



WEST DAPTO CATHOLIC CEMETERY RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

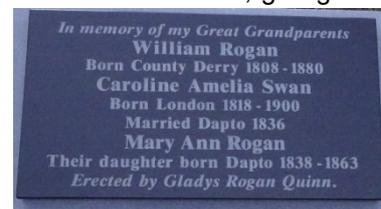
(Wendy & Terry Nunan)

Email: wich53@gmail.com
No. 2 August 2017

What have we been doing over the last three months? Besides hoeing into various families, we have undertaken some general research.

Headstone photographs

During May we visited the cemetery and updated our photographs of the headstones. This was followed by transcriptions of all of these and adding in about 160 more names to our list, giving now approximately 1060 names of those either buried or with memorials. Eg. Someone has placed a plaque for William Rogan and his daughter Mary Anne Rogan. They also included William's wife Caroline, who is actually buried in St Luke's C/E Brownsville. Hence she is just a memorial.



There have been some problems arising from some of the new headstones that have replaced old ones. On some of these, dates are different to the original headstone and, on checking, the original headstone had the same date as the newspaper! There are also some new headstones where names are spelt differently to those on the original headstones. These are just some of the little problems we often deal with.

Dates on headstones are regularly checked against other documentation as we have often found them to be incorrect. Eg A December death on a headstone that had been organised in January sometimes has the "current year" listed instead of the year of death. Often headstones are ordered when the organiser is still highly emotional re the death of the loved one and subsequently mistakes are made re birth dates, death dates etc. In St Paul's Cemetery Albion Park there is a "new" replacement headstone for a couple. The death dates were replaced with year of birth and year of death for each of the couple. All four years were incorrect and hence what I believed to be the correct dates had to be verified by costly certificates, to prove that what I did have was the correct details for this couple.

Hansen and Cole Records

With many thanks to Warwick Hansen, we have started to look through Hansen and Cole records for possible burials, in particular up to 1950, when the cemetery register was begun. Along the way we found an unexpected burial. I had already documented the fact that Edward Healey's daughter, Rosannah Kennedy, had died in Parramatta in 1959. I could not easily find a death or burial notice so decided I would just leave it at her death and not worry about spending money on a transcript of her death registration to find where she was buried. Amongst Cole's records was the burial of Rosannah Kennedy in West Dapto! I wondered why, with a 1959 death, she was not listed in the register, until I realised that the burial register actually only covered the "new" sections, not the old north-western section. There is no headstone for Rosannah so I am presuming she was probably buried near her father and siblings in the old section.

Land Research - Where Did They Live?? (by Terry)

"Why did they put the first church way over here?" was a question I was asked on the occasion of Fr David Catterall holding a Mass in West Dapto cemetery around the time of the canonisation of St Mary M^{ac}Killop. One of the Albion Park parishioners attending the service was puzzled why the initial church and cemetery was "so far from anywhere." My reply was that all the best land bordering the lake had been taken up early on as huge land grants to the rich, and all that was left for the poorer folk, including the Irish Catholics, were the foothills and mountain side, hence, the cemetery and initial church was, in fact, fundamentally near to the centre of the Catholic population.

Over the last month or so I have been discovering just how near that statement was to being very true as I have launched forth on a major field of the research that we have decided to undertake – to answer the question – "Just where did those pioneering families actually live?"

The exact location of the initial church, and of course since then, the cemetery, was more or less decided by M^{rs} Elizabeth Cray who donated a small portion of her land grant for the use of the Catholic Church. Elizabeth had been the wife of Richard Mallon, who, as a disbanded soldier from the Royal Veterans Corps, was entitled to one of the several 100 acre Veterans Grants that lay either side of Dapto Creek (which runs south east from the foothills west of Whytes Gully to join Mullet Creek at the railway bridge opposite Brownsville). The Mallons had been authorised to take possession of the land on 08.09.1830, in return for the quit rent of one farthing per year, to be paid if demanded. However, Richard's death just 6 months later saw the deeds to the land being eventually issued in the name of his widow on 18.05.1843, by that time remarried and hence being Mrs Cray. As mentioned above, the subsequent land "grants" or Conditional Purchases that were issued, or more correctly purchased, stretched up and down the western extremities of the coastal plain, up the foothills, and even, in the case of Patrick Keaveney, up and over the very cliff face of the escarpment itself – just how such land was to be made profitable one can only imagine, but I suppose it all looked good drawn out on a map at the Government Office in Sydney. Little wonder that "Land for Sale" advertisements in the newspapers of the day would colloquially describe them as "valuable bush farms" as the original owners sought to "better their lot" as the larger estates were eventually broken up for sale in farm sized lots.

Not helping the researcher though, was the habit of the large land owners seeming to hold repeated sales of the remnants of their broken up estates, but changing or re-using the lot number identities on each occasion!!! One such case in point was Andrew Lang's Canterbury Estate covering the 1000 acres bounded by Lake Illawarra and Mullet Creek in the south, a north / south line just to the east of Berkeley Catholic Church, a west line just south of what was once Flagstaff Rd (now Nolan St), and a north / south line through the current day intersection of Northcliffe Drive and the old highway. Several early Catholics such as the Clifford, O'Brien, Gibbons and Cook families held land on this former estate at various times, but to determine exactly where has been quite a task, necessitating the documentation of every land sale involving any of the lots within the estate – eg what was initially sold as Lots 33-34 was subsequently re-sold some years later as Lots 1, 2 and 3, irrespective of the fact that other portions of the property had been sold as Lots 1-3 at some other time!! Some assistance or surety of location can be gained when a lot is described as bordering two or more features such as the only three roads that existed at that time (the "high road from Wollongong to Dapto", Canterbury Rd and Hooka Creek Rd), the lake, Mullet Creek, Hooka Creek, or the estate boundary. However, when a lot bordered just one such feature, its actual position anywhere along that feature's length can only be determined by comparison of the length and direction of its other boundaries with the known or estimated boundaries of other lots in that area, irrespective of their previous or 'current' lot numbers.

Having said all that, the land research is turning out to be a fascinating exercise, with so far almost 700 land transactions involving the Catholic families being identified as they purchased, mortgaged and on-sold their properties over the years, with some properties passing through generations of the one family, or being passed on from one Catholic family to another, either through intermarriage or perhaps simply camaraderie within the Catholic community.

When looking at the land maps for the (Land) Parish of Kembla (from Mt Kembla to Mullet Creek) one sees so many Catholic names as the original owners of properties centred round the site of the cemetery and original church at West Dapto. As one then uncovers the acquisition of other properties by the later arrivals, one can see perhaps one of the bases of the seemingly cohesive early Catholic parish community of Dapto centred round their parish centre.

Aside from all the farms changing hands, three other series of land transactions that were of course vital to the parish community were those relating to the land occupied by the parish centres, these being in many ways just as fascinating.

Documentation relating to the first, the donation of the initial parish land by Elizabeth Cray had eluded my searching until I was actually writing this newsletter item and trying to determine the final owner of the site of the first convent (see below). The reason why I had not been able to find any documented trace of Elizabeth's donation of the land was the simple fact that there was none – the parish maintained occupancy of the land purely through the good will of the owners!! Following Elizabeth Cray's death in 1855 that 31 acre portion of her 100 acres falling to the east of West Dapto Rd was passed on to James Roach, in trust for his son, John Roach – no relation at all but obviously a favourite of the old lady, the Roach family thankfully being members of the local parish. Eventually, on 21.10.1879 John Roach sold the 31 acres to Timothy O'Brien, yet another parishioner, with ownership being inherited by his daughter, Mary, in 1902. Finally, on 17.12.1923, some 80 years after the initial donation by Elizabeth Cray, the donation was formalised when ownership of the 4

acres 1 rood and 4½ perches was transferred to the Catholic Church in exchange for the “official” nominal amount of 10/-.

However, returning to the early days, on 01.06.1871 Fr. Cornelius D. Coghlan purchased, at a price of £190, almost 7 acres from John Barrett to provide a site for his presbytery and, during the following decade or so, the first convent and Catholic school. Like Elizabeth Cray, John Barrett was the unintended but eventual first owner of one of the 100a Veterans Grants, his being on the eastern side of Dapto Creek, opposite Elizabeth's, bordered by the creek and West Dapto Rd from the creek where the road turns east just north of the cemetery and heads towards Kembla Grange. John's land stretched from the bridge over Dapto Creek back to a point east of the current day turnoff to Whytes Gully Tip. The 6¾ acres purchased by Fr Coghlan was a strip of land between the creek and road, leaving Barrett's brick house and associated paddocks between it and the creek crossing.

Following the arrival of the railway in the late 1880's and the subsequent movement of the town centre from Brownsville south to the area surrounding the railway station, the decision was eventually made to bring the parish buildings closer to the town centre. This decision coincided with, or was perhaps brought about by, the Marshall family's subdivisions about the new town centre, with both the parish and Sisters of St Joseph securing their respective allotments in Jerramatta St. On 18.05.1898 Cardinal Moran, Fr John Joseph O'Carroll, Fr Wm Hayden, Patrick Rafferty and Maurice Madden purchased, from the Illawarra Harbour and Land Corporation Ltd, 2 roods 29 perches, being Allotments 4-6 Section 59 in Jerramatta St, as the site for the new parish centre. The adjoining Allotments 7-9, also totalling 2 roods 29 perches, were acquired on 16.10.1899 as the site for the new convent, the Torrens Certificate of Title listing the new owners to be “The Most Rev Patrick Francis Moran, Cardinal of Sydney, Mary Ma^cKillop of Dapto, Spinster, and Mary Anne Lenihan of Dapto, Spinster”.

Following the nuns' move to Dapto, the previous convent site was sold to William Hore for £250, this sum going towards the debt on the new convent. The ‘Catholicity’ of this land continued on 18.12.1912 when the land was again sold, this time to Mary O'Brien of Brownsville for £520, and thence through generations of that family.

How to put it all together – It won't all fit in one book!

Being a cemetery of 1060+ burials and memorials and growing, we recognised very early on that the compilation of the individual personal histories for most / all persons would necessitate the publication of at least two books. We believe that EVERY ONE of those 1060+ people are important and deserve to have their life and contributions to parish, community and family acknowledged. However, the physical constraints of printing and binding limit us to just over 500 pages, hence at least two volumes will be necessary. We have tossed around various ideas of how to split the 1060+ and have come to the conclusion that the first book will (possibly) cover those families who have their first burial prior to 1900, this also being a way of highlighting the interactions between families of a similar time period, be that through intermarrying or participation in events covered by news reports etc. Rather than only covering half the members of each of those ‘early’ families, we will continue through the generations and include the full details and stories of all members of those families buried to the present day, as far as we know. However, we will be including in the first book, a full list of the names and dates of death for ALL known burials and memorials up to the time of submission to the printer – only their details and stories will be held over to the second volume.

Below is a list of those surnames we think would fall into this “first family burial pre-1900” category. We are reluctant to publish a detailed list of full names and dates at this stage as it is the end result of our many years of research effort and costs. If you believe you know of someone of another surname buried at West Dapto before 1900, or someone who belongs to one of the listed families but may have been missed (eg a grandchild with a different surname or a sister with a different surname) then please let us know. Often we only find the connections between people as we complete the detailed research. Note that some common family surnames in the list have been noted with “(not all)”, indicating that there are post-1900 burials of people with that surname, who are not related to the pre-1900 people. If you wish to check if your specific family members have been included, or you think you have some other people who should be included, please contact us and we will give you more relevant details. We have not yet started the research on “every” person and hence are very open to changes to this listing. This list also lets you know those families we are currently trying to complete and would appreciate any help with ASAP, especially with regards photographs. On a rough count, the surname list covers approximately 500 persons, which is less than half the known burials, but the earlier families tend to have more collectable information, such as convict records and newspaper stories, so will take more space. However, this is off-set by there being a greater percentage of

infants and young children dying in the early years, and their entries often only take a few lines. Keeping in mind the limit of approximately 500 pages A4 size, as we get closer to completion of this group, we will have an idea of whether the time frame needs to be cut back to 1890 or 1880 or can move forward into the early 1900s.

ABBERTON	GAMMY	McNAB
AHERN	GEORGE	MEANEY
BARRETT	GIBBONS	MELLON
BIRMINGHAM	GORMAN	MILLER
BLACK	GRAY	MOORE
BOYLE	GREENWOOD	MORAN (not all)
BREEN	HALLORAN	MOREY
BRUCE	HALPIN	MURPHY
BURGESS	HARTE	NEVIN
CALVERT	HAYES	NOLAN
CAMPBELL	HEAD	NOWLAN
CARNEY	HEALEY	NUNAN
CASEY	HEININGER	O'BRIEN (not all)
CASTELLI	HEMPTON	O'DOWD
CLEARY	HENLEY	O'LEARY
CLIFFORD	HICKEY	O'MALLEY
CLYNCH	HODGSON	O'NEIL
COGHLAN	HOLLINGWORTH	O'NEILL
COLLINS	HORE	O'REILLY
CONNELL	HOWES	QUINN
COOK	HUGHES	RAFTERY
COOPER	HUNTER	REED
CORR	IRWIN	RICHARDS
COSTIGAN	KEAVENY	ROACH
CRAY	KELLY	ROCKS
CULLITON	KENNEDY	ROGAN
CURRY	KEOGH	ROGERS
CURRY	KEYS	ROURKE
DAN	KEYS	RYAN
D'ARCY	KILEY	SANDERS
DOHERTY	KILLALEA	SIMPSON
DOLAN	LAHEY	SMITH/SCHMITT
DOYLE	LARKIN	SPETTIGUE
DRINKWATER	LEARMONTH	STAPLEY
DRURY	LEITCH	SUMMERS
DWYER	MADDEN	SWAN
EMILHAINZ	MALLON	SWEENEY
FARRAHER	MANNIX	THOMPSON
FITZGERALD	MARCEAU	THRIFT
FLANAGAN	MARKHAM	WAPLES
FOLEY	McAULIFFE	WARRINGTON
FOX	McCLOY	WILEY
FROST	McCORMACK	WILLIAMS
GALLAGHER	McKINLEY	WYNNE

Please note, we will still need information and photographs of those buried past 1900, not listed above, as the intention is to research, document and publish details on EVERY person buried in the cemetery. The cut-off date for people for the final book will be determined close to the publishing of the final book as new burials are being continuously added to our list. We would prefer to have the information sooner rather than later so that the information and photographs can be gathered whilst available.

Also, since there are not the quantity of newspaper stories etc available for many post 1950 burials, please consider writing a personal story about your family members who were buried in the last 50 years or so. Otherwise, your loved ones' entries in the second book will be little more than details taken from the headstone and death or funeral notices.