

## Eating in the Fifties

Pasta had not been invented. It was macaroni or spaghetti.

Curry was a surname.

A take-away was a mathematical problem.

Pizza? Sounds like a leaning tower somewhere.

Bananas and oranges only appeared at Christmas time.

All chips were plain.

Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.

Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green.

Cubed sugar was regarded as posh.

Chickens didn't have fingers in those days.

None of us had ever heard of yogurt.

Healthy food consisted of anything edible.

Cooking outside was called camping.

Seaweed was not recognized as food.

'Kebab' was not even a word, never mind a food.

Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days, and was regarded as being white gold.

Prunes were medicinal.

Surprisingly muesli was readily available. It was called cattle food.

Pineapples came in chunks in tins, we had not even seen a picture of a real one.

Water came out of a tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than gasoline for it, they would have become a laughing stock.

The one thing that we never ever had on/at our table in the fifties ... was elbows, hats and mobile phones.

## HON PETER WALSH MP

Member for Murray Plains

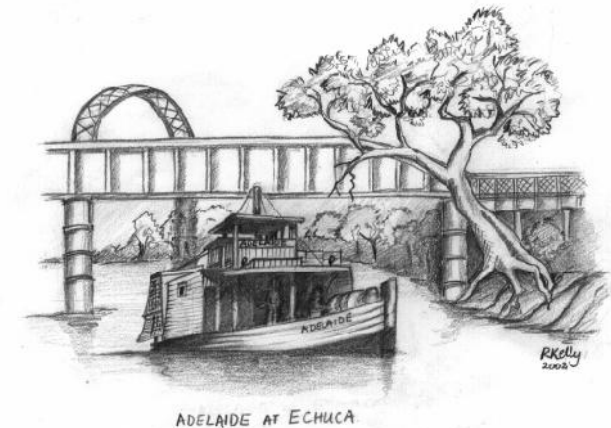
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# Bridges & Branches

Number 118 June 2020



Quarterly Newsletter  
of the  
ECHUCA-MOAMA FAMILY HISTORY  
GROUP INC.

## Echuca-Moama Family History Group Inc

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**The Monthly Group Meeting** is held in the Research Room, in Murray Esplanade - the second Tuesday of each month, except January, at 1.30pm. **The Monthly Group Activity Session** is held from October to March, on the third Thursday at 7.30 pm, and April to September on the third Saturday at 1.30 pm. **At St James Parish Centre, Maiden St. Moama.**

Excursions can replace the Group Activity Sessions.

The **Research Room** at 9 Murray Esplanade, Echuca, is open and manned every Monday and Friday between 11.00am -3.00pm, except on Public Holidays. At other times contact Barbara (03) 5480 1501

## Towns /areas covered by the EMFHG Inc

**In Victoria:** Ballendella, Bamawm, Barmah, Echuca, Echuca Village, Kanyapella, Kotta, Koyuga, Lockington, McEvoy's, Millewa, Nanneella, Patho, Piavella, Pine Grove, Restdown, Rochester, Roslynmede, Strathallan, Tennyson, Tongala, Torrumbarry and Wyuna

**In NSW** Bunnaloo, Caldwell, Mathoura, Moama, Thyra and Womboota

The Editors welcome articles, notes, queries, book reviews, comments and any items of interest. Contributions to Bridges & Branches are accepted in good faith but the Echuca-Moama Family History Group Inc. or the Editors, do not accept responsibility for the accuracy of information nor for the opinions expressed. Items can be emailed to:-  
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Peter was promoted to Lance-Corporal in France but on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1917, he was killed in action. Peter was buried at Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Picardie.

Arthur Newman Barnes, the son of Matthew and Elizabeth (Newman) Barnes and was born at Boort. He was married to Victoria Adelaide Margaret, the daughter of William and Joan Disher. Arthur also sailed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1916 on the *HMAT Nestor*. On the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1917 Arthur died of wounds in France and was buried at Etapies Military Cemetery. Victoria Adelaide with her three young children kept the farm at Lower Thule, but for a time lived at Womboota, where the children could attend school. Victoria's sister Jessie Osborough Disher had married John Williamson and they were living at Womboota. The Lower Thule land is still owned and worked by the family.

Two of Arthur Barnes's brothers were in England at the start of the war and both joined the British Army.

William Irvine and Jane (Knight) Thompson were living at Moulamein with their four sons when Jane died in 1906 followed by William in 1909. The four sons scattered with Robert Henry, the youngest, who had been born at Violet Town in 1891, finding work at the Lower Thule. There he met and in 1913 married Lily May Disher. Lily was also a daughter of the William and Joan Disher. On the 19<sup>th</sup> February 1917, Robert embarked on the *Ballarat* for England. He was killed in action in France on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 1918, and was buried at Le Grand Hazard Military Cemetery. Lily with her two young children also moved to be near her two sisters at Womboota.

James Casey the son of Patrick and Susannah Casey was born at Rushworth. He was aged 29 years and single when

he embarked in Melbourne on the *HMAT Renic* on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 1916, landing at Plymouth for further training. In November he was moved to France, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917, James was killed in action in Belgium and was buried at Meivin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders. The Casey family still own the original holding which interestingly is they had called 'Tantrum.'

John Wilkinson Chambers was born at Sandhurst the son of John Henry and Mary (Turner) Chambers. He was 22 when on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 1916 he embarked on the *HMAT Renic*, with James Casey, arriving at Plymouth. He was promoted to Lance-Corporal in April 1918. In June he was wounded then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1918, John was killed in action and he was buried at Peronne Communal Cemetery, Picardie, France.

David Corbett Vincombe was the last and the youngest of the sons of the Lower Thule settlers to enlist. He was the son of George and Alison (Smart) Vincombe and he was just 18 years when he sailed from Sydney on the *Whiltshire* on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1918. David returned to Australia on the *MT Malta* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1919, the last of the locals to return home. Members of his family still farm the original holding.

Like so many other small communities, the war had taken a heavy toll on the district, which further united the isolated families.

Over one hundred years after the first families arrived in the area, three of the blocks are still owned by the descendants of the original settlers. Although the area is no longer as isolated, the families have maintained their strong community spirit.

*Shirley Durrant*

## Lower Thule Settlers and their contribution the war effort.

In 1904 the strip of land between the Thule Lagoon and the Perricoota State Forest, which borders the northern bank of the Murray River, was offered for Settlement Lease. Over the next few years families, all from Victoria, arrived and took up the blocks. Most of the settlers came with young families.

As part of the agreement of a Settlement Lease, the holders had to report regularly to the Board in Deniliquin, some 75km away, and meet a list of conditions regarding the development of their block. The whole area was timbered which had to be cleared. The soil was good light farming country, so that the settlers in time, were able to establish profitable farms. Unlike most subdivisions which are in a block formation, the lower Thule Settlement Leases were in a long narrow strip. The blocks being side by side giving each block access to the lagoon and to the forest. The lagoon does not always have water but when it is dry 'soaks' were quite common which provided some stock and domestic water.

On the other side of the lagoon was Thule, the whole of that land was still held as the original station. On the Lower Thule, as the area became known, settlers soon developed into a strong close knit community.

By 1906, a small mud brick school had been build by the settlers in a central position, and a teacher had been employed. In 1911 they opened a hall nearby which provided a venue for all their social activities. As well as socials and dances, roller skating was held regularly. In later years it was also the venue for church services. A tennis court was made in a paddock across the road.

With the outbreak of World War 1, the young men from the Lower Thule flocked

to enlist.

James Service was the first to sail. James had been born at Trentham in 1889 the youngest of John and Sophia (Jack) Service's nine children. By the time that James enlisted both his parents had died so he gave the name of his oldest brother, William Charles as his next of kin. James was 23 years old when he embarked on the *HMS Malva* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1916. He served in Belgium where he was wounded, returning home on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1918. Soon after he returned James sold his Lower Thule block, and moved to land on the Moonee Swamp Road, east of Deniliquin.

Three sons of William and Joan (Fraser) Disher enlisted. William Frazer was born at Rupanyup and at 40 years he was the oldest of the three. He was married to Margaret Mary Whitmore and on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1916 he embarked on the *HMAT 32 Themestocles* arriving at Plymouth for training. William returned home on the *HT Port Darwin* and was discharged on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1918.

John Alexander was born at Cannum, and in 1909 he married Phoebe Belbin at Moama. The Belbin family were the first to settle in the area. They had selected a heavily timbered block on the north west corner of Perricoota Station. Their block joined the land where some 10 years later, the Lower Thule Settlement Lease blocks would be available. John was 34 years old when he enlisted. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1916 he sailed from Melbourne on the *HMAT Nestor*. John suffered from shell shock and returned to Australia on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1918.

The third son, Peter Wood the youngest of the brothers, was born at Hopetoun and was 22 years old and single when he sailed with John on the *HMAT Nestor*.

## President's Report

Could we have envisaged the events that have happened so far this year? We can truly say History does repeat itself. This time one hundred years ago our ancestors were experiencing a pestilence with a different name, Spanish Flu. We have Corona Virus or Covid 19 which sounds more sophisticated, but it is still taking people's lives as did the Spanish Flu. Comparisons are inevitable but we are not through this pandemic yet so they are premature at the moment. We are far better off than our ancestors, as we have advanced medical science to help us and the lessons of history.

Self-isolation has shut down the normal running of our Family History Group, but I hope you have all been busy at home doing your research and writing your stories. In times like these when we have time to slow down and contemplate our lives nostalgia has been quite a motivating force for me. It has made me drag out boxes of family photos and begin scanning them to create a digital record, for any younger members of the family who might want them. Story writing has been possible with more time, no meetings, no family history room duty and other community activities involving the group. I have missed these things but have zoomed or face timed people for catch ups. This might be the way we do things for the rest of the year and perhaps even longer. We have not had a Monthly meeting since March, but I hope that we can have one in June on line at least, and make decisions about the AGM in July. We may have better idea of the restrictions that are still on activities. Consumer Affairs has allowed Incorporated Associations like our group the opportunity to apply for an extension of

time for up to three months.

During this time the one issue that has been under discussion has been the Shire License that was being negotiated before the lock down in March. Basically this is an abbreviated version of what we are putting to the shire.

The Shire will put a special condition in the license to say EMFHG will not have to pay municipal rates and land taxes. This is stated in a Peppercorn license policy on the Shire's website. A Peppercorn License covers not for profit community organizations such as our group.

Currently EMFHG pays the electricity for the property which is in accordance with any licensee, and we understand that we should pay the water usage and sewage charges.

The Shire has indicated that EMFHG should pay the insurance on the building of \$649.05 which covers the building and the contents, as stated in the Peppercorn License agreement under costs incurred by the tenant. In our case we already pay contents insurance through GSV (Genealogical Society of Victoria) and this insurance also includes Public liability too. This is a total premium of \$961.29.

Most insurance policies separate building and contents insurance, and as the Shire have no contents in the Murray Hotel, it is only building insurance they are covering and they own the building so we should not be required to pay it. EMFHG believes that Shire should accept this insurance cover for the contents that we hold through GSV.

The shire has also suggested that we might have to pay the fire service levy on the building which is approximately \$862.00. We could not afford to pay this

levy. Of course we will pay the yearly license fee of \$110.00. Stay tuned for the next installment.

Until September stay safe and enjoy your research.

Judy McCleary

## Women Who Helped Shape Our History

March was Women's History Month and with the emphasis on remembering women who helped shape our history, I recalled that I knew two sisters who were among 500 women employees of the textile factory, E Lucas & Co in Ballarat that did just that. They planted trees in the Avenue of Honour to remember every service man and woman from Ballarat that enlisted their services in WWI. These women also had a hand in the construction of the Arch of Victory. The two sisters I refer to are, my late Aunt Emily Simpkin and my late mother Ivy Laverick nee Simpkin.

For the hundreds of women who worked at E. Lucas & Co Pty Ltd, it was much more than a textile company. When Eleanor Lucas, a widow with four young children to support, set up her backroom workshop in Ballarat in 1888, she offered her customers a personal guarantee that the garments would meet high standards in workmanship. She believed it a moral as well as a commercial responsibility to meet that specification. When Mrs Lucas was joined in the business by her son from her first marriage, Edward Hargreaves Price, the tradition she had established endured. Through the years, three of Edward's sons, and two of his grandsons followed into the business. It was a matter of family pride, and the reputation upon which Mrs Lucas and her son built their business, that enabled them to survive the bad times and prosper in good times. By the 1960's Lucas & Co was one of the largest and oldest manufacturers of feminine fashion wear

in Australia and the Commonwealth, and was a family concern, not a public company. The company produced women's fashion with departments dedicated to children's wear, babies wear and underwear. The clothing ranged from colourful underwear to parachutes, and war uniforms for service men and women. The women also made clothes for renowned Italian designer Pierre Cardin, which were sold under the name of his label.

As the company expanded, so did the community work that the women did outside the factory. My mother always spoke about Tilly Thompson, a Director in the company, and her boss. Apparently, in 1917 a suggestion was made - reputedly, by Tilly that an Avenue of trees should be planted to honour every Ballarat service man and woman who enlisted. Each tree was to bear a plate engraved with the name and unit, and the entrance to the Avenue of Honour was to be marked by a memorial arch. The idea was sponsored enthusiastically by the Lucas girls, who with the firm's support raised over ten thousand pounds, to finance and maintain the unique monument. The first instalment of money was proceeds from a football match waged between the Lucas Girls of Ballarat and the Khaki Girls of Melbourne. Yes, way back in 1920 the Lucas Girls had a football team. (I never ever heard my mother mention a football team!). The Lucas girls were in the forefront of Ballarats civilian effort to help the fighting men. The girls' war

poppies in France to raise money for the war's orphans. Guérin sent poppy sellers to London ahead of Armistice Day in 1921, attracting the attention of Field Marshal Douglas Haig, who supported and encouraged the sales. This practice spread throughout the

British Empire, and so the tradition of selling the poppies in countries that belonged the Commonwealth was established.

Judy McCleary

## 4775 Private Oliver Thaw

He was born at Torrumbarry on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1894, to his parents James Watson Thaw and Louise Elizabeth Thaw (nee Fowell).

He enlisted on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1915 at Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, he was 21 years of age a single, engine driver, of Patho, Victoria, his next of kin is listed as his mother Mrs. Louise Elizabeth Thaw, 42 Smith St. Manley, NSW, he became a member of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> reinforcements, he embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, Australia on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1916, on board the *HMAT Wiltshire A18*.

He was appointed Lance Corporal on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1917 in France, returned to England from France 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1917 to 33<sup>rd</sup> Training Squad at Fern Hill camp, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, England, on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1918 with the 8<sup>th</sup> training squad, promoted to Corporal Mechanic of the Australian Flying Corp on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1918, promoted to acting Sergeant on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1919 at Depot Wedover.

He married Norah Audrey Cooke in September 1918, at Cirencester, Gloucestershire, England, 2<sup>nd</sup> of Sep-

tember 1918; she was a daughter of James Cooke and Delilah Ann Cooke (Nee Walton).

He returned to Australia with his wife on board the *HT Konig Fredrich* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1919, England, 2<sup>nd</sup> class, they disembarked on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1919, he was awarded the 1914 - 1915 Star Medal, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Oliver Thaw also served in WW2 service no 280, series description A9301 : RAAF, NCOs and other ranks he enlisted at Point Cook, Victoria, year range 1921 to 1948, his next of kin is listed as Mrs Thaw.

Later he was working as an Engineer and living in the Sunshine area of Melbourne, Norah died in 1973, aged 72 at Sunshine, Victoria, Australia, Oliver died in the 1981 at Richmond, Victoria, Australia aged 87.

Sue Shaw



Discipline is doing what doesn't come naturally.

## In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

This poem was written by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae who was a soldier, physician and poet after the Second Battle of Ypres in the Flanders region of Belgium (April 1915), where the German army launched one of the first chemical attacks in the history of the war. McCrae, a Canadian with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, wrote the poem after the death of his friend in this battle. He described this battle as a “nightmare” in a letter to his mother.

“For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally. In all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds ... And behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way.”

The poem written from a dead soldier’s perspective presents their sacrifice and urges the living continue the fight. It was written early in the conflict when the romanticism of war still prevailed in popular writings before the true reality of the conflict brought bitterness and disillusion for soldiers and civilians alike.

“In Flanders Fields” was first published in *Punch* magazine in December 1915

and became the most popular poem of its era being republished throughout the war. It became a universal expression of the sacrifice of the soldiers who died in the First World War.

Soldiers took encouragement from it as a statement of their duty to those who died, while people on the home front viewed it as defining the cause for which their brothers and sons were fighting. (John Bassett 1984) It was one of the most quoted poems during the war being used to recruit more soldiers, sell war bonds and criticize pacifists. It was even set to music in the USA.

The red poppies that McCrae referred to had been associated with conflict since the Napoleonic Wars. The lime content in the surface soil, was greatly increased during war leaving the poppy as one of the few plants still able to grow in Flanders Fields..

Inspired by "In Flanders Fields", at the end of the war American Professor Moina Michael resolved to wear a red poppy year-round to honour the soldiers who had died, and campaigned to have them adopted as an official symbol of remembrance by US War veterans. She also wrote a poem "We Shall Keep the Faith". In 1920 Madame E. Guérin supported Michael's proposal, and was inspired to sell

activity was firstly directed to keeping a YMCA worker at the front – which they did for 3 years, and sending comfort parcels, and farewelling contingents of soldiers. Then, between 1917 and 1919, the girls planted almost four thousand trees to create the Avenue of Honour. The first of trees were planted on 3 June 1917, and the last of them on 6 August 1919. It covered a 23 kilometre stretch along the Western High Way (which is now adjacent to the Freeway), and was the longest of its type in the world. The Lucas girls paid for, and planted every one of them.

The Arch of Victory was opened in 1920 by the Prince of Wales. The Lucas factory gave the young Prince a pair of satin pyjamas to which every girl had contributed a stitch. The associated Temple of Remembrance is situated at the entrance of the Avenue of Honour. It houses a book of Remembrance which contains the names of every person in whose honour a tree was planted. My Aunt Emily planted her own brother’s tree on 25 August 1917. Soldier Henry Leon Simpkin’s tree number is 2296. He was in the 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion and he enlisted on 27/3/1916. His sisters are listed as planting many a tree of remembrance for WW1 soldiers. The “Lucas Girls” raised thousands of pounds for the construction of the Arch of Victory, a 17 metre high structure which overlooks Sturt Street. Tilly Thompson apparently, rang Robert

Selkirk, manager of Selkirk Brick, suggesting he donate the necessary bricks to build the Arch of Victory! At the time, Selkirk’s had no vehicles available, so the Lucas girls loaded the bricks into carts for delivery to the arch site.

The “Old Lucas Girls” marked 100 years in 2015 with pride. As well as their contribution to the manufacturing industry in regional Victoria, the Lucas Girls are just as famous for their commitment to philanthropic work since WW1. From earlier years, a selfless spirit was installed in the employees and they have continued the tradition of service to the Ballarat community. Every year the group not only donates around \$1,500 towards the upkeep and maintenance to the Avenue of Honour, they also donate too many other Ballarat Charities.

Of course all of this happened before my time at E Lucas & Co. - me and my friends are the “Young Lucas Girls”- we only came along in the early sixties, but were equally proud to be a Lucas employee. It was an institution for many Ballarat workers. When I visit the Arch of Victory and the Avenue of Honour, I’m not only reminded of my Uncle, but also of my Aunt and Mother, the two sisters who helped shape this wonderful memorial of history, and I think about the wonderful work place we all had the privilege to be part of.

*Helen Hastie.*



The Lucas girls' football team, 1920

## A Woman of Resilience and Determination

Women's Suffrage Petition of 1891 was a very significant document in the history of Victoria. It was compiled by a very small number of women who embarked on a door knocking campaign across Victoria, collecting signatures for a petition to present to the Victorian Government, requesting that "Women should vote on Equal terms with Men". These women collected almost 30,000 signatures over a period of six to ten weeks. They were able to do this by using the rail way lines to access the women of Victoria. Before these signatures were presented to parliament they were collated and pasted onto cotton or linen and these were sewn together to make one enormous petition 260 metres long- the "Monster Petition".

My great grandmother Rebecca Sarah Jarvis signed the "Monster Petition" when she was living at 138 Albert Street East Brunswick. The family moved to Melbourne from Adelaide and was living in a little single fronted cottage. It was the beginning of the Great Depression of the 1890's. It was so severe that many of the men remained too proud to accept charity, and newspaper reports of the day tell of women and children, weak and dressed in rags, queuing up to accept food hand-outs. The Melbourne Age published graphic descriptions of life in the working class suburbs of Melbourne. The conditions endured by the families of the unemployed were dire. "You look round the rooms, the kitchen with its empty shelves, the fireless grate, the solitary crust on a plate placed high up on the dresser to be out of the reach of the children till the time comes for its use.."

It appears that all the signatories on the petition page my great grandmother signed were women who lived in Albert Street East Brunswick, which was a one of those working class suburbs mentioned in the newspapers. The act of signing the petition is a reflection of her characteristic independence. Rebecca was a survivor. She arrived at the Port of Adelaide in March 1882 with her husband George Burrows and their three daughters, one of whom was my grandmother, Mary who was 2 months old. Rebecca was 23 and had endured a birth at sea. Married at 19, because she was pregnant, Rebecca, who could read and write, had already shown her strength of character, leaving Lincolnshire to make a life in a new country with George.

Six years later and with two more daughters, Rebecca was alone as George had died. She may not have known how George died as there is no positive death certificate, which records next of kin. Did he die in Adelaide or Melbourne? Their last daughter, Helena was born on 1st December 1886 at Balaklava. It was around this time that the family moved to Victoria. George died possibly in 1887.

I found a registration of the death of a George Burrows on February 13<sup>th</sup> 1887; he was 29, a labourer and born in Lincolnshire. He died of Febris Intercia which is a form of Typhoid. His age, his place of birth matches with my George, and there is another person on the death



Rebecca Sarah Jarvis

impassable, but to their relief, Mr Zealley the manager of Perricoota, was able to find them very comfortable accommodation.

By the end of March the Riverine Herald was reporting that the cases of the flu in both Melbourne and Sydney were on the decline, and there was hope that the restrictions on peoples movements and gatherings would soon be able to be eased. Although the reports were so positive at this point, it was a year before the crisis was really over and that things could get back to normal.

Locally where the number of people infected had been low, by the end of March, the biggest concern was the closure of the border, and the necessity of quarantine at the Torrumbarry camp for 7 days before being allowed to return to NSW. Some reports of the conditions at the camp were far from flattering.

With much pressure on the NSW Government from the local councils, on the 25<sup>th</sup> February the time in quarantine was reduced to four days.

It was announced on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1919, in the Riverine Herald, that people who had lived in Echuca or within 10 miles of Echuca, and had not

been outside that area for the last seven days, would be able to cross the bridge at 2 pm that afternoon, to return home after passing a health check. A crowd of family and friends gathered in the NSW side of the bridge to greet the returning family members.

Then on 14<sup>th</sup> March people residing in Echuca or within 10 miles could apply for a permit which would allow them to move and trade across the border.

Reading through the Riverine Herald for 1919 I have been struck by many similarities to our present situation, with what was happening 101 years ago. Our modern communication will no doubt have helped the efforts to get the problem under control. But it also means we are far more aware of the extent of the devastation which is being caused across the world. One hundred and one years ago, without all our advances in medicine and communications, after appalling losses, the people of the world did pick themselves up and carry-on. I am sure that if we are prepared to take all the time which is needed, we will be able to do the same, and hopefully even come out wiser and less self centred than we were before.

*Shirley Durrant*

No Moama Sir Walter Raleigh

Much consternation was caused to a lady pedestrian yesterday while trying to negotiate one of the muddy roads in Moama. Her dainty feet stuck fast in the glue. The distressed dame then tried to advance, but the shoes refused to budge. After a considerable delay, the victim rescued the foot-leather, and finished the last few frightful feet in her stockinged feet! Though two Moama gents watched the ladies predicament, neither volunteered to lay his overcoat in the mud for the passing of Moama's Queen Elizabeth. The incident has caused much dissatisfaction.

*Riverine Herald 1926*

## Spanish Flu, and the Local Impact

Whether the Spanish Flu did actually begin in Spain or from the troops engaged in war on the Western Front may not be known, but which ever the case the result was devastating right across the world. In Australia it is believed to have arrived in late 1918 or early 1919 with the troops returning from the war.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1918 discussions were held as to how Australia should deal with a flu pandemic if or when it came to the country. It was agreed that if it should appear in one state the other joining states should close their borders. If there were out breaks in two joining states, the border should be reopened. Following the arrival of troops ships in Melbourne with the soldiers disembarking, the first flu cases were reported in Melbourne. The ships then went on the Sydney where more of the soldiers disembarked.

As the flu took hold in Melbourne, the New South Wales Government despite already having cases in Sydney, decided to close the border with Victoria, with police at each border crossing ordered to enforce the closure. The reaction from Victoria was swift, pointing out that because there were already cases in New South Wales the decision was unconstitutional, but NSW was not moved. An appeal to the Federal Government found them not prepared to take sides in the dispute.

The closure of the Echuca Moama bridge caused many problems for the locals. An exception was made for Dr Ebsworth, the health officer for Moama and Echuca, who was allowed to provide flu injections for some of the

people of Moama. Any of the people from Moama who were caught on the wrong side of the border when it closed, could not go home without going into quarantine for seven days. Those stranded in Echuca included Councillor Wall, the mayor of Moama.

It was reported in the press that, "Sergeant Constantine found four persons in Moama who were not entitled to have crossed the river. The people consisted of two ladies from Deniliquin, one lady from Moira and a man from Moama, who were detected and escorted back over the river to Echuca. The police are diligently patrolling the river banks and it is intimated that should there be any further surreptitious breaking of the barrier regulations the people will be sent to a proper quarantine without option".

*Riverine Herald, 3 February 1919*

An isolation camp was set-up close to the Murray River about 5 miles from Torrumbarry. The camp consisted of tents with basic meals provided. On the 15<sup>th</sup> February the first 18 who had completed their 7 days isolation and after inspection by the Medical Officer, they were taken to the river and rowed across in two loads, to where they were met by Sergeant Constantine who checked their paper work, before allowing them through the barrier. They were then taken by car to Moama.

The second group of 20 people were released the following day. The second group were particularly pleased to be released, because it had rained over night and their camp had been flooded. When they reached NSW they were informed that the road to Moama was

register page who died of the same cause. George was in the Melbourne Hospital at the time and the Hall porter at the hospital was the witness, as he was with three other deaths that occurred there in the space of three days. There was no spouse or children listed.

What is certain is that in 1887 Rebecca had five girls under the age of 11, so she entered a common law relationship with Joseph William Brown, who was a friend of her husband George according to my father. It is probable that she met him in Victoria because he spent all his years in Victoria after migrating from England in 1886. I have not found a marriage certificate for Rebecca and Joseph William Brown. They had four children the first being born in 1888 and the last in 1895, and on each birth certificate it stated that they were illegitimate. There is a possibility that Rebecca did not know for certain that George was dead, so she would not marry again. She also registered each of the births in her maiden name, Jarvis, her married name Burrows and in Joseph's name Brown.

It is not surprising that Rebecca signed the petition in 1891 as she had seven children in the house with ages ranging from one to fifteen. Joseph was a labourer, and with the Great depression impacting on the family's survival, it is understandable that she needed an occupation. How would they manage to feed the children? No doubt the two older girls could have been working, but they would have needed an exemption from school. The family was paying rent on the houses they lived in as they moved around Brunswick during this time, as evidenced by the addresses on the birth certificates of the children.

Rebecca's occupation was to be nursing. I

have family photos of her in later life, (1915), wearing a nurses uniform. She was a registered nurse and midwife. My father told us stories about how she delivered babies in the City of Brunswick, legitimate or illegitimate; in fact he said she delivered at least half the babies in Brunswick. Officially she worked with a Doctor Ratten, but unofficially she helped out the poor and desperate. The family struggled through the 1890's with Rebecca and Joseph losing their daughter Florence who died the year she was born in 1892.

By 1905 Rebecca was living in Brunswick in a small detached single fronted weatherboard house, which probably had three or four rooms off a single hallway that ran down the length of the house into a kitchen. My father recalled living there from 1907 to 1917 with his mother, Mary and his sister. Mary, Rebecca's third daughter had been deserted by her husband who was a seaman in 1907, leaving Mary in Sydney with two children under the age of three.

Rebecca had taken my grandmother and family under her wing, but this was not the first time she had been a supportive mother. In 1895 her second daughter Frances, who had been working as a domestic servant, had an illegitimate child at the age of 17. Rebecca took the child Leonard, as her own and raised him under the surname of her second "husband" Joseph. The story of Rebecca does not end here as her youngest daughter, Olive also become pregnant when she was eighteen, and had a daughter who was also brought up by Rebecca for the first fourteen years of the daughter's life, until her mother, Olive took her back.

This was 1914 and the beginning of

## 35 Influenza Cases at Geelong.

World War 1. The house must have been very crowded with Rebecca, pregnant Olive, Mary, and her two children, and Leonard. My father also told me that at some stage Rebecca had four boarders living in the house. Two of the boarders worked day shift and two worked night shift, so the two beds in one of the rooms were never unoccupied. By 1914, her 'husband' Joseph was living with his eldest son in Brunswick. The electoral rolls indicate that at various times between 1908 and 1914, two of Rebecca's other daughters were registered as living in this little cottage. Rebecca was still living there at the time of the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1919-20.

By 1921 Rebecca had moved to another house in Brunswick and was living with Leonard Brown, her illegitimate grandson and other members of the family at various times. Joseph who died in 1928 had not been living with her since 1914. She finally went to live with her daughter Frances who lived

locally and she died in 1936 at Mary's home in Pascoe Vale. It seems that both these daughters repaid their mother's kindness by caring for her in her declining years. Rebecca died of influenza and cardiac failure at the age of seventy nine having lived longer than four of her nine children. She lived through hard times, supporting her family in situations of adversity and working in a caring profession. I believe she epitomized the principles embedded in the Suffrage petition she signed in 1891. She was contributing significantly to the health and well-being of the women of Brunswick and at the same time caring for her family. She was a survivor, resilient and caring.

[Search Women's Petition - Parliament of Victoria](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/womens-petition)

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/womens-petition>

*Judy McCleary*

In 2014 as an idea to boast the number of stories being contributed by members for Bridges & Branches, it was suggested that **everyone** write a story about their families involvement in World War 1. It was thought that if sufficient stories were received we would consider having them printed as a book.

Now six years later, we have received 90 stories of varying length. They include stories about those actually involved in the war, and a number of letters written to their families at home. There are others entries which tell of the insight to the conditions in the areas in which the men were serving, all of

which make an interesting collection. So now, this is your last chance to submit your family story for inclusion in the book. Your story can be about those who served overseas or about those who kept the home fires burning. Until now this part of the war effort has been somewhat neglected but it was a vital part of the story. There were all the women who had to take on roles for which they had not been trained. Please submit your story ASAP or at least let us know that you are still working on it, so that it can be included in the book, which we believe can now proceed.

Patients in the influenza wards at the Geelong hospital last evening numbered 35, an increase of six for the day. One was discharged, three are in a dangerous condition and 12 are seriously ill. The rest are reported to be getting well. More nurses are being obtained and a request is made for additional helpers. There are many young ladies capable of rendering aid; the superintendent and resident surgeon (Dr. Day) would be glad if they would come forward. It has been decided not to allow visitors to the hospital except in cases of emergency, and the regular visiting-days - Sundays and Thursdays, have been cancelled until further notice. Acting on the advice of the medical officer

(Dr. Moreton) the Geelong Protestant Orphanage has been closed to visitors. There are no cases in the institution, but it is thought wise to take precautionary measures. Yesterday the Geelong police were notified of the death of Mrs J. Toner in the Exhibition Building hospital in Melbourne, and asked to communicate the fact to Mrs. W. Callander, a sister, residing at 34 Little Myers street, Geelong. Senior Constable Consedine traced Mrs. Callander and delivered the message.

*Geelong Advertiser,  
Saturday 19 April 1919*

[The Mrs W. Callander mentioned in the article was Catherine Murnane's Grandfather's sister-in-law]



Nurses and children during the influenza pandemic, outside the Exhibition Building, Melbourne 1919.

The children are dressed in oversized, makeshift dressing gowns or wrapped in blankets. In 1918/1919 the Spanish influenza pandemic swept the world. From February to September 1919 the Exhibition Building was transformed into a hospital as the city's hospitals were unable to accommodate all the patients. The hospital was capable of accommodating 1500 people and by mid August 1919 it had treated 4046 cases, 392 of whom had died.

*Image and caption from Museum Victoria*

Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they really are.