the Sydney suburb of Bondi where William continued to practice as a doctor. They had no children and their last recorded address was 85 Curlewis Street in Bondi.



Evelyn James, née Marsden died 30 August 1938 aged 54 and was buried at Waverley Cemetery in Sydney, Australia. Her despondent husband died a week later on 7 September 1938, reportedly after a short illness; his grand-nephew said Dr James arranged to die when he did as he could not bear to live without his beloved Evelyn.

His obituary was written as follows: "DR. W. A. JAMES

The funeral of Dr. William Abel James, of Bondi, who died on Wednesday, at the age of 58 years, took place to the Waverley Cemetery yesterday. Dr. James, who came to Australia from Wales in 1911, served as a surgeon with the A.I.F. in Egypt, and elsewhere. His wife died about a week ago. The chief mourners were Mr. D.M. Thomas (cousin), Mrs. Thomas, and Miss Gladly Thomas. The Rev. R.F. Tacon conducted the graveside service." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1938.



Evelyn and her husband were buried at Waverley Cemetery in Sydney, Australia in an unmarked grave. Their resting place remained unmarked until 5 October 2000 when a stone was finally erected on the site.

Son of Elizabeth Ann (née Brown) & William John James.

William enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 1 March 1915 and he served as a Medical Officer, rank Captain, at the No. 1 Australian Army Hospital in the Middle East. On his return to Australia he served at the No. 7 Australian General Hospital, Keswick, S.A. He was discharged from the AIF in May 1917 but remained in the AAMC. He volunteered a second time in June 1918 and served in England at the No. 2 Australian Army Hospital at Southall. He returned to Australia in May 1919 and his appointment terminated on 28 August 1919 in the 4th M.D. He resumed practice in New South Wales.

## **Trooper Thomas Bradshaw Marsden,**

2nd Mounted Rifles Contingent, South Australia. From Kapunda, North Adelaide, Australia. Son of Walter Henry Marsden and Annie Louisa Marsden. Served in South Africa during the Second Anglo Boer War 1899-1902. Died aged 22 (or 23) years of pneumonia at the military hospital, Britstown, Northern Cape, South Africa. Also commemorated on Panel 3 of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, Australia.

Birth 21 Jan 1878

Victoria, Australia

Death 2 Apr 1900 (aged 22)

Britstown, Pixley ka Seme District Municipality,  
Northern Cape, South Africa

Burial Britstown Garden of Remembrance

Britstown, Pixley ka Seme District Municipality,  
Northern Cape, South Africa

The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Virtual War Memorial give date of death as 5 Apr 1900.

**Service number** 13  
**Rank** Private  
**Unit** Second Mounted Rifles,  
South Australian Contingent

**Service** Colonial Military Forces

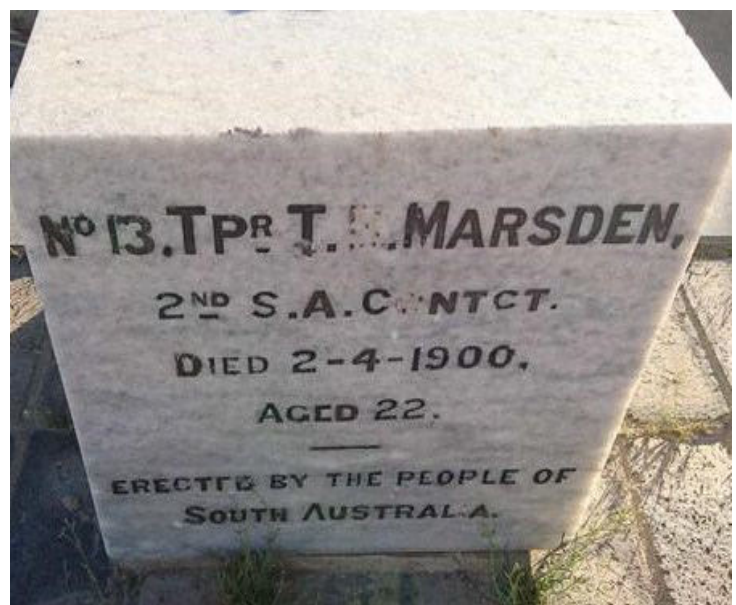
**Conflict/Operation** South Africa,  
1899-1902  
(Boer War)

**Conflict Eligibility Date** South Africa, 1899-  
1902  
(Boer War)

**Date of Death** 5 April 1900

**Place of Death** Britstown, South  
Africa

**Source** AWM142 Roll of  
Honour cards, War in South Africa, 1899-  
1902



## HISTORICAL BRITSTOWN CEMETERY

Sj de Klerk

Britstown was laid out on portion of the farm Gembokfontein in 1877 and named after owner Hans Brits. At the time, the traffic to the diamond diggings at Kimberley had grown to such an extent that another village on the Great North Road was warranted. Initially it was administered by the Dutch Reformed Church, but in March 1890 a village management board was instituted. It became a municipality in 1899.

The cemetery is situated on the western side of the N12 as one approaches the southern end of Britstown. It must have been established soon after the town was laid out as it is reported that the earliest Jewish burial appears to have been of Max Levy in 1897. He was buried in the general cemetery as there was no Jewish precinct at the time.

Although a smallish cemetery, there are several graves of historical interest. A cemetery roadway runs through the centre in a north/south direction and provides good access to all the graves.

On the western end of the roadway are tombstones of interest to Anglo Boer War enthusiasts. Nearer to the northern boundary is a memorial to burgers Johannes Senekal and Jacobus J. Naude who fell at Houwater and to Christiaan Boonzaaier from Calvinia who drowned in the Brak River at Holgatsfontein around 15 September 1901. The memorial was erected by two ladies from Lemoenkloof and two ladies from Smouspoort.

This battle took place on 6 March 1900 when a British force of between 500 and 700 men with six field pieces attacked a force of Cape Rebels under General Liebenberg on the farm Houwater west of Britstown. The Rebels were initially under severe pressure but managed to gain the initiative and forced the British force to retreat all the way to Britstown. British casualties were three killed, fourteen wounded and seven taken prisoner while on the Rebels' side two were killed and three wounded.

Slightly further to the south but also on the western side of the roadway is the military precinct where the remains of thirteen or fourteen imperial soldiers are interred.

Their details are:

- J. McDonald. Rank and unit unknown. Date of Death (DoD) 5/02/1898.
- T. Stephen. Rank and unit unknown. DoD 28/12/1898 (see note below).
- J. Lees. Rank and unit unknown. DoD 13/06/1898.
- Sergeant T. Eaton. Royal Warwickshire. DoD 1/02/1900.
- Private W. Franklyn. Royal Warwickshire. DoD 4/02/1900.
- George T. N. Barton. Imperial Yeomanry. DoD 16/03/1900. 'Aged 23. Son of Reverend J & S. W. Barton of Havant England. A good soldier of Jesus Christ'.
- Private T. Arton. Lancashire Fusiliers. DoD 30/03/1902.
- Private G. Mercier. Imperial Yeomanry. DoD 8/05/1902.
- Trooper T. B. Marsden. 2nd SA Contingent. DoD 2/04/1900. 'Erected by the people of South Australia'.
- Private D. Peters. Suffolk Regiment. DoD 4/04/1900.
- Private T. Stephen. Bedfordshire Regiment. DoD 27/12/1900. A duplicate of no. 2 above?



- L. Corporal G. Ashpole. Bedfordshire Regiment. DoD 28/12/1900.
- Private Dunkerton. Wiltshire Regiment. DoD 9/01/1901.
- Private T. Lloyd. Royal Welsh Fusiliers. DoD 23/05/1901.

#### Reference

Grobler J. (2018). *Anglo Boer War (South African War) 1899 – 1902*. Historical Guide to Monument and Sites in South Africa. 30° South Publishers, Pinetown.



***Memorial tombstone to three burgers who fell during the Anglo Boer War (SJ de Klerk)***

## OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT

*Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT : 1873 - 1927), Thursday 20 April 1916, page 12*

Since their returning to Egypt letters from the Darwin boys have been more frequent and lengthy. In the trenches the opportunities for writing were scant and the censorship severe. In some of Harry Pott's home letters references are made to many Darwin boys which are of interest. The following are brief extracts. "Capt. O'Sullivan is over this way, but I have not seen anything of him. . . . I met Jim and Joe Cain, Jim Mac-Donald, Fred Yeadon, and Alan Power the other day. They are camped pretty close to where we are. Fred Yeadon is a Sergeant in the 22nd battalion. Fred has been re-commended for the Legion of Honor for something that he did in the trenches. I hope he receives it. . . . (-) said in her letter that Bert Morris had lost his leg, but Leslie Giles saw him in Heliopolis. He was wounded in leg but was just about right When Les saw him. I see by

the papers that Les was wounded but his was not as bad as mine. . . . Jim Cain said that Cyril had gone to England. He was wounded in the hand. . . . I have applied for leave to go to Cairo to see Jim Fawcett, who is in hospital at Heliopolis. . . . The other night Alan Power and young Upjohn called to see me and we went for a walk to see McLennan, the Vet. He is a Captain in the Vet. Corps and he told us that Macpherson from Survey Department is in the Ammunition Column. He is a bombardier.

I also hear that Drs. Goldsmith, Fry, Maplestone and Howson are here. . . . I had a letter from poor Jim Fawcett. He is in hospital with enteric and has been ill for eleven weeks. The following of the Darwin contingent are away ill: Giles, Levy, Stiles, Meredith, Fawcett, and Loftthause. (This was on January, 31st.) Speaking of his experiences Harry, says- "The snipers did very good work on the Peninsula, and we accounted for over 140 Turks.

The Christmas Billy I received was from a South Australian lady, Miss Tudor of Prince Alfred College."

Sid Lauder writes to a friend - "I have had a bit of experience since I have joined the army. The first day I was put on pick and shovel, and after working for about five minutes Johnny Turk sent over an 8 inch shell which landed three feet away from where we were working and did not explode. I can tell you I was bluffed that day, but I soon got used to them. . . . Do you remember (name censored)? He had his head blown off by a bomb at the Apex. Writing on January 18th Sydney says- "Meningitis has broken out in our brigade; we lost one of the finest chaps in the Battalion the other day. I think we are going to have some trouble with it."

Privates Dunkley, Keogh and Braithwaite expected to leave Brisbane for "Somewhere" on the 21st March.

## WOMEN REMEMBERING WOMEN DURING THE WAR

From *Wartime Territory* Aug-Dec 1995

Studio portrait of VFX12006 (V146546) Lieutenant (Lt) Alva Kelway Storrie, AANS, 115 Heidelberg Military Hospital, of Melbourne, Vic. Lt Storrie enlisted on 3 March 1942 and nursed at Adelaide River, NT and Tablelands Hospital, Qld. She was discharged on 22 April 1947. From Australia War Memorial

### Alva's Story

Alva (Storrie Courtis) was a member of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) for five years, 18 months of which she spent working at the 107AGH Hospital, Adelaide River, Northern Territory.

"We lived in huts and most of the hospital wards were tents, although each ward had one large shed as one arm of the cross, the kitchen was in the centre and three large marquees completed the complex.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P04995.004

"We worked very hard on 12-hour shifts with only an hour off for lunch. It was very hot and there was never time for a shower during the day, although we always felt we needed one after working all morning in the heat.

"There were different wards for different diseases. I remember working on the dysentery ward. There were about 50 patients and they were very ill and it was not very pleasant.

"There was not much we could do for them because we did not have the antibiotics which are available today. Supaquadine was about all we had."

When the war ended, Alva was posted to Sydney.

"Because we had training in and experience of infectious disease nursing, we were eventually sent to nurse POWs and troops coming back from Singapore and other Asian locations.

"Some were in dreadful condition and suffering from hookworm, beri-beri and Tuberculosis. Those suffering from TB were the worst. There was no cure for some of them. We lost a few patients, but most eventually recovered enough to go home. I often wonder how many of them survived over the years to live "normal" lives."

Alva's younger brother, Don, a Flight Sergeant with the RAAF, was lost in action when his Darwin-based Catalina crashed at sea in March 1945. Her sister Merle, Don's twin, served with the WRANS.

## **Vera's Story**

Vera (Whalen) Douglass, Australian Army Women's Medical Services (AAMWS), also served with the 107AGH which relocated to Berrimah from Adelaide River in November 1944.

"Our hospital was located seven miles out of Darwin at Berrimah and was constructed of open huts and wards because of the tropical climate.

"Mosquito nets were a must after sunset, and we also used them to cover our faces, arms and legs to avoid malaria. Salt tablets were also essential because of the very hot, steamy and wet conditions.

"There were lots of centipedes, spiders, snakes and scorpions and we had to look in our shoes, uniforms and beds in case some had crawled in there.

"It was at Darwin that we really knew there was a war on. The harbour was littered with dozens of ships, aeroplanes and there was rubble and rubbish everywhere. The American headquarters, bank, shops, homes and streets had been wiped out."

"A large number of patients were nursed at the 107AGH until they were well enough to rejoin their units, to be flown south for further treatment, rec leave or discharge.

Our off duty hours were very hectic. With so many servicemen – Navy, Army, Air Force – and the American Forces, we were always receiving invitations to dances, the pictures, BBQs and cruises on the harbour.

"It was funny to see us dressed in summer uniforms with leggings up to our knees and our arms and faces plastered with greasy mosquito repellent but we had to do it for protection."

Vera was in Darwin when the war ended on August 15 and when the POWs returned from Singapore and Japan.

"Then came the day we had all prayed and waited for – the war was over. The date, August 15, was my birthday so I was given the rest of the day off.

“Everybody went mad. There were great celebrations, ships horn blasting, planes doing aerial acrobats, cars, trucks and jeeps all tooting. Anything that made a noise was used. Our CO conducted a very lovely “Thanksgiving” service. The celebrations continued for weeks.

“I was still at the hospital on 21 September 1945, when the hospital ship Oranje arrived in Darwin Harbour with the first POWs from Japan aboard.

“There were approximately 730 men on board – 130 cot cases and the rest walking. Darwin really gave them all a hero’s welcome, which they so richly deserved. Bands from all services played at the wharf and went on board to play for patients who could not get off the ship.

“It was great. All the POWs we asking “any VX or SX or WX?” (meaning anyone from Victoria, South Australia or West Australia). It was great to see so many soldiers from our home states.

“Some came back to our hospital and were entertained at lunch and to talk, some went off to Mindil Beach for a picnic. We gave them all a wonderful welcome home.

“The RAAF flew up uniforms, badges, colour patches, service ribbons, so every veteran could be outfitted with uniforms before leaving Darwin.

“All this was repeated again on 1 October when we greeted the Highland Chieftain in the same proud way we met the Oranje.

“Overall, my ‘war experience’ was happy and rewarding. I would do it all over again.”



WW11 Hospital ship Oranje of the Netherlands which was handed to the British Government to be used as a hospital ship to carry Australian and New Zealand troops in 1941. Oranje made 41 voyages as a hospital ship until November 1945.

## **Helen’s Story**

Helen (Pickering) Pointon obtained a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Certificate at the age of 16 and attended lectures at night and on her days off from work, as well as working long hours at the local hospital. All voluntary, of course.

Helen also worked with the Women’s Land Army harvesting crops vital to the feeding of Australian troops until she turned 18 and was old enough to join the Women Royal Naval Service.

“I went out with the girls and did harvesting jobs. Very hard and very dirty work. Indeed, my mother used to hose me off outside on the lawn before allowing me in the house.”



Helen joined the WRANS in 1944 and served at HMAS Penguin and Cerberus until her discharge in March 1946, not quite 21 years old.

## HOW TO RESEARCH AND HONOUR OUR RETURNED WAR HEROES

**Ian D Burrett JP**

Why I wrote the book and a summary of the contents.

Because of years of debilitating physical and emotional problems service people who returned from all wars and conflicts, and their families, probably suffered more than those who died during, or because of, their service. This being the case I feel that such people have just as much right to be named on community war memorials as those who died.

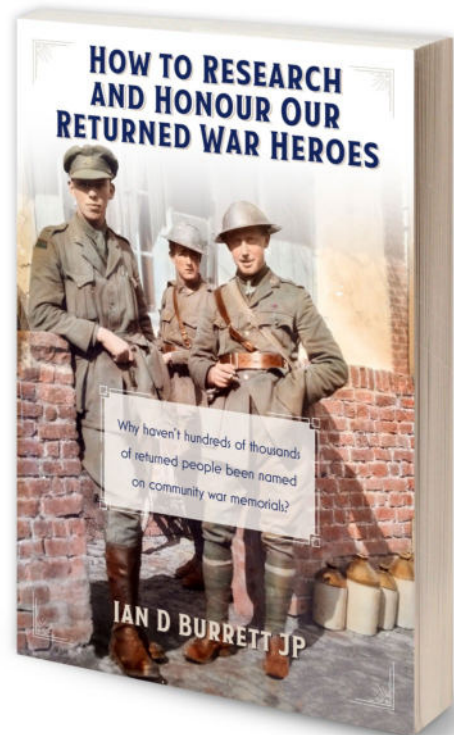
**Hundreds of thousands of our returned heroes have not been so honoured.**

Late in 2015 I commenced a project to update Lithgow and district World War One memorials. The Lithgow City RSL sub-Branch did not initially support the project. They were confused with the workings of the Office of Australian War Graves which only relates to those who died. Because of this the Lithgow City Council also did not initially support my project.

I concluded that the major reason why our returned heroes have not been named on community war memorials is that neither of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Australian War Memorial, RSL Australia, the Australian Local Government Association or the National Archives of Australia have published any guidelines to assist communities to identify people from their locality who should be included and other information that would assist communities to undertake this task. In many cases the task has been put into the 'too hard basket'.

My research was a steep learning curve. It included countless letters, emails and phone calls to all tiers of government and relevant institutions. I spent over 1500 hours producing over 500 pages of research which resulted in the sub-Branch and Council finally supporting the project. The end result was that an additional 762 men and women were named on a plaque which was unveiled at Queen Elizabeth Park Lithgow on 11 November 2018. The names included 72 people who had died and were not named on the original Lithgow WWI Cenotaph which names 131 people. A further 108 people were added to the Portland NSW WWI war memorial.

The book is a result of my battles with bureaucracy. It refers readers to relevant websites with step-by-step guidelines and handy hints as to how to navigate them. It also helps individuals research their service person ancestor and details how more can be done to keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive. It provides valuable assistance to RSL sub-Branches, Historical Societies, schools and anyone studying military history. **Every librarian assisting such people will find that the book**





**makes this task much easier.** Hopefully, it will provide a good guide for the 'powers that be' to produce a publication which improves upon my limited knowledge and experience.

98.4% of the nearly 103,000 names on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial relate to the two world wars. As well as WWI the book provides detailed information on researching our WWII heroes and some information relating to other conflicts.

I'm not an academic or trained historian. I'm merely a proud Aussie who hopes that what I have learned will be helpful to others.

The inspiration for this book is my father, 568 Lt Col Athol Frederick (Joe) Burrett DSO MID. My mother was born on 11 November 1915 whilst Dad was fighting at Gallipoli. As a 20 year old Sergeant with the 3rd Battalion he was one of the 12,000 Aussies to land at Gallipoli on 25th & 26th of April 1915. Of these, he was one of less than 300 to be still fighting when the war ended. Two days after landing he received a bullet to his upper left arm. After recovering he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and was one of the officers to blow a whistle to commence the Lone Pine charge on 6 August 1915. He was the platoon commander, and in the same trench, when John Patrick (Jack) Hamilton received the Victoria Cross. He was promoted to Major and 2IC of the Battalion on 2 December 1916 aged 22 years 5 months. It is likely he is the youngest Aussie to have risen through the other ranks to be promoted to Major. He commanded the battalion on many occasions including its last battle at Hargicourt in France during October 1918.

My NSW car number plates read LESTWF. I was at Gallipoli on 6 August 2015 for the 100th centenary of the Lone Pine charge. After laying the last wreath I was given the honour of blowing a replica of the whistle that Dad blew to lead the charge almost exactly 100 years previously. I could not prevent shedding tears.

I'm confident that you will find my book to be an interesting as well as an informative read.

With sincere best wishes

Ian Burrett JP

'Tidy House', 30 Railway Avenue, Portland, NSW, 2847

Phone & amp; Answering Machine: 02 6355 5546

(Best to ring after dark) Mobile: 0428 363 385

Email: [buzz1@southernphone.com.au](mailto:buzz1@southernphone.com.au)

Book Website: [www.howtoresearchwarheroes.com](http://www.howtoresearchwarheroes.com)

The book is available directly from the author via **[www.howtoresearchwarheroes.com](http://www.howtoresearchwarheroes.com)** or via email at [buzz1@southernphone.com.au](mailto:buzz1@southernphone.com.au). The book is not available via any other source. The RRP is \$39.99, however, when purchasing via the website, please enter code **LIBRARY22/23** to attract a discounted price of \$30.00 per book. Relevant postage costs will be applied at checkout. If you require an invoice, please email Ian directly at [buzz1@southernphone.com.au](mailto:buzz1@southernphone.com.au) with the number of books required and delivery address.

## JAMES MAY Born August 21<sup>st</sup> 1851 Died 29<sup>th</sup> July 1876.

James May arrived in Darwin on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 1875 aboard the 530 ton “*Claud Hamilton*” from Port Adelaide.

James May was a teamster involved in hauling goods from Port Darwin to the goldfields at Pine Creek. The Northern Territory Times and Gazette on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1875 reported his death. He had passed through the Shackle near Yam Creek and camped for the night some six miles from Granite Crossing. There were signs of his having had an evening meal and camped in his bed under the wagon. It is surmised that he died that evening or next morning. His body was found several days later by a passing traveller. A large dog had been feeding on the head and left side of the body presenting a sickening spectacle. The dog was destroyed and May’s body was taken to the Shackle for burial.

An inquest into the death was held in Palmerston in September. May had been involved in an accident days before his death, falling from a galloping horse and injuring his rib cage.

He spoke to several persons about feeling pain in his ribs before starting off with his team.

Several witnesses were called at the inquest and the jury returned a verdict, “*That the deceased was found dead, but there was no evidence to show the cause of Death*”.

The supposition is that the poor fellow ruptured some blood vessels as blood was found where his head had been lying before being dragged away by the dog. No signs of native tracks were observable, and the loading on the wagon was intact.

A public subscription was raised for the provision of a grave headstone. By the time the headstone had arrived from Adelaide, all those involved in burying James had moved on and the actual location of the grave had been lost.

The headstone was offloaded at the Shackle and lay there undisturbed until around 1992 when Telstra were laying underground communication cabling and unearthed the headstone.

It was brought to Darwin and since that time was stored in a number of locations until taken into protective custody by John Matthews a long term Territory resident and surveyor with Lands.



The Headstone has been returned to the Pine Creek Museum for safe keeping.



Overland Telegraph Line 1876

#### Reference

Kelsey D.E. 1975 *The Shackle* Lynton Griffin Press Adelaide.

Northern Territory Times Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup> 1875 Shipping.

Northern Territory Times and Gazette Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 1876

GSNT Deaths Burials Pioneers PR No 2931.

## **Northern Gateways Conference: 150 Years of Chinese in the Northern Territory**

In August 2014, the NT Chinese Museum convened the inaugural History and Culture Day for Seniors attended by more than 100 local interstate senior citizens. The feature event was a presentation entitled 'The Dragon Descends on Darwin' by local historians Peter and Sheila Forrest, which provided a comprehensive overview of the Chinese community's history and contributions to the Northern Territory.

The Forrests made specific mention of the fact that the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2014, was the 140th anniversary of the arrival of the ss Vidar, which brought the first boatload of Chinese labourers to the Northern Territory. They suggested that the Chinese community prepare for the 150th anniversary in 2024 and plan some form of commemoration and celebration of that historic event.

To this end, the Chinese Museum is co-hosting the conference *Northern Gateways: Chinese Heritage and History in Northern Australia* from September 20th to 23rd, 2024.

By "co-hosting", it is meant that this will be the 9<sup>th</sup> biennial "No-Fuss" conference of Chinese Heritage in North Australia Incorporated. CHINA Inc., as it is known, is a Queensland-based organisation dedicated to improving the understanding and appreciation of the contribution of Chinese history and heritage to the settling of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Peter and Sheila Forrest will deliver the keynote address, specifically to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Chinese in the Northern Territory.

Under the broad theme Northern Gateways: Chinese Australian History and Heritage in Northern Australia, the conference aims to explore sub-themes relevant to the Chinese in north Australia, such as: Chinese families and family history; ports, travel routes and connections; objects as tellers of history in collections, art and archaeology; direct action and courts; welfare, repatriation and war; scattered legacies of objects and language; and worship and temples.

The conference is open to all. An impressive array of presenters, from everyday amateur historians to leading history and archaeological academics, have already committed to the conference. More than a third of the presentations are directly about Darwin and the Northern Territory. Among the many intriguing presentations is one by Ely Finch, who visited the Museum and the Seniors lunch in 2022. Ely, a leading linguist and translator, will tell us about Australia's Chinese Language Place Names.

Members interested in this conference can join the mailing list by contacting [museum@chungwahnt.asn.au](mailto:museum@chungwahnt.asn.au). The formal registration period will open on 1 June 2024 and run until 20 August 2024. The conference's sobriquet, "no-fuss," means that conference fees will be kept to an absolute minimum, and half-day options are anticipated.

**Neville Jones May 2024**