



WEST DAPTO CATHOLIC CEMETERY RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

(Wendy & Terry Nunan)

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Given the improving Covid 19 situation, the parish is hoping to host the usual November Mass at West Dapto Cemetery. This will be confirmed closer to the date.

Note: Copies of “**West Dapto Catholic Cemetery -The Early Families**” are still available from us. Cost \$150 plus \$35 postage and packaging. Collection of books from our residence in Haywards Bay is possible by prior arrangement. If the Cemetery Mass is on, we will hopefully have them for sale on the day. Contact us on 42570042, 0411547169 or by email: wich53@gmail.com.

Yes, as stated in Newsletter 11 in November last year, we are still alive and have not yet joined Terry's ancestors in the cemetery!

What we have been doing.

Just like 2020, this year has been another drawn out “frustration” in regards to our West Dapto research, with our work stopping, re-starting and stopping once more every time the Covid situation altered and access to libraries on a regular basis was not possible. As will be explained below, without regular access to the microfilmed copies of post-1954 newspapers, our research is just as likely to hit a road-block at any point, especially given our work on most of the people to be documented in *West Dapto Catholic Cemetery – The Later Families* relies heavily on what we can glean from their death and funeral notices.

The work we had started in 2020 on *The Later Families* has still advanced somewhat, albeit at a much slower pace than what could have been. Advances have occurred on a couple of fronts.

Firstly, once we were comfortable with the number of local Covid cases etc, we paid the occasional visit to Wollongong Library and spent 2-3 hours dumping part screen images onto our thumb drives. This involved working our way through the list of hundreds of newspaper notices we needed to copy – go get the relevant reel of microfilm covering 1-2 months of a newspaper, mount the reel, fast forward through to the required date (oh why do the required dates so often occur at the very end of the month / reel!!), find the right page in the required edition of the paper, line up the required death or funeral notice, press the copy button, check that there are no more notices to gather off that reel, start the high speed rewind, and while it is rewinding, head off to find the next reel. A relatively simple but repetitive process for the *Illawarra Mercury* (once you work out where the death notices normally appeared in the paper for each time period / decade – it did change from time to time). But if the required notice was in the *Sydney Morning Herald* then the finding could turn into a nightmare, it being a toss-up between searching for the death notices amongst the endless ads and notices, or searching for the small contents table that would tell you what page to find the notice on. By the end of a 2-3 hour session one might head home with 20-30 notices if they have been easy to find. While I (Terry) search for notices, Wendy might be looking through reels of historic shipping information etc., though such archival work is less common with the members of “*The Later Families*”. Each library visit is then followed by a few / several day's work by Wendy clipping each newspaper image down to just the notice by itself and renaming the final image before adding it to our collection of catholic pioneer (or family) related clippings – we have over 44,000 clippings all uniquely named by newspaper / date / day of the week / clipping a, b, c ... from that edition. Wendy also adds the details of the image into the huge Excel spreadsheets we have to index the collection by name and/or subject matter. Finally, the image is inserted into a Word file so it can be typed up for cross checking, correction and being used to create (or add to) the relevant family file that forms the basis for one of the 500-600 biographies that will fill our next publication. Any archival shipping information, church register images etc that Wendy finds and copies are treated in a similar manner, being added to our “Documents” collection and indexed, with the information being extracted and added to the relevant family file.

Secondly, Wendy kept a close watch on our transcription agent's website or a lookout for emails from them advertising special discounts on the purchase of PDF images of birth, death or marriage

certificate transcripts. Such discounts are most often offered over holiday periods or long weekends, when most “normal” people would be tied up with family activities rather than rummaging through records of dead people. (Not sure what that says about us!!) Leading up to likely discount offer times, Wendy will compile a list of certificates she feels necessary to purchase based on what other (free) sources we might have for the information they would hopefully contain. For example, the transcript of a marriage certificate should give full details of the bride and groom’s birth, their parents, their current place of abode, their profession etc. A death certificate would hopefully allow the confirmation that the deceased was indeed the precise Billy Bloggs we are looking for – a particularly difficult problem to solve when a widow / widower leaves the local area to live their final days with one of their children etc. Although the discounts offered are normally only in the order of \$1 (\$19 instead of \$20 per transcript), Wendy normally orders in sufficient numbers to attract a further 10% discount, thereby attracting a 15% discount overall. When you are ordering several hundreds of dollars’ worth (thousands of dollars’ worth over the full publication), a 15% discount is most welcome. When the email arrives some weeks later with the PDF file of multiple transcriptions attached, Wendy then settles in for another multi-day session to separate each transcribed image out into its own separate PDF file, assigns it the next identity in numerical order, adds it to the certificate directory on her computer, and adds its details – name, year, birth/death/marriage and project reference – to the equally important Excel spreadsheet that provides our index into the almost 10,000 birth / death / marriage certificates (or equivalents eg images of original church register entries) that we have gathered over the past 4 decades of research for both (our) family and cemetery related projects. (Thankfully, not all those 10,000 entries in our certificate directory are purchased transcriptions – a growing proportion are screen dumps of church register images or typed up transcriptions there-of that Wendy has sourced from *Ancestry*, *Find My Past*, *Family Search* or any of the several websites she accesses to chase up British ancestral details. She has also recently downloaded, for free, a couple of thousand birth and marriage certificates from Ireland.) As per the newspaper clippings, after storing away each of the purchased transcripts, she then proceeds to extract the information from each of them and adds it to the relevant family file.

So far we have created about 175 such family files for *The Later Families*. Even allowing for some / several files containing the starts of the biographies for more than one family member, we still have a long way to go to make a start on all 500-600 people we have to document. Unless we manage to have input from remaining family members, the complete “biographies” of many of the most recent burials will be just their death / funeral notices and a photo of their headstone. Hence we have been unable to even start on many families until we have gathered their post-1954 newspaper notices from the library. If the deaths are post-1990, we cannot obtain copies of the death certificates and hence the only family details we may gather are those in the newspaper notice (if one exists).

As will be discussed further on, our process is so often something of an iterative / repetitive process since the information extracted from one clipping or certificate often generates the requirement to gather further clippings or certificates so as to follow up new leads or even questions as to the validity of what we have just gathered. Hence, even the trips to the library that we have achieved did not necessarily complete the tasks at hand, but may well have left yet more loose ends dangling until a further visit became possible. Our list of “library look-ups” is not a stagnant list, compiled once and simply worked through – it is a constant work in progress, fluctuating in size as each person or family is worked on and, like a mine following one, two or more lodes of ore, has been thoroughly worked out on all fronts.

In between our work on *The Later Families*, Wendy has continued assembling her grandfather’s 2,600+ historic photos of all over NSW into Photobooks in preparation for handing the collection over to the State Archives. Some of you may have seen our regular posts of the Illawarra related photos on the *Lost Wollongong* or *Back in Time, Photos from the Illawarra* Facebook pages. She has also carried out some long overdue work on her McNeice ancestry in the UK / Ireland (hence the 2,000+ downloads!!).

I (Terry) have just completed my next publication covering the land ownership history of those parts of suburban Dapto not covered in my previous publication last November. As noted in last year’s newsletter, as well as being a worthwhile Christmas present for those interested in Dapto history, these publications will now be a ready reference for land transaction information for many of those being documented in *The Later Families*. (see details of the new book at the end of this newsletter).

Having gotten the new land book out of the way, and with the Libraries re-opening soon, I (Terry) have started to work though reviewing the family files we have produced to date, to see what additional information I can gather or additional “library look-ups” I can identify.

Working through a few Family Files

A few weeks ago I (Terry) started my review of the "in progress" family files in alphabetical order, though that method didn't remain totally intact once I uncovered relationships between the "A's" and "B's" with families further down the alphabet.

A for Anderson – the first file, containing little more than a few birth details and the death and funeral notices for Adam Anderson in 1972. After a day or two's effort, I managed to find an account of Adam's marriage to Rose Patricia McCormack in 1941, a number of entries from Electoral Rolls detailing their places of residence and Adam's profession, and finally tracked down the fact that Rose's second husband, Stanley Cecil Bayliss, was in fact Adam's brother-in-law! "Oh I already knew that," noted Wendy "Peter told me a few years ago!!" However, I then proceeded to find what I could about Stanley and his wife Stella (Adam's sister), including Stanley's WWII service record, his death registration and his death / funeral notice – another one to add to the "library look-ups list" (together with Rose's death / funeral notice which we hadn't gotten to yet). At least once Wendy assembles all the extra information into the family file, we have a ready-made contact in Peter Anderson to go to for additional details and photos. If only we had that luxury for all the families!!

B for Baker – the ¾ page family file had a few scant details on Oswald Ellis Baker and his wife Ruth Kendrick Davis. We had gathered Oswald's 1969 death / funeral notice but are still to get Ruth's notice from 2006 – our initial look-up list was in chronological order to simplify the reel by reel searching. I managed to find some further press reports on colliery accidents Oswald had been involved in before moving on to become a railway worker, Electoral Rolls allowing me to track down some of his postings around NSW. I found the marriage registration of their son Dallas, and probably the death / funeral notices for their sons and daughter-in-law – more additions to the look-up list for the library to confirm they refer to the correct people – another temporary dead end.

B for Barker – Robert and Mary Ann Barker's one page family file already contained most of what we are likely to find on them – the *Ryerson Index* (a volunteer compiled online index to almost 8 million death / funeral notices in over 400 Australian newspapers) contains no reference to Robert, only to Mary Ann (which we already had). Upon checking whatever Electoral Rolls that are available on the *Ancestry* website, I discovered that the Josiah / Joseph Barker who travelled to Australia on the same ship as Robert and Mary Ann also lived at Wongawilli, thereby supporting our suspicion that he was in fact Robert's brother who was listed in the 1901 Census in England. This also provides a better understanding of the family information listed in Mary Ann's death notice. We are yet to manually look through the 1958 *South Coast Times* on microfilm to see if there are any items relating to Robert's death. 1958 is of course beyond the 1954 cut-off for the digitised newspapers on the *Trove* website so a manual perusal of the microfilms at the library is required.

B for Barlow – Joseph and Elizabeth Barlow's one page file contains both their death / funeral notices from 1971/72 seemingly within just 12 months of their arrival from England. Looking through the information in their death notices, I realised that Elizabeth was a sister to Dorothea (and Eric) Wilkinson, also buried in the cemetery. When glancing through our photos of their headstones, I noticed a nearby headstone was that of Hugh M^cConville. His headstone noted that he had left Belfast in the 1960's, that fact triggering a recent memory related to that surname – upon checking I realised that Hugh M^cConville was most likely a relation of Elizabeth Barlow, she having been born in Belfast to Hugh Doylerush and Ester M^cConville. There may be further confirmation of the relationship when we get Hugh's 1975 death / funeral notice from the library microfilms. We are also yet to get the Wilkinsons' death notices to start their files.

B for Bein – Josephine and Chester Bein's file contains their death / funeral notices and little else. Any further information from friends or relatives would be gratefully accepted.

B for Bendyke - the Bendyke file contained only Josephine's death notice from 1977 – for some reason we have not yet obtained Frank's death notice from 1964. I was able to gather a lot more information that will expand this ¼ page file to a number of pages – as Josephine and Frank were both born in Braidwood pre-1900 and were married in 1916, that gave a near 40-year-period for *Trove* to be true to its name and become a treasure trove of information courtesy of the automated searching of the digitised newspapers up to December 1954. Local press reports quickly identified their three daughters, Laurel, Florence and Beryl as being stars of the local Coniston / Illawarra softball scene, also providing pointers to their marriages once they continued playing under their married names. (Not only do we provide full biographies for those buried in the cemetery, we also provide mini-biographies for their children, including at a minimum, birth, death and marriage details where we can.) Hence my Bendyke research lasted some days, progressively gathering possible marriage and death details for each of the daughters and for their (collectively) several husbands and / or partners. Of course this all added yet more entries to the library look-ups list to get numerous post-1954 death / funeral notices to confirm several people were in fact who I suspect they were, and to try and ascertain if a number of marriages had ended through death or divorce, or if de-facto relationships were involved (not always possible to discover for the more recent decades). It was during this

process that I discovered further links between the family names which will appear in *The Later Families* courtesy of two of the daughters also being buried at West Dapto, namely Florence Doreen M^cGarry (1971) and Beryl Mauiri (1969) – so they will have their own family files – so much for sticking to alphabetical order!!!

B for Beringer- Just the two death notices were all we had for Johann and Margaret Beringer – less than a page. After checking out the Electoral Rolls which told me little more than we already know from the death notices, namely that they lived at Berkeley and that he was a carpenter, I started hunting for their shipping and hit the jackpot – they and their 12 and 9-year-old sons Weiner and Norbert left Bremerhaven, Germany, 19.06.1954. As I copied down their details my heart felt for them for what they must have experienced – their sons had been born in Vienna in the very middle of the Second World War. What a time and place to be starting a family!! The family details which were included in the death notices we did already have guided me to find marriage registrations for the two sons, and numerous further death notices to add to our library list that may help to sort out relationships for the two sons and their wives, widows or partners.

B for Billingham – Having married in 1958 (post Trove) there was very little extra that I could find for Robert and Marilyn Billingham other than a few Electoral Roll entries which simply added some residence information to the brief family details included in their 2017 death notices – a dead end without additional family input. (Other than the fact that Robert was a teacher at Wendy's primary school!)

B for Blunden – the family that came up with the most unexpected results after I started with the ½ page file containing bare birth and marriage details for Francis Gauntlet Blunden and Maureen Therese Blunden (nee Cook) supplemented by Francis' 1966 death notice. Their marriage being in 1952 made them another couple for whom we would struggle to find any press related information to "flesh out" their biographies. My land research for last year's book *Dapto Land Transactions – The Marshall Subdivision* had collected the details on the purchase of their home at 1 Osborne St in 1957, Francis being listed as a labourer of St Marys. This meant that Dapto was at least their second place of residence since the 1954 Electoral Roll had still recorded Francis as being a farmer in the West Wyalong area. The fact that Maureen Cook was born at Guilford but was married at West Wyalong interested me so I decided to search the Electoral Rolls on *Ancestry* to see if there were enough Rolls available to allow me to track the Cook residences throughout her childhood. Searching for her parents, Thomas Edward Cook and May Josephine Noonan, I found them living as farming folk in the West Wyalong area through the early 1930's – the period leading up to Maureen's birth in 1933/34 (according to her age as recorded on Francis and Maureen's marriage certificate).

I was puzzled by the post-1934 Rolls showing Maureen's mother no longer residing as a farmer's wife on a rural property but as a woman living alone in Carter St, Wyalong. Thomas Edward was no longer mentioned, with a *Trove* search finding an obituary for him in May 1933 in the *West Wyalong Advocate*. Maureen was not mentioned in the list of children he had left behind, hence her mother, May Josephine, must have been pregnant at the time of her husband's death. The obituary referred to Thomas Edward as being of Alleena (a little south of West Wyalong – their previous address in the Electoral Rolls) and Carter St Wyalong, thereby explaining the change of residence for the widowed May Josephine. Perhaps with Thomas Edward's deteriorating health it had been considered judicious to commence a transfer of the family from the land into the town. But if she was left a widow in Wyalong, why then was Maureen Therese born in Guilford? A search for May Josephine Noonan's birth found her parents to be John Joseph and Ada Noonan (nee O'Brien), her birth being recorded in Wagga Wagga in 1896. Looking for Ada Noonan on the Electoral Rolls found her and her blacksmith husband moving from rural NSW to the city sometime between the 1913 and 1933 Electoral Rolls. Throughout the 1930's their address is given as Swift Street, Guildford, thereby explaining that the newly widowed May Josephine had gone to stay with her parents for the birth of her eighth child before returning to her home in Carter St, Wyalong. What a start to life for poor little Maureen – born after the death of her father.

Wendy's ears perked up when I discussed these findings with her, especially with Maureen Therese Blunden (nee Cook)'s mother being a Noonan. I always like to say that Noonans are normally the common garden variety of County Cork Noonans, where-as the Nunans are the more restricted County Limerick (branch of the) family. That of course does not mean to say that all the Nunans in the past remained true to the "correct" spelling of their name and did occasionally (and sometimes permanently) lapse and adopted the Noonan spelling. Wendy was even more intrigued to find that May Josephine Cook (nee Noonan's) parents were John Joseph Nunan and Ada Margaret O'Brien, of the Riverina area. She remembered that a Noonan / O'Brien marriage in the West Wyalong area figured prominently in some extensive research she had undertaken some years ago.

When my (Terry's) g-g-grandparents John & Elizabeth Nunan arrived in Sydney in 1841, a final child was born just after their arrival, shortly before Elizabeth's untimely death. This left John with a young family to raise as a sole parent in a new country. After the family had moved to the Wollongong

area, the eldest daughter, 15-year-old Ellen Nunan married Michael M^cNamara from the West Wyalong area and soon left for the Riverina with her new husband. Having been the primary carer for her infant brother, it was decided that Ellen should take the infant Edward with her rather than leaving him in the care of her much younger sister. And so it was that young Edward grew up separated from his full family, eventually adopting the more common "Noonan" spelling of his name. His true identity and origins seem to have been not that well understood within the M^cNamara family, it being supposed at a M^cNamara reunion we attended at Quandialla in the 1980's that he had been an illegitimate child of young Ellen! Just how young did they think she had been when she supposedly had him????

As Wendy's research into what happened to this Edward Nunan / Noonan, she thought she had constructed a sizeable tree of his descendants, including the future May Josephine Noonan for whom she only had the name May J. and a birth date. Some years later her research was challenged by a number of other researchers whose ancestor was an Edward Noonan living in the West Wyalong area. It came to pass that there was not one but two Edward Noonans living in the area, born within a year or two of each other, both with fathers called John who were blacksmiths. Several months of collaborative effort managed to separate the two Edwards, the extensive family tree Wendy had prepared belonging to the "other" Edward rather than the offspring of the Dapto Nunans' Edward.

Although the ancestry of Maureen Therese Blunden (nee Cook) does not fit into our Nunan tree, it does certainly extend Wendy's records of the "other" Edward Noonan tree, providing lots of interesting information she can now pass on to the other researchers she had collaborated with. When one researches far and wide, one should never be amazed by what "a small world it is" which is proven over and over again when seemingly separate fields of research end up overlapping.

But returning to the current day, the question remained as to what happened to Maureen Therese Blunden after Francis' untimely demise in 1966. My land research for last year's publication provided me with some answers, especially by way of the final transaction before the land records for 1 Osborne St were converted to computer records. That 1988 transaction was Maureen Therese Jenkins, formerly Maureen Therese Blunden, married woman of Wongawilli, gifting her property to her five children, the children being named in full with their profession and residence. This one transaction allowed me to look for Maureen in the Electoral Rolls under her new married name, thereby providing me with the identity of her second husband and an approximate time for their marriage. (Their marriage occurred post 1971, the current time limit for open access to marriage registrations.) The full names for the children were more than those (first name only) listed in Francis' death notice, and included an indication of the marriage of one of them. All this then led to yet another list of library lookups for Maureen's second husband's death and other things.

We need your help !!

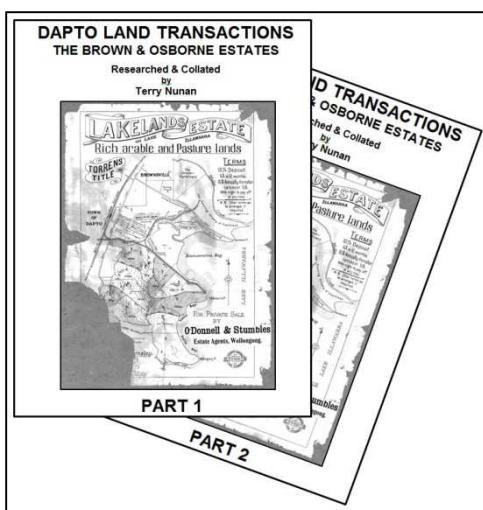
Hopefully the above examples give you an appreciation of how dependent we have been upon regular access to the library so we can follow up leads when they are fresh in our minds. Every time we have to "put down" a family file to move on to another, full awareness of what we needed to find (but couldn't) starts to wane over time as we get involved with the next family. If it is too long before we can get the desired newspaper item for the previous family, we more or less need to step ourselves all the way back through that previous family so we can once more understand what we are looking for. Furthermore, our awareness of the outstanding issues may even allow us to just find the desired notice, check out if it is relevant and perhaps not even take the time to copy it if it turns out to be a dead end. This could avoid wasted time and help us move on to the hundreds of families we are yet to make a start on.

Hopefully they also highlight some of the interesting things that inspire us to keep going, but also just how desperate we are for family input, especially for many of the later burials whose entire lives have occurred beyond the time cut-offs that prevent us having any avenues to find anything more than their death and funeral notices (if they even exist). So, if your loved ones are due to appear in *The Later Families* please consider coming forward to offer photos and / or accounts of your loved one's life, their background and anything you might think could be helpful. A few people have been forthcoming in this way and their loved ones' entries will be just that much better than many others with just the bare minimum details.

A final note – when we say that we will include short biographies for the children of the couples we are documenting, in the interests of privacy we limit the information to that available on the public record. Should the child be already deceased, their biography will include as many details as possible – birth date, marriage date etc. Should the child be still alive, then birth dates, marriage dates etc will be abbreviated or omitted if beyond the cut-off dates that apply to the NSW BDM Index – births 100 years, marriages 50 years. The 1990 death cut-off date for certificates is somewhat irrelevant as death dates up to the current day can be obtained from the Ryerson Index.

Hope to see you at the November Cemetery Mass.

Wendy & Terry Nunan



DAPTO LAND TRANSACTIONS

THE BROWN & OSBORNE ESTATES

Researched & Collated
by
TERRY NUNAN

668 A4 PAGES SOFT COVER
Over 16,000 transaction transcripts
Fully Indexed

Complementing last year's book, Dapto Land Transactions – The Marshall Subdivision, this new publication traces the land ownership history for most of the rest of suburban Dapto from initial land grants to current day allotments. Numerous maps plot the boundaries of long forgotten grants, farms and acreages against current day back fences and streets. Highlights include:

- Details of the original grants and their consolidation into the Brown & Osborne Estates.
- Early history of postal services in Dapto in the Post Office & Stores opposite Cleveland Rd, later John Reed's Hotel.
- Henry Osborne's sales of small Highway frontages to early Dapto Pioneers & donations to the Dept of Education and Church of England
- Development of the Dapto Showground site, detailing the initial Osborne donation, purchases of adjacent allotments through to the development of the Cirrus St / Craig Cres / Rink Rd subdivision.
- Purchase & development of the Byamee St Primary School site
- The rise and demise of the grandiose plans and rail lines of the Illawarra Harbour & Land Corporation. Discover their planned subdivisions stretching from current day Fowlers Rd to Kanahooka Rd with streets that never eventuated. Discover how the paths of their rail lines shaped the development of Dapto and can still be found to this day.
- The rise, short lived success and demise of the Australian Smelting Company Works on Kanahooka Rd, later replaced by the small acreage allotments running down to Mullet Creek.
- The five decade long effort it took the Corporation's mortgagees to sell the central Dapto allotments bounded by Werowi St, Mulda St, Byamee St & the Highway, and in doing so the appearance & disappearance of service stations and businesses long since forgotten.
- The splitting up of the western section of the Daisy Bank Estate along Avondale Rd.
- The splitting up of the Osborne Estate into farms from Kanahooka Rd to Duck Creek, from the Highway or Mulda St to Lake Illawarra, and their eventual absorption into the Tallawarra Power Station surrounds or Dapto suburbia.
- The splitting up of the Brown Estate leading to the development of current day Brownsville, the Commonwealth Cottages (Yalunga St & Barellan Avenue), the Coolabah Rd – Kundle St area, and the Khan subdivision along Unara Rd & (now) Prince Edward Drive.
- The subdivisions that were "still-born" – the failed attempts by John Brown, John Reed and of course the Harbour Corporation, whose grand auctions yielded just one or two sales or none at all.

PRICE \$75 + POSTAGE: \$15

STILL AVAILABLE:

Dapto Land Transactions – The Marshall Subdivision \$35

Brownsville Ledgers, Letters, Séances & Receipts \$45

West Dapto Catholic Cemetery – The Early Families \$150