



## WEST DAPTO CATHOLIC CEMETERY RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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This third newsletter comes to you as we move towards the Annual West Dapto Mass. Most of you are aware of the Mass as we obtained your email details at the Mass last year, but for those who are not aware, the Annual West Dapto Cemetery Mass will be on:

**SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017**  
**10 AM**  
**WEST DAPTO CEMETERY**  
**WEST DAPTO ROAD, WEST DAPTO**

This is our annual chance to pay respect to our ancestors and other relatives who are buried there. Please note that Darkes Road will be closed. If you are coming from the north, turn west at the lights at the corner of Princes Highway and West Dapto Road. If coming from the south, either go through to West Dapto Road or turn off the highway at Bong Bong Road in the centre of Dapto, go through four roundabouts, turn left into the continuation of Bong Bong Road, turn right into Shone Avenue, follow it through to the eastern end of Wongawilli then turn right on to West Dapto Road.

The research has been trundling along. Every now and then we break through the barriers but admittedly often we just feel overwhelmed by the whole project and the amount of information that we can find .... or can't find, as the case may be.

One of the "out of towners" in the cemetery is William Nowlan who died 21.11.1881 at Charcoal (Unanderra). He had travelled up from Victoria to visit his brother-in-law John Richards. His sister, Winifred, had died in 1867 and was buried in West Dapto. The starting point for him was his death registration. This gave me his birth in Cork Ireland, approximate year of birth, his father, his wife, his occupation and a list of children plus how long he had been in the colony. His mother's given name was obtained from his sister Winifred's death registration.

Step two: Look for William's marriage in Sydney. This was in 1853 at St Mary's Cathedral Sydney, to Mary M<sup>c</sup>Guinness. Unfortunately, being pre-1856, there were very few details on this marriage record – names, date, place, priest and witnesses. There was only one possible birth listed in NSW and when checked, it was not from this family. As William was visiting from Victoria, I then looked at the Victorian Birth Index, which is better than the NSW Index in that it also gives the mother's maiden name. So this gave me a definite list of children along with their years of birth. Unfortunately, you cannot calculate the date of birth from the index, as you can with most NSW registrations. This gave me William 1857, John 1860, Winifred Jane 1863, Mary 1865, James 1869, Thomas Patrick 1872 and Alfred Edwin 1877. I then hit a stumbling block with no recognisable deaths or marriages in Victoria for these children nor for Mary, especially as I did not know Mary's parents.

Step three: For a while, I gave up. Sometimes you just need to leave things and come back at a later date. I had obtained some newspaper articles re William's death, both in the *Illawarra Mercury* and in Victorian newspapers. When I was typing up the Victorian newspaper articles I saw that the family lived at Dunolly. I tried searching in *Trove* on line for Mary Nowlan after 1881 but the only record I found was a death of a Mary Nowlan in Melbourne, the widow of John Nowlan, late of San Francisco. It also stated that Mary was of Dunolly. I searched again but could not find a suitable marriage for John Nowlan and a Mary. I next looked for articles in Victorian newspapers that contained the words Nowlan and Dunolly. I initially went forward from William's death but then decided to do two earlier searches – one for Nowlan and Dunolly up to 1881 and one for William Nowlan from 1853 to 1881. There were not a great number of articles but with one in particular I felt I hit the jackpot. It explained why I could not find any marriages or deaths in Victoria. In 1886 M.A. Nowlan put Nowlan's Bakery

up for sale as they were leaving for San Francisco! This tied in with the son John's widow's death notice.

Step four: I started scouring various websites for records from San Francisco. My subscription to *Ancestry* was of no help as I have only signed up for British and Australian records. I found a few websites which could have been of use but many of them would have cost money. However, something I saw made me think to go back to *Family Search* and on this website I found various USA census records. Fortunately, most of the family stayed together. The 1900 USA Census for San Francisco City, taken 08.06.1900 lists the Nowlan Family. Details are as follows. (Not all details listed here.) John Nowlan, head of family, born June 1860 Australia, father born Ireland, mother born at sea, married 7 years, emigrated to USA 1885, Provision Dealer in Meats. Mary, wife, born July 1861 Australia, parents born Ireland, emigrated 1893. Mathew J., son, born June 1896 and Winifred, daughter, born April 1898; both California. Thomas P., brother, born November 1873 (sic) Australia, single, Provision Dealer in Meats. Alfred, brother, born September 1877 Australia, single, a jeweller. Parents and emigration details were the same as for John. Lastly, we have Mary A. Nowlan, mother, born January 1837 at sea, parents from Ireland, widowed, 7 children, all living, emigrated 1885. Except for the two children, all could read and write. John owned, per mortgage a house.

A few comments on the census record. The year of emigration was out by a year. John's wife had emigrated from Australia in 1893 and they had married in 1893. Mary Ann Nowlan, William's widow, was still alive and living with John's family AND she had been born in January 1837 at sea. She also had 7 children (which we knew), of whom all 7 were still alive. I then went in search of possible shipping records for Mary but had no luck.

The 1910 USA Census listed John's sister Mary, the 1920 Census listed the brother James and the 1930 Census listed the brother William as living with John's family. The only family member who could not be found was Winifred and I can only conclude that she had married but marriage records were not available. I may yet try *Ancestry* at the library and see if I can find Winifred's marriage.

Step 5: When did they die? From the Californian Death Indexes, I was able to find the deaths of William 1933, John 1937, James 1925 and Alfred Edwin 1935. Mary (jnr) was also listed for 1927 but I had previously discovered a Coroner's report for her, which identified her as being born in Australia, aged about 60 years and single. One of her brothers was also listed as a witness to the accident which killed her. Everything fitted. However, I could not find Mary Ann Nowlan. At that stage, I believed she had died between 1900 and 1910 as she was not listed in the 1910 Census. Further hunting on *Family Search* listed a number of deaths of Mary Nolans. I finally found one whose age was close to the correct age. I also noticed that the County code was the same as the County code given on each of her children's death index records. So this meant Mary Ann died in 1906. Apart from Winifred, the only child whose death has not been found is Thomas Patrick, who was alive in 1930 in San Francisco but whose death was not listed in the Californian Death Index, which went to 1940.

So by taking a fresh look at things and digging amongst a different set of records, I have been able to put this family together.

The "local" families who have been here for some generations and were baptised and married locally are much easier to do.

Another family of interest that I have just finished is the M<sup>c</sup>Cormack Family. Most people would have noticed the large double grave in the second row of the old section. Many have heard the story of the tragedies that beset this family, with the boys Edward and Patrick dying in a fire and the daughter Catherine being drowned in the Mullet Creek just seven months later. The baby who had died in 1896, died from sunstroke. The mother, Theresa, was brought back from Sydney to be buried with these children. However, that was not the whole story. In November 1912, the daughter Alice sat for the high school bursary exam. She obtained a bursary and the family decided to move to Sydney and have Alice attend St Scholastica's College, Glebe Point. Alice went



on to become a teacher and when she died in 1958, she was listed as “late of Education Department”, which infers she had risen through the ranks. Her sister Theresa became a stenographer. The youngest brother, Patrick Edward, became a doctor and then a barrister. So after somewhat tragic early years, the family did well. Theresa’s father had been a school master back in Ireland and this probably led to Theresa having a high regard for education in her children.

One particular gem when researching convicts is having a convict who was tried at *The Old Bailey* in London. It is possible to search the records and find the transcript of the trial. In the cemetery, without a headstone, is Mary Masterson, who came free in 1842. She first married James Woodland in 1843 at St Mary’s RC Sydney. After James’ death in 1849-50, she remarried, to James Doyle. James Woodland was protestant. No actual death date is known – even the sale of his land says “died -----” (blank), so that was of no help. As he was protestant, he was probably buried in St Luke’s C/E Brownsville, though may have been buried in Wollongong at what is now known as Pioneer Park. Unfortunately there is no record. James’ Convict Indent stated he was convicted 27.10.1813 and was per Middlesex Gaol Delivery, which also meant that he had been tried at The Old Bailey. I initially could not find his trial as the original typed record has James Woodling, but I was able to hone in on the date of the trial and eventually found the record. In the searching, I came across a previous trial, just five weeks earlier, at which James was found not guilty. His co-accused was Samuel M<sup>c</sup>Crae, who was found guilty and sentenced to death. However, by checking convict records, I found that Samuel’s sentenced was commuted to transportation for life and he actually came out on the same convict transport as James.

As stated above, Mary’s second marriage was in 1850 to John Doyle. They had five children, then in 1860 Mary died in childbirth with the sixth child, who also died. When looking for the marriages and deaths of the Woodland and Doyle children, I saw that quite a number of these were in the Goulburn area, hence it appears that at least some of the family moved there after Mary’s death. However, I have not been able to identify Mary’s husband, John Doyle’s death.

#### **The Land Records ... Oh the Land Records by Terry.**

I am still plugging away on little else but answering the question .. “where did they all live??” .. or perhaps, “where did they own land at any time?”.

Oh why did St John’s Parish have to include one or two land speculators !!!! Thanks to those and my gradual working through more and more families, the near 700 land transactions I mentioned in the last newsletter has now reached almost 1,200 that I have documented. The tangled web of sales between Catholic families continues with, at times, a “catholic” farm becoming “protestant”, for just a few years or for a whole generation or so, before being purchased back into the “catholic” community.

Some parcels, such as the old convent site on West Dapto Rd, to the north of the cemetery, continued to throw up challenges. In our last newsletter I had traced its history up to being owned by Mary O’Brien. When she died, it was subject to a number of inherited changes of ownerships, first in equal shares from her, and then from some of her heirs to their heirs, some of whom had been Mary’s heirs as well. Throw into the mix a few people of the same given name and one’s mind starts to go into overload, trying to trace through who owns what percentage of what, also bearing in mind that the property had been subdivided along the way so that the various buildings on the property could be left to separate people. I have still not been able to solve the question as to how come John Barrett’s original land grant was supposed to be 100 acres, yet it was later quoted as having only been 89 acres, and the fact that NONE of the combinations of bits and pieces of it being sold at various times actually add up to either of these supposed total acreages for the original property!!

The James Woodland whom Wendy commented on above also brought up an interesting land history. His first land transaction had him purchasing just 15 acres of one of the Veterans Allotments – No 9 which was just north of Darkes Rd and Mullet Creek. As with John Barrett’s Veterans Allotment, the original promise (Veteran), in this case Charles Clayton, sold all or parts of their grants before the deeds were issued. Clayton had sold 15 acres in 1835 which was then on-sold to Woodland in 1837. Eventually the deeds were issued in 1841 to Augustus Hayward, solicitor of Sydney, in trust for Woodland and others, all of whom by that time had an interest part of the land. Haywood sold the whole 100 acres in 1848 on behalf of the various owners, the proceeds being divided in proportion to their part holdings. Two months later James Woodland then went on to secure the deeds for a 60

acre property at the end of Sheaffe's Rd, though transactions years later indicated that the deeds should have in fact been issued to James Woodland and William Rose as joint tenants.

One of the branches of the Cook family has left me with a puzzle, complicated by an issue I touched on in the last newsletter. Following the death of William Henry Cook in 1922, a complex document was registered in 1927 detailing the break-up of William Henry's estate as per his will, both in terms of land and livestock. One of the nine allocations detailed there-in included a vague description of a 37 acre property at "Lake Illawarra", being Lot 31 of the Jenkins' Berkeley Estate, which stretched from current day Berkeley to Warrawong, and the Lake to Allans Creek and beyond. As noted in the last newsletter, many of the larger estates were progressively sold off in bits and pieces, with lot numbers not necessarily being used consistently over the gradual disposal of all the land. Nor do any of the later versions of the historical parish maps show the lot by lot breakup of the Berkeley Estate, as they do for the adjacent Canterbury Estate covering the Kembla Grange / Farmborough Heights area. Hence not only do I lack an accurate description of the exact location of the property, but neither do I have any idea, as yet, of when William Henry Cook came into possession of the property!!

The breakup of the Berkeley Estate commenced in the early 1890's, pre-dating the Purchaser's Index (so I can't go looking for William Henry's name there-in). I have gone through the Vendors Index (for "Jenkins") noting every entry for the gradual disposal of the estate over 20 or so years, being able to identify the sale of Lot 1, Lot 2 ... etc, (including the sale of Lot 9 to William H. Cook), all the way up to Lot 30, ... but no Lot 31 !!! It would appear that the sale of Lot 31 either missed being indexed, or one of the sales was for more lots than were summarised in its Vendors Index entry. If I cannot find a transaction recording the on-selling of the lot by the Cook family that includes a reference back to its purchase from the Jenkins, I will most likely need to physically check each and every one of the documents (Old System Deeds) relating to the sales of all the lots to see if Lot 31 was included in one of them, and then, if necessary, trace its on-selling until I reach its purchase by William Henry Cook.

The annoyance value is increased by the fact that all the documents relating to the Berkeley Estate sales are not available for easy inspection at the moment – all the volumes of Old System Deeds remaining on the shelves at the Land & Property Information Office in Sydney are progressively being taken away for scanning as part of the total digitisation of the millions of documents previously held in the Land Titles Office basement. Prior to the privatisation of the LPI Office some months ago, documents that were digitised progressively over the past 3-4 years would eventually appear on the LPI webpage. This has allowed one to undertake most of their research from home rather than being limited to what one could achieve whilst on-site in the Sydney Office.

However, following the sale of the LPI Office to a consortium of insurance companies and superannuation funds etc as (for them) a money making investment, not one digitised image has been added to the website for easy access by LPI clients / users. There are now upwards of 550,000 Old System Deeds that are unavailable to review either in their original bound volumes or as images on the website. I have lodged a complaint via one of our local MPs who has forwarded it onto the Minister for Lands, and I am awaiting a reply. In the meantime, one needs to lodge a request for each and every "missing" document that one wants to access and then await the office staff to determine if the document has been scanned (and hence they can simply printout a copy), or try and discover the location of the document (either on site or at Bathurst being scanned) and then figure out if they can either allow the requestor to inspect the original document (now unbound into separate sheets), or if it needs to be photocopied. One is then (eventually) presented with either the original or printed hard copy which one has to then inspect, derive the required information, and then return the document or copy to the office staff. One can only retain / take home the copy for a more detailed or repeated analysis after paying \$14.90. On my last two day long visits to the LPI Office I needed to inspect anything up to 40 - 60 "missing" documents on the one day!!!! Frustrating!!!! Both myself and the professional land title searchers who frequent the LPI Office are afraid that access to these records, which have been in the public domain for years, will eventually be only allowed at a cost, which would spell the end of detailed historical research in the future.

Yours in Illawarra Catholic History  
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