



AROUND THE GRAVES

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Father and Son at War

Behind every grave is a story worth telling. Member Vicki Laveni was kind enough to share some details of her ancestors, Clement and Edith Fanny West. Clement (1865-1919) and his son Edgar James (1900-65) are a rare example of father and son who not only enlisted for active overseas service during WWI, but are buried together in the same grave—Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery, CofE “44” 28.

“The family story says they were due to leave England together with their seven children in 1912—Eva McDermott née West, May, Edwin (Edgar) James, Robert, (William) Frederick, Ivy Edith, Alice Ruby and Irene (Renie) Lily. Edith went on to fall pregnant with her last baby so decided not to travel until after the baby was born. Clement came out in 1912 to look for work and for somewhere for the family to live. Edith left England in 1913 [on the ship ‘Port Lincoln’] with her eight children the youngest was about six-weeks-old at the time.



above:
Clement West.

(Photo courtesy of
Vicki Laveni)

At the start of WWI, Clement decided to enlist in the Army (1914-16 & 1918-19)—unlike some keen to become six-bob-a-day tourists, he didn’t fib about his age, being 49 at the time. Clement survived all the horrors of war including being shot in the arm in Gallipoli. Clement came home to his family in Commercial Road Mentone only to die as a consequence of the flu epidemic on 19 April 1919.

I do not know how long Edith and Clement lived in Commercial Road for but Edith spent most of her later years living in Marina Road, Mentone. Towards the end of her life she was cared for by her five daughters. I am sure if they were here now they would be thrilled to know of their association with Mentone Football Club. Two sons, two grandsons and a great-grandson have all played for the Club.” (Source: Info supplied by Vicki Laveni, 2011; The Argus 21 Apr 1919 p1 & War Service Records, C West and E J West, www.naa.gov.au)

Famous and Forgotten...

Some of the well-known interments at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery who lie in unadorned graves.

Frederick FRANCIS (CofE “49” 33)—Mayor of Malvern City (1920-21) while a Federal politician for Henty (1919-25).

John ARCHDEACON (RC “E” 48)—Was involved in the story of the Kelly Gang when in 1870 he arrested James (Jimmy) Quinn for assault and resisting arrest; he was later beaten up by the Quinns at Greta. Quinn is the maternal grandfather of the bushranger Edward (Ned) Kelly.

Richard GOLDSTONE (CofE “D” 93)—early medical practitioner of the Cheltenham district in the mid-1850s.

James HEFFERNAN (CofE “A” 105)—owned the Long Beach Hotel (“Riviera”), Nepean Highway, Carrum (1908).

Julius HERZ (pictured) (CofE “E” 24)—German-born musician credited with persuading Francis Ormond to give £20,000 for establishing the chair of music within the University of Melbourne.

William Trench Clifford KELLY (CofE “47” 22)—Lawyer and Moorabbin councillor (1908-17). Was also an inaugural councillor of the Sandringham Borough.

Alexander MACDONALD (Pres “A” 44)—Grazier and Mordialloc identity. Built the first Mordialloc Hotel in 1853.

Thomas MOORHOUSE (CofE “D” 133)—St Matthew’s Church of England clergyman between 1902 and 1912.

Catherine NICHOLSON (CofE “43” 1A)—married the well-known businessman Mark Foy (“Foy & Gibson”) who were both early Chelsea residents. Their home later became the Carrum Borough municipal chambers in 1920.

George Wade WATSON (CofE “9” 8)—Archdeacon of Bendigo.



above:
Julius Herz (1889).

(La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria)

Berkshire to Bathurst: Searching for the Becketts

This is a story about the family of Clarice Beckett and uncovering the layers of a mystery that has eluded historians since her 'discovery' by the renowned art historian Rosalind Hollinrake. So obscure is the mystery, so difficult has it been to uncover the truth that there remains to this day an incomplete chapter of her family that is essential to gain a better understanding of her remarkable life as an artist.

Rarely are artists introverts, reticent and private. Social outcasts like their acting fraternity, they are often carefree in spirit, liberating in their ways, and progressive in their views. But Clarice Beckett was the exception to the rule. Indeed, her art and her life was like no other artist of her time and without comparison. Yet her reticent and private nature belied the inner strength of her public persona that enabled her to withstand the undue criticism of her art. Her reluctance in revealing her life to even her closest contemporaries is difficult to simply be put down to her reticent and shy nature. How much of her reluctance was nature and how much was nurture will never be known, but the family mystery may have had a pronounced effect on her subsequent outlook.

For a cordwainer—to use the traditional description—Joseph Beckett came from a family of well-off shoemakers from Newbury, Berkshire. The distinction between a cobbler and cordwainer is important; the later made luxury shoes and boots from the finest leathers, while the former repaired them. After their marriage on 23 April 1822 at St Edmunds, Salisbury, Joseph (c1801-50) and Elizabeth Beckett *née* Tanswell (c1801-57) lived at 135 Church Court, Newbury (1841) and there followed the birth of their two children, Joseph jnr (b circa 1825) and Mary Ann Elizabeth Beckett (c1830-61). Historically, Newbury's economy was built on the cloth trade and later agriculture. Today, it is the UK headquarters of Vodafone as well as being the nearest town of Highclere castle, scene of the popular British television period drama series "Downton Abbey".

After the death of Joseph snr in 1850, Elizabeth Beckett continued the family's boot manufacturing enterprise that employed five staff with her daughter Mary. Then, for some inexplicable reason, Mary decided to migrate in 1854—three years before her mother's death. It doesn't appear to have been a sudden decision as she travelled with a near relation, Mary Beckett (c1809-78) who was probably her cousin and had been living with the family for a period in the 1840s. There is nothing to suggest that the Beckett family

were other than well-off which makes the decision of Joseph and Mary to migrate seven years apart all the more difficult to understand. If the decision was the dream of a better life, this was one of the least successful stories, but in Clarice Beckett, Australia gained an artist whose legacy enriched our cultural life. Mary and her cousin arrived in Victoria on the *Herald of the Morning Star* in December 1854.



above:
44 Bartholomew Street, Newbury
(second from left) where Clarice
Beckett's father was born.

(Google Maps UK)

Gold was discovered at Wombat Flat in the Daylesford district by John Egan in the first week of August 1851 on ground now covered by the man-made Lake Daylesford. While Daylesford wasn't Victoria's richest, it was arguably the most diversified and long lived gold field covering the largest area—300 square miles—than any other in the State.

Joseph Beckett arrived in Daylesford just as the heyday of shallow alluvial mining was coming to an end. It was now time for the real work to begin—extracting the rivers of gold deep beneath the surface. The two methods of the day were quartz mining and tunnelling (deep-lead). The latter required a new type of digger—those foolhardy to risk life and limb working underground in dangerous and primitive conditions; while quartz mining reduced the risk by favouring machine over man. Both methods required capital from investors willing to gamble.

It is extraordinary that Joseph Beckett came to be appointed manager of 12 quartz mining enterprises between 1863 and 1871. But then again, many adaptable and enterprising men had travelled to the other side of the world to find the social classes replaced by an egalitarian society with an independent spirit of brotherhood that can be summed up in a nutshell - "Jack's as good as anybody". Undoubtedly, the goldfields gave birth to the spirit of Anzac their grandsons would inherit.

Then in October 1872, Joseph Beckett disappears...

Members can download the entire 13,100 word article on the Becketts for free from the Members' Area of our website: www.focrc.org/members.htm