

The Balboora O'Connors

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The Balboora O'Connors



Dr David Cullen



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The Wearing of the Green

*O Paddy dear, an' did ye hear the news that's goin' round?
The shamrock is by law forbid to grow on Irish ground;
St. Patrick's Day no more we'll keep, his colour can't be seen,
For there's a cruel law agin the wearin' o' the Green.*

*I met wid Napper Tandy and he took me by the hand,
And he said, "How's dear ould Ireland, and how does she stand?"
She's the most distressful country that ever yet was seen,
For they're hangin' men an' women there for the wearin' o' the Green.*

*Then since the colour we must wear is England's cruel red,
Sure Ireland's sons will ne'er forget the blood that they have shed,
You may take a shamrock from your hat and cast it on the sod,
It will take root and flourish there though underfoot it's trod.*

*When law can stop the blades of grass from growin' as they grow,
And when the leaves in summer-time their colour dare not show,
Then will I change the colour, too, I wear in my caubeen
But 'till that day, please God, I'll stick to wearin' o' the Green.*

*But if at last our colour should be torn from Ireland's heart,
Her sons with shame and sorrow from the dear old isle will part;
I've heard a whisper of a land that lies beyond the sea
Where rich and poor stand equal in the light of freedom's day.*

*O Erin, must we leave you driven by a tyrant's hand?
Must we ask a mother's blessing from a strange and distant land?
Where the cruel cross of England shall nevermore be seen,
And where, please God, we'll live and die still wearin' o' the Green.*

Old Irish Ballad

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Introduction

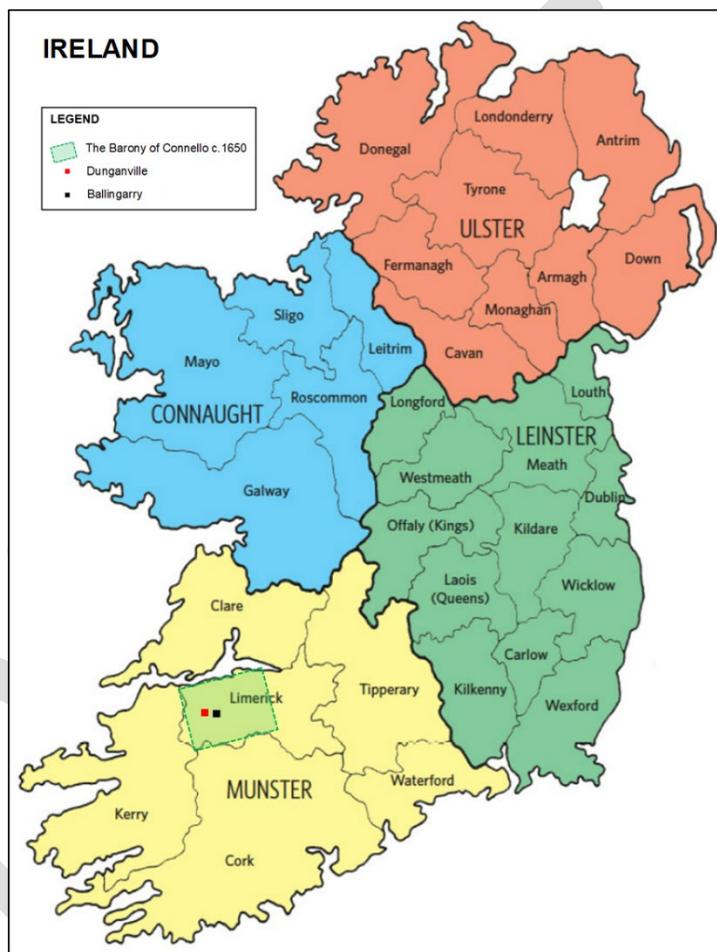
The Balboora O'Connors

The Balboora O'Connors is a family history tracing the O'Connor family of *Balboora*, a farming property near Collie in western New South Wales, Australia. The study was commissioned by members of the O'Connor family who were raised at *Balboora* and wished to understand their heritage beyond the knowledge passed down through family memory. They knew that their ancestry was Irish, that their great-grandfather William O'Connor had selected land at Collie in 1901, which became the Balboora homestead, and that, before settling there, William, his wife Caroline, and their family had lived in the Echuca district of Victoria. Their grandfather, Frederick O'Connor, one of William and Caroline's sons, retained *Balboora* until he died in 1964. Frederick married Eileen Chisholm, and both couples, William and Caroline O'Connor and Frederick and Eileen O'Connor, are buried in Gilgandra Cemetery.

As the earliest confirmed ancestor, William O'Connor formed the starting point for the historical research. His birth was registered in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1847 by his parents, Patrick O'Connor and Margaret Kennedy, who later registered the births of five additional children in the colony. William married Caroline Mary Royal at Kyneton, Victoria, in 1873, and together they raised 12 children, including Frederick, whose birth was registered at Mitiamo, near Echuca, in 1886. Frederick O'Connor later married Eileen Jean Chisholm at Gilgandra in 1917, and they had ten children.

Family history research requires a detailed examination of primary sources, including birth, death, and marriage registrations; census material; land and travel records; military service files; and legal documents. These are supplemented by secondary sources such as newspaper reports, family papers, photographs, and historical reference works. *The Balboora O'Connors*, therefore, embrace both Australian and Irish perspectives. While Australian records are comparatively extensive, Irish genealogical research presents particular challenges due to the loss of many public records. The destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland during the Four Courts fire in Dublin in 1922 resulted in the loss of centuries of archival material,

including court and parliamentary records, as well as the census returns of 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851. Consequently, Irish family research often proceeds by working backward from known information and filling gaps through substitute sources such as the Down Survey, Tithe Applotment Books, Griffith's Valuation, Catholic parish registers, ship manifests, and estate papers.



The success of Irish genealogical research is greatly enhanced when precise biographical details are known. Fortunately, Patrick O'Connor's death notice recorded that he was born on 17 March 1811 in the Parish of Newcastle, County Limerick, and that he arrived in Melbourne aboard the *Westminster*, landing on 13 December 1839. His death certificate

further identified his parents as William O'Connor and Ellen Hogan, an unusually detailed record that proved invaluable for this family history.

Patrick's family likely lived on a modest twenty-acre holding at Dunganville, a townland approximately seven kilometres northwest of Newcastle West. Alongside his parents and siblings, Bridget, James, Mary, Johanna, Margaret, Elizabeth and Nora, Patrick belonged to one of several O'Connor households in the district sharing common ancestry. Around 1837, he married Margaret Kennedy, daughter of Michael Kennedy. In 1839, while living at Ballingarry, just west of Dunganville, with their infant son Michael, Patrick and Margaret made the difficult decision to emigrate to Australia and begin new lives abroad. The accompanying map (**previous page**) illustrates these locations.

The Balboora O'Connors traces eight generations of the O'Connor family, beginning with their presence in County Limerick in the mid-seventeenth century and concluding with the death of Frederick O'Connor at Collie in 1964. The final chapter explores the long history of the *Balboora O'Connors*, tracing them deep into medieval Ireland. Across these centuries, the narrative exposes the enduring brutality of English conquest, dispossession, and imperial rule, while simultaneously revealing a proud, resilient, and tenacious O'Connor clan who, like so many of Gaelic Ireland, fought relentlessly for family, sovereignty, and survival.

This long struggle reached a critical turning point in 1838, when Patrick and Margaret O'Connor made the courageous and heartrending decision to leave Ireland forever and seek a future in Australia. Their story alone embodies a remarkable, quintessentially Irish and Australian quest for success. Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, the patriarch and matriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*, arrived in Melbourne in late 1839, determined to seize the opportunities of their new world, and, in doing so, became pioneers in the truest sense. Their resilience, hard work, and resolve laid the foundations for future generations, who inherited the same determination, adaptability, and refusal to yield in the face of adversity.

Chapter 1 – County Limerick 1584 – 1839 explores life in County Limerick, especially in the early decades of the 1800s, with a particular focus on the O'Connors of the parish of Newcastle, who have a direct ancestral link to the *Balboora O'Connors*.

Chapter 2 – A New Horizon 1838 – 1839 explores the circumstances under which Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, along with their infant son Michael, and Patrick's 14-year-old sister Nora, made the heartbreaking decision to emigrate to Australia, along with an account of their voyage on the *Westminster*.

Chapter 3 – Pioneers 1840 – 1877 tracks the extraordinary *Balboora O'Connors* from their early days on a Squatter's run in the Macedon Ranges, through to their first farm in the Parish of Carlsruhe, near the new township of Kyneton, then to more substantial leaseholds in the nearby Parishes of Langley and Baynton. The chapter concludes with the auction of their holdings in the Parish of Langley and the decision by Patrick and Margaret, along with their adult children William, James, Margaret, and Catherine, to relocate to new leaseholds at Terrick Terrick East, near Echuca in the Northern Plains of Victoria.

Chapter 4 – The Northern Plains and Riverina 1878 – 1901 begins with images of William and Caroline O'Connor, and James O'Connor, at the time of their departure from Langley, Kyneton. The chapter then takes a deep dive into the *Balboora O'Connors'* nine years in Terrick Terrick East, followed by six or so years at Echuca, then a short stay at Cobram and ending with the six years they lived on a selection at Booroobanilly, just south of Jerilderie.

Chapter 5 – *Balboora, Collie* 1902–1924 recounts the *Balboora O'Connors'* first two decades in the district, from the arduous early years to their emergence as highly respected farmers and valued members of the Collie community. Yet their progress was overshadowed by the profound loss of the Great War, which cast a sombre pall over the entire area. Like many local families, the O'Connors sent sons to serve, and George's death on the Western Front marked a devastating blow. With William gone on the eve of the Great War and George lost during hostilities, the family ultimately decided at Christmas 1923 to sell both *Balboora* and *Lisfarran*.

Chapter 6 – Fred's *Balboora* 1925–1955 explores these formative years, revealing a story of enterprise, resilience and familial strength whose influence lives with their many descendants today.

Chapter 7 – Carrigafoyle Castle 600–1584 takes a deep dive into the Middle Ages! The *Balboora O'Connors'* ancestral homeland lay in the Barony of Iraghticonnor (*Oireacht Uí Chonchúir*) in County Kerry, roughly 25 kilometres northwest of Newcastle in County

Limerick. For nearly a millennium, the O'Connor Kerry (*Ó Conchubhair Chiarraí*) ranked among the great Gaelic clans. The building of Carrigafoyle was one of the most formidable during the reign of Elizabeth I at its brutal climax. Carrigafoyle families fleeing east into the establishing themselves in

The Origin of *Balboora*

The name *Balboora* is highly by the *Balboora O'Connors* spelling *Balboora* does not to the family is unmistakable

One plausible explanation *boh-ROO*, meaning "Brian Irish history, a High King of Viking military power in the Parish of Newcastle, County regional lords operating with therefore feasible that *Béal* this interpretation must be

David Cullen, 2026

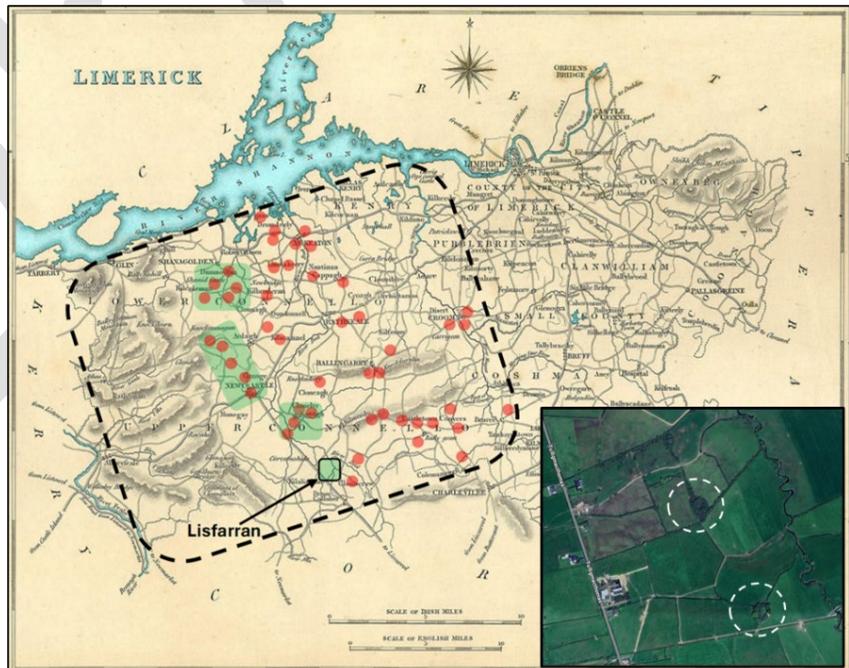
Chapter 1

County Limerick 1584 – 1838

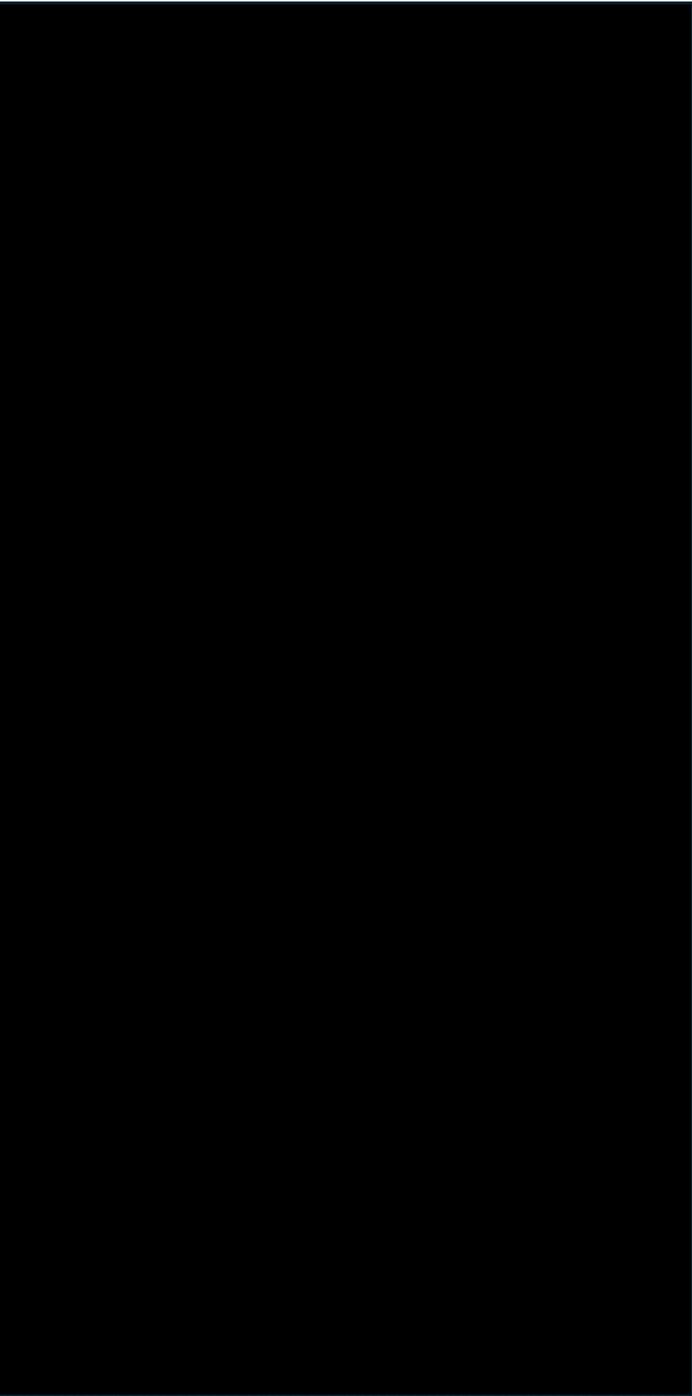
*They couldn't call themselves O'Connor anymore...they had to be Connor or Connors, they had to keep their heads down and the only place you would find them would be in boggy places...they left their lands...they lost it all!*¹ **Local Folk Narrative**

After six centuries of fierce battles, dispossession, and colonisation, firstly by the Anglo-Normans and then by the English, the once mighty Gaelic clans of Ireland, including the O'Connors' of Carrigafoyle Castle, County Kerry, were a vanquished people and by the beginning of the 1800s most eked out a humble existence as tenant farmers, cottiers, or landless labourers, often under deplorable living conditions.² Many had ventured east into the Barony of Connello, County Limerick. William O'Connor, or William Connors as he was recorded in English registers, was one of these vanquished souls, and he is the earliest identifiable male ancestor of the *Balboora O'Connors*.³ **Chapter 1 – County Limerick 1584 – 1838** explores life in County Limerick, especially in the early decades of the 1800s, with a particular focus on the O'Connors of the Parish of Newcastle, in the Barony of Connello, who have a direct ancestral link to the *Balboora O'Connors*.⁴

Distribution of O'Connor men in the ancient Barony of Connello, County Limerick (bounded by the dashed line), in 1584 (green-shaded areas) and 1829 (red dots).



The map drawn from the Desmond Survey (1584) and the County Limerick Tithe Applotment Books (1829) County Limerick (**previous** acre) area in the townland anglicised as *Lisfarran*, while *fearann* means land. medieval farmsteads, between folklore, these forts were forts. Inset in the map (**pre** *Lisfarran*, where two ringforts *Balboora O'Connors* used *L* which strongly suggests a not appear elsewhere in I



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(folio 37 verso). Limbrick County, I

(folio 37 [a]) Limerick County, Th
Allen, 09 ; Bane, 09 ; Barry, 40
& Brennagh, 9 ; Ó Cahell, 11 ; Ó Cont
15 ; Ó Callaghane & Ó Callahane, 17
41 ; Ó Casy, 10 ; Ó Curtaine & M^e
Ó Cahane, 9 ; Ó Dillane & Ó Dillen
Ó Donnell, 19 ; Ó Dally, 14 ; Ó D
McEdmond, 36 ; Ó Flyne, 13 ; Ó Ferr
19 ; Ó Grady, 31 ; Hely & Ó Healy
Ó Helyhy, 20 ; Ó Hogane, 21 ; He
Hecky, 9 ; Ó Hanraghane (19), Ó Ha
11 ; Ó Kelly & O Keilly (31), Ó Kealy
& Ó Lenchy, 13 ; Ó Lency, 8 ; Ó
McMorrough, 12 ; Ó Muldowny, 16 ; M^e
Morpheu & Morphy, 30 ; O Mulriane,
Nagle, 11 ; Ó Neale, 20 ; M^eOwen, 1
Ó Ryane, 8 ; Russell, 21 ; Ó Regane
(05), Shagins (05), 14 ; Ó Sheaghane
McShyhy (06), 10 ; Ó Sullevane, 33
11 ; M^eTeige, 90 ; M^eThomas, 39 ; M^e
50 ; Whyte, 16.

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O'Connor
Ellen Hogan,
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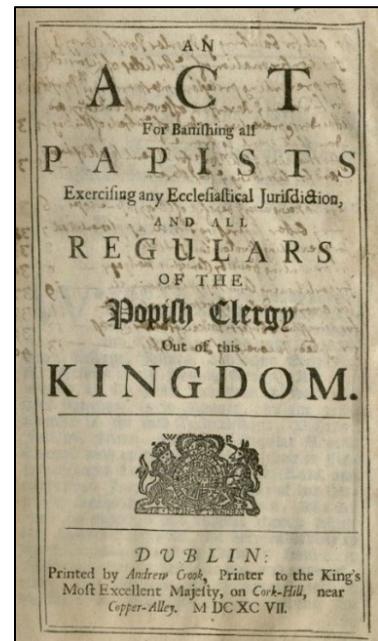
In addition, around 1659, Barony of Connello to ma than any other barony in more of these O'Connor men represent the earliest identifiable forebears of the *Balboora O'Connors*, and William O'Connor's direct heritage lay within four generations of one of them.

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William O'Connor (c1785 – c1840)

William O'Connor was born around 1785, and he spent his early years essentially as a non-citizen. The malicious Penal Laws, which permeated much of the 1700s, stripped Catholics of all but the most basic of human rights. The clear aim of the laws was to break the power of the Catholic majority and secure Protestant political and economic dominance. William's father and his father before him were forbidden to buy land and were limited to short-term leases, usually on marginal or boggy land. Access to schooling was non-existent, while entry to professional education, such as law or medicine, was prohibited. It was illegal for them to own any weapon or even a horse worth more than five pounds. William's father and grandfather were not entitled to vote or hold any public office. Although they could join the army or navy, they were not eligible to hold any leadership position.¹² Of all the restrictions imposed on them, the loss of cultural and religious identity struck William and his family most deeply. Hoping to avoid prejudice, many Irish people, including William O'Connor, set aside their venerable patronyms Ó and Mac, or saw their proud names ignorantly reshaped by Protestant landlords, officials, and clerks who spelled and recorded them as they pleased. These uneven anglicisations blurred kinship ties and muddled family histories, just as many traditional Irish placenames became altered beyond recognition.¹³

The cover of the 1697 Act for Banishing all Papists Exercising any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and all Regulars of the Popish Clergy out of this Kingdom.



The emblem of the Society of United Irishmen.

Central to the Penal Laws were orders that sought to eliminate the Catholic religion, such as the Act for Banishing all Papists Exercising any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and all Regulars of the Popish Clergy out of this Kingdom. The British Parliament expelled Catholic bishops, threatening death by continuing their ministry.⁴ For the O'Connors, through the 1700s, the English language became the language of power and status, while the Irish language became a mark of insult to injury. English became the language of the dominant class, while the Irish language became the language of the oppressed. In contrast, the Irish language became a mark of dispossession, exclusion, and poverty.



The 1798 Rebellion painted by E. Foran

Through 1792 and 1793, influential Irishmen petitioned the British government for relief from the Penal Laws. Inspired by the American and French Revolutions, a growing nationalist movement in Ireland pushed the British government to pass the Catholic Relief Act (1793), which granted Catholics the right to vote (provided

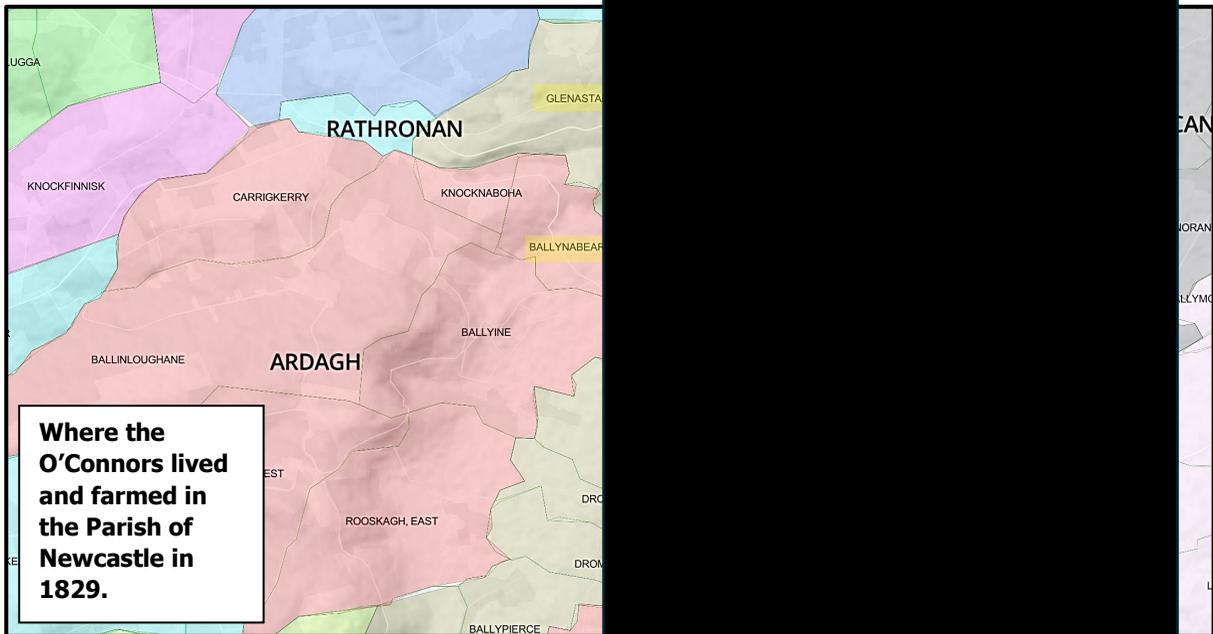
they leased land with a freehold value of at least forty shillings per year), enter the legal profession, serve as army and navy officers, and attend Trinity College, Dublin.^{17 18} However, they remained barred from Parliament and high offices. The act also permitted Catholics to practice their religion freely, allowed them to bear arms under certain conditions, and repealed many remaining property and educational restrictions.¹⁹ The act, though, did little to dampen the Irish thirst for rebellion, and with a group of prominent Catholics and liberal Protestants, the Society of United Irishmen (**previous pages**), rallying support for Irish independence and parliamentary reform, much of Ireland fell into rebellion in 1798. The British responded to the uprising quickly and brutally, resulting in mass executions, atrocities, and widespread destruction.²⁰ The painting (**previous page**) depicts the 1798 Irish Rebellion and shows Irish farmers, armed only with pikes and farm tools, in battle against the British Army.²¹

William O'Connor married Ellen Hogan during the first decade of the 1800s, and on 17 March 1811, they had a son, Patrick, who was to become the Australian patriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*.^{22 23} William and Ellen had at least seven other children: Bridget, baptised in 1816; James (1818); Mary (1821); twins Johana and Margaret (1823); Elizabeth (1824); and Ellen [Nora] (1826).²⁴ They were all baptised in the Catholic Parish of Newcastle, County Limerick.²⁵ Baptismal records for this parish are available only for the period May 1815 to October 1831, and Patrick likely had other siblings born before May 1815.²⁶

In 1829, the only O'Connors registered as leasing land in the Parish of Newcastle lived very near one another, with just seven kilometres separating them across the adjoining townlands of Ballinena, Dunganville, Glenastar, and Churchtown, as well as Maiden Street South in Newcastle town.²⁷ An O'Connor family also lived in the townland Ballynabearna, adjacent to Dunganville, but in the neighbouring Parish of Ardagh (**next page**).

A William O'Connor leased a modest 20-acre plot at Dunganville. It is possible he was Patrick's father, as the sponsors noted in each of Patrick's siblings' baptisms included the surnames Ambrose, Wolfe, Carroll, Liston, Sweeny, Foran, Keane, and Barratt. All of these surnames were common in Dunganville and the surrounding townlands.²⁸ Another Patrick O'Connor, probably William's brother, farmed 13 acres in a neighbouring block.²⁹

Bartholomew (Batt) O'Connor held 23 acres at Ballinena, Thomas O'Connor leased just a single acre at Churchtown, while Denis O'Connor leased 10 acres at Churchtown. Simply referred to as Messrs, a group of O'Connors, (next page).³⁰ The baptismal records for the Parish of Newcastle in 1829 list the names of newborns, parents, and baptismal sponsors. Of those lucky enough to lease land, many lived as laborers, including dairywomen, cooks, masons, bricklayers, cabinetmakers, shepherds, housemaids, dressmakers, seamstresses, blacksmiths, coopers, shoemakers, tailors or seamen, and were not mentioned in any public record.



Like the rest of rural Ireland, the hunger years of the 1840s affected the O'Connor families. Many perished from starvation, while others sought work in factories, mills, or mines in England, or emigrated to Australia.³¹ By the mid-1850s, while dozens of O'Connors were living in Ballynabearna, and there is no mention of William O'Connor, families were living in Glenastar, with some of them living in

35

Extracts from the County Limerick Tithe Applotment Books (1829) detailing the amount and quality of land leased by O'Connors in neighbouring townlands Ballinena, Dunganville, and Glenastar. The annual sum they were required to pay to the local Protestant clergy (tithe) is noted in the last column.

Names of Townlands and Landholders	Acres	First Quality	Second Quality	Third Quality	Fourth Quality	Amount of Composition £ S D
	A R P	A R P	A R P	A R P	A R P	
<i>Ballinena</i>						
Robert Ambrose	29 0 00	5 0 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	4 0 00	1 13 2
James Ambrose	11 3 00	---	9 0 00	2 3 00	---	14 10
Cornelius Cremin & Son	144 0 00	10 0 00	27 0 00	7 0 00	---	3 3 6
John Burns & Sons	37 0 00	19 0 00	13 0 00	5 0 00	---	3 0 2
Widow Cypson	32 0 00	---	1 0 00	---	31 0 00	13 0 3
<i>Ball Owners</i>	23 0 00	4 0 00	10 0 00	9 0 00	---	1 8 11
Denis Hurley & Sons	47 0 00	16 0 00	22 0 00	9 0 00	---	3 9 11
	124 0 00	70 0 00	145 0 00	---	---	10 10 11
<i>Dunganville</i>						
William Connors	20 1 00	18 0 00	2 1 00	---	---	1 19 2
Patrick Connors	13 0 00	9 0 00	4 0 00	---	---	1 3 8
John Ambrose	12 2 00	10 0 00	2 2 00	---	---	1 3 8 1/2
James Ambrose	24 0 00	18 0 00	5 0 00	4 0 00	---	2 6 1
Daniel Ambrose	6 1 00	5 1 00	---	---	---	12 6
James Wolfe	58 2 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	28 2 00	2 12 4
John Hoff	48 3 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	18 3 00	10 0 00	2 12 0
Pat O'Conor for Mary Sullivan	38 0 00	5 0 00	5 0 00	15 0 00	13 0 00	1 13 2 1/2
Patrick Kerby	1 0 00	1 0 00	---	---	---	2 0
					21 0 00	1 10 9 1/2
<i>Glenastar</i>						
John Upton	19 1 00	15 0 00	4 1 00	---	---	1 16 0
Morty Lynch	17 3 00	15 0 00	2 3 00	---	---	1 13 11
John Scough	9 1 00	4 0 00	---	5 1 00	---	11 11
John Peckley	21 0 00	7 0 00	5 0 00	9 0 00	---	1 7 10
Samuel Upton	15 0 00	---	15 0 00	---	---	1 1 3
Michael Madigan & Jr	12 0 00	6 0 00	6 0 00	---	---	1 0 6
John Knight	9 20	---	2 20	---	---	10 1/2
Severy Ambrose	30 0 00	10 0 00	14 0 00	6 0 00	---	2 14 4
Michael Alley	5 3 30	5 3 30	---	---	---	11 10 3
Wm Connors	152 2 00	---	26 0 00	54 0 00	---	14 6 11 1/2
James Lynch	15 0 00	---	6 0 00	9 0 00	---	15 3
Dower and Partners	60 0 00	---	9 0 00	---	10 0 00	1 1 7 1/2
John Murphy & R Shesky	11 3 00	6 0 00	2 3 00	3 0 00	---	18 2

Newcastle – A Parish in Revolt

With the disappointments of the 1798 rebellion behind them, the Irish people entered the 19th century, a country deeply stained by religious, cultural, political, and economic divisions.³⁶ The O'Connors found themselves with barely a toenail on the bottom rung of the ladder of opportunity. At the same time, the Protestant landowners had climbed well beyond the ladder, an ascendancy which had given them a supreme level of privilege and power.

This power only intensified when, under the promise of Catholic emancipation, or freedom, from the British government, enough influential Irish people cautiously agreed to the Act of Union (1801), which led to the abolition of the Irish Parliament in Dublin and a single parliament for the United Kingdom of Great Britain, including Ireland. Incredibly, the British crown refused to sign into law the government's bill for Catholic emancipation, rendering the relationship between Irish Catholics and the Protestant hegemony irreparable.³⁷ The tension between Catholic Ireland and their Protestant occupiers was palpable.



A cottier's mud and stone cabin about 1840.



The McNamara Cob (mud) House in Tullaroe, west County Clare. One of the last surviving mud houses in Munster Province.

Aside from the broader political difficulties, the O'Connors, almost entirely dependent upon the land for their survival, lived in a state of persistent insecurity. Their dwellings were modest one- or two-room cabins constructed of mud and stone, with earthen floors and thatched roofs, centred around a small hearth that served for both warmth and cooking. In addition to their potato plot, they cultivated a small vegetable garden and kept poultry, a

cow, and likely a pig they cramped quarters were of barn. The rents were high hardship. The two images other a photograph of a su into the living conditions

ir already hold and for and the insight

The life-sustaining potato crop.



The potato, introduced to poor and, by the 1700s, had value and abundant yields for the landlord's larder or entirely reliant on the potato also created a dangerous crop rain, meant hunger and malnutrition potato represented not just picture (above) illustrates the on a small potato crop, often Catholic faith and strong ten resilience in the face of potato

the rural nutritional destined most survive, it heavy annors, the 1 42 The pendent s, their and

Ireland's population also rose mid-1830s. As families experienced

on by the pots, often

insufficient to support a family.⁴⁴ The land had reached its holding capacity. Increasing numbers of cottiers and landless labourers were forced to seek seasonal work for meagre wages. This work was irregular and forced many young men and women to travel across Ireland, and even as far as Scotland, Wales, and England, with a spade in hand.⁴⁵

Compounding the O'Connor burden, the local Protestant clergy compelled them to pay an annual tithe to support the Church of Ireland, despite being Catholic.⁴⁶ Also, absentee landlords, mostly residing in England, remained indifferent to tenant welfare, leaving estate management to middlemen and agents. In many cases, these intermediaries were unscrupulous, frequently raising rents, soliciting bribes, and enforcing unfair evictions to line their own pockets, often without the landlord's approval or knowledge.^{47 48} Unsurprisingly, when crops failed, the entire rural system collapsed into crisis. The result was a cycle of poverty, resentment, and insecurity, where population pressure, tithes, ruthless middlemen, and crop failures combined to create chronic suffering for the O'Connors.⁴⁹

In 1591, over 34,000 acres, encompassing most of the land in Upper and Lower Connello, including the Parish of Newcastle, were granted to the Courtenay family from Devonshire, England.^{50 51} The Courtenays were largely absentee landlords and relied on an agent to oversee a complex array of predominantly Protestant over-tenants. These tenants divided a portion of their land into small acreage parcels, which they then leased to subsistence farmers, mostly Irish Catholics. It was the classic middleman system, in which the middleman was not only a farming producer but also an entrepreneur in the farm rental market, often demanding rents above market value. The Protestant Upton family was the over-tenant for Dunganville and the surrounding townlands in the Courtenay estate.⁵²

In 1811, the same year as Patrick O'Connor's birth, Edward Carte was employed as the Courtenay agent. By 1818, the Courtenay estate was in severe financial decline, with rental arrears of £63,500, over four times the annual rental income of £14,000. Carte had raised rents during the prosperous years of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵³ However, when the agricultural depression of 1813–16 set in, tenants could no longer sustain the high war rents, prompting Carte to grant abatements.⁵⁴ Additionally, Carte, who had surveying experience, initiated road improvements across the estate and Newcastle town, which provided much-needed employment for distressed labourers and cottiers. While clearly enjoying the favour of most of the Irish of Newcastle, Carte lost the confidence of the trustees of the Courtenay estate. In

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This decision to appoint
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the Irish,
ban, coupled
nors of

At the same time, Hoskin
London, purchasing cost
foxhunting, which requir

s from
ndulging in
at great

expense. His conspicuous consumption, in contrast to the widespread poverty in the district, fuelled hostility among the over-tenants, or middlemen, who refused to accept their financial burdens quietly.⁵⁹

In December 1819, the incendiary atmosphere in the Parish of Newcastle exploded when Robert Parker, a middleman living just four kilometres north of the O'Connors at Dunganville, found himself in arrears to the tune of £415 and, with the support of his Irish tenants armed with sticks, pikes, and farm tools, resisted an attempt by Hoskins' bailiffs to seize his property. Eventually, Hoskins, with the British military leading the way, stormed Parker's estate in an early morning raid. Aside from impounding his cattle, Hoskins had Parker arrested and then marched, along with his pregnant wife, 15 kilometres into Newcastle town, where Hoskins humiliated the couple by parading them through the streets. The harsh treatment of Parker and his wife, including their shameful arrest and her subsequent stillbirth, won Parker widespread sympathy. Hoskins stirred the pot further by placing guards on Parker's farm, auctioning off all his effects, ejecting his Irish tenants and destroying their cottages. Shortly after, fire destroyed Parker's home as well, an act widely blamed on Hoskins.⁶⁰

Parker was a substantial figure, both as a liberal-minded middleman and a road contractor, and he employed many local men. At the time of his arrest, a section of Parker roadworks was almost complete. Hoskins proceeded to further poke the bear by using Parker's horses and carts, and his own men, to finish the job. This action stirred an immediate reaction from local Irish Catholics who hurled rocks taken from a nearby quarry to drive Hoskins' men away. Out of this bitter fight rose the fearless Patrick *Paddy* Dillane. According to local legend, his expert rock-throwing skills earned him the celebrated pseudonym Captain Rock.⁶¹ Dillane later escalated the violence, firing a gun at Hoskins' bailiffs and playing a leading role in the payback execution of Hoskins' son, Thomas, in July 1821.⁶²

Another of Hoskins' victims was middleman William Brown, who lived at Rathcahill, several kilometres south-west of Newcastle town. Hoskins' heavy-handed approach, which relied on armed guards, spies, humiliation, tenant ejections, and mass seizures of livestock and property, alienated most middlemen. It also raised the hackles of the Irish, including the O'Connors, across the Courtenay estate, who feared their families, too, would soon be homeless, landless, and starving. They rallied quickly and resolutely to fight for their livelihoods. In a 'better the devil you know' scenario, the Irish even sided with middlemen, who themselves had often left much of their charity at home. At times actively encouraged

by their over-tenants, or middlemen, the rebelling Irish farmers, turned Rockites, organised quickly, raiding Protestant homes, to seize weapons and issue threats from Captain Rock.

These targets were primarily
opportunities to increase

Hoskins and his supporters
with Hoskins eventually
Rockite bullet with his name

The disturbances on the Courtenay
several men accused of violence
thanks to the skilled defence
enraged Hoskins and his
of triumph, especially when
Buckley, stoned to death

With the Courtenay estate
estate trustees removed
defused the tension by re
measures.⁶⁶

**Desmond Castle in
the centre of
Newcastle West,
owned by the
Courtenay family,
and home briefly to
Alexander Hoskins.**

The appointment of Furlong
had lost their cottages and
these tenants back, some middlemen took the opportunity to consolidate small plots into



larger farms and install Protestant tenants. This decision obviously angered those families who had been ejected, as well as their Irish Catholic brethren, and consequently, Rockites became eager to exact retribution. Threatening notices signed by Captain Rock began to appear, nailed to the cottage door on usurped land, including the house of John Ambrose, William O'Connor's neighbour in Dunganville, as a warning to those who had taken evicted land.⁶⁷ English settler, Christopher Sparling, who had benefited from tenant ejections, was shot near Dunganville, receiving medical treatment at the home of William O'Connor's landlord, William Upton, before dying the following day.⁶⁸ Days later, Major Richard Going, former head of the Limerick police, was ambushed and killed on the road to Rathkeale, just ten kilometres from Dunganville. His death greatly angered Protestants, while local Irish celebrated with bonfires on every hilltop, fuelled by bitterness at the role played by Going in the harsh aftermath of a tithe disturbance at Askeaton, about 25 kilometres north of Newcastle, where Rockites had been shot and their bodies buried alive in quicklime.⁶⁹ In February and March 1822, the Protestant Upton family was the target of Rockites, with their homes at Glenastar and Ballynaberna threatened and raided for firearms, forcing the families of John and William Upton to flee to Newcastle town for safety.^{70 71}

Between 1819 and 1823, the Parish of Newcastle was the most violent and dangerous district in Ireland, where daily events captured the attention of newspapers across Ireland and England.

O'Connor Men Sentenced to Death

During this period of widespread violence, countless numbers of Irish from County Limerick swung from the gallows. Also, over 1500 men and women were transported as convicts to Australia, with about one-third on charges relating to rebellion and insurrection, including 14 O'Connor men.

On 10 August 1822, the *Dublin Weekly Register* reported the following:

LIMERICK ASSIZES
County Court, August 1

The following are the names of the unfortunate forty-one men who have been capitally convicted:

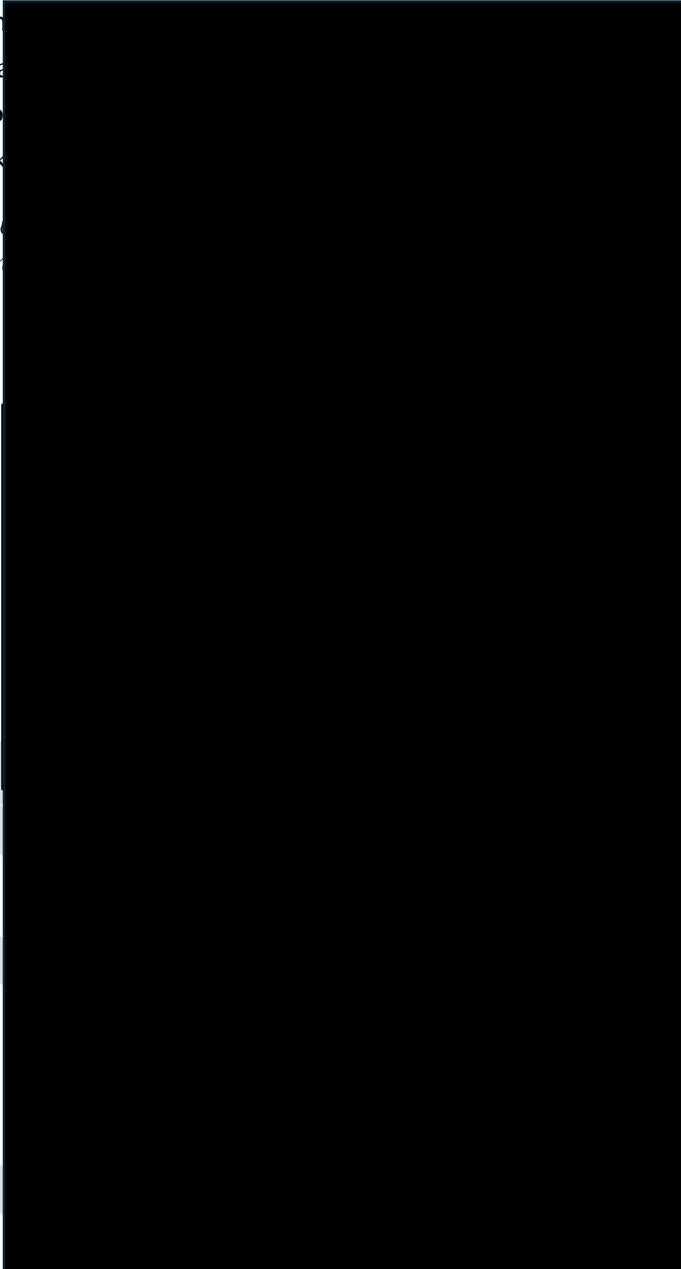
...William [Snr], Pat, Denis, Darby, Charles, John, and William Connors [Jnr], John Leahy, Owen and Pat Sweeny, for taking a gun from Mr. Hayes...⁷²

Imagine the torrent of emotions that ran through the contingent of O'Connors as they watched the proceedings. The magistrate ordered a sentence of death for the O'Connor men, all brothers of the O'Connors, who had broken into a Protestant house and stolen a gun. These O'Connor men, all brothers of the O'Connors, were hanged on the 14th of June 1822 near Abbeyfeale, about 10 kilometres from Limerick. The O'Connors were hanged with:

...attacking the dwelling house feloniously entering the house with firearms.⁷³

burglariously and out, and being armed

Rockites John and Michael O'Connor were sentenced to death for breaking into a Protestant house and stealing a gun.



A N D.

ASSIZES.

Hennessy, John Dorgan, Thomas, and Patrick Cullahans, were the sons of Patrick Buckley, a Crown Officer, the 23rd of September, 1821. His trial by an affidavit.

After the Jury had returned PENNEFATHER addressed the Court at great length on the fatal crime of aggravated and atrocious features of the crime. They were sentenced to death. Thomas Menhane was recommended for mercy, and after it had been pronounced, and after it had hardened scenes of outrage and occurred in a similar case took Hennessy was about asking for a reprieve, struck him a blow in the forehead, and sought a favour. When the trial was ended by the Judge, Hennessy said, "To the Devil we pitch you all." He then struck down his brother in the lower part of the court in a violent manner, and kicked the other two. Two others, Halpin and Dorgan, were removed by the military. Menhane remained quite, gazing at the scene, and was marked as a man of horror.

was executed on Halpin, the two others were reprieved.

—The following sixteen men, who were sentenced at our last Assizes, have been reprieved.

to be hanged on the 14th inst. Michael Burke White, Esq. in the house of Patrick Connors, William Connors, junior, Owen Sweeney, P. were sentenced for death on the 14th inst. for the felony in the house of Patrick Connors, in the house of Maurice Connell, at the Assizes to be hanged on the 14th inst.

Muriogh Dunn and David Shea, for a robbery in the house of Thomas Keat, of Glensharum.

Patrick Dunneen, for highway robbery.

John Reidy; for compelling Patrick Griffin to quit his dwelling house, respited until further orders.—(Limerick Paper, Sept. 7.)

They were initially held at *Newcastle Bridewell*, the local lock-up, before being transferred under yeomanry guard, 42 kilometres, to the county gaol at Mulgrave Street, Limerick City,

where they remained incarcerated until their trial date on 1 August.⁷⁴ Incredibly, less than a month later, their sentences were respited, meaning their punishment was deferred until a later date (**previous page**).⁷⁵ Similarly, John and Michael Connors, along with two other men, received a death sentence on 1 June 1822 for breaking into a house owned by Adam Milier at Garrane, a townland just to the west of Newcastle and stealing his gun (**previous page**).⁷⁶ Fearing widespread rebellion in County Limerick, the courts sought to dampen the uprising by commuting most death sentences, preferring the penalty of transportation for life to Australia. Accordingly, within months of their convictions, these nine O'Connor men were fettered and shackled onboard the converted whaling ship, *Brampton*, in November 1822, bound for New South Wales. Upon arrival at Sydney in April 1823, these men were all separated for their convict assignments, and little is known about their lives in Australia.⁷⁷

Though it is unclear how these O'Connor men were related to Patrick O'Connor, a familial relationship, though, is inevitable, as all O'Connors in and around the Parish of Newcastle were of Carrigafoyle Castle stock. They were just nine of thousands of local Irish Catholics who were in outright revolt at this time and prosecuted under the Whiteboy Acts.⁷⁸ The acts passed by the Irish Parliament in 1775 aimed to suppress rural secret societies, particularly the Whiteboys, who protested high rents, tithes, and evictions through violent agrarian unrest.⁷⁹ It gave magistrates, who were mainly prominent Protestant landowners, the military, and constables sweeping powers, including curfews, searches, and harsh penalties, to curb what they saw as threats to landowners and social order.⁸⁰

Catholic Emancipation and the Tithe Wars

By 1822, the Rockite movement, which originated in the Parish of Newcastle, had evolved into a widespread agrarian uprising across southern Ireland. The persona of Captain Rock became a powerful symbol of Catholic resistance. Countless Irishmen invoked it, or figures like Captain Steel, Molly Maguire, and Major Ribbon, across Ireland over the next twenty years or so as they fought for Catholic emancipation and sought an end to Protestant tithes.⁸¹

Obviously, with 96% of the people in West County Limerick being Catholic, the tithe burden was an ever-present source of conflict and unrest. In creating a false narrative that Irish Catholic unrest stemmed from confusion rather than injustice, the British Parliament enacted the Tithe Composition Act (1823), converting tithes from payments in kind to fixed cash charges and formally recording each occupier's liability in the Tithe Applotment Books. The act did nothing to ease the tension, and any attempt by an overzealous tithe proctor or the

Protestant clergy to collect tithes, particularly if farmers were struggling to put food on the table, was usually met with strong resistance. Daniel O'Connell rallied the Catholics in a successful constitutional drive for the Catholic Relief Act (1829). While tithes did not eliminate tithes. Buoyed by the success of refusing to pay tithes, leading to the

The Parish of Newcastle again drew attention. The Rector of Newcastle, became a lightning rod for O'Connors, through his violent protest against every tithe owed to his Protestant landlord. For military support in his mission, he was described as *wild and very populous* and determined to use his connections on Rockite-era networks, the Irish people, and livestock in response to tithe refusal. The incident, eight kilometres southeast of Newcastle, involved the military and police, was greeted with a cow, the locals showered all and a hail of gunfire, which killed five and injured

The following year, though, Locke's account of O'Connor, likely Patrick O'Connor, was published in his father William's farm at Dungannon. The *Chronicle* and then reprinted in the

It will be recollected that some days ago a party of men rescued from the Rev. Mr. Locke's farm some notices they carried. The agents of the Rev. Mr. Locke stated that one of the parties, named Connor, had taken possession of Mr. Locke's receipt for his tithes; and that he had refused to pay all tithe on the ground of being

Men from the cluster of O'Connors, including the now 24-year-old Patrick O'Connor, were seen with their livestock seized by Locke. They responded powerfully, not only to take back their animals, but also to force Locke's men to eat their

distrainment notice and bury the remainder they carried.⁸⁵ Imagine the amusement this episode created for generations of O'Connors as the events were recounted, especially over a few whiskeys!

Conclusion

Patrick presumably lived with his family at Dunganville for most of his formative years. He likely left around the time of his marriage to Margaret Kennedy around 1837, when he earned his living as a farm labourer in the nearby Parish of Ballingarry, approximately 15 kilometres west of Newcastle.⁸⁶ Little is known about Margaret Kennedy except that she was the daughter of Michael Kennedy.⁸⁷ She may have been local to Newcastle or Ballingarry. The Kennedy surname was common in the Parish of Newcastle, and in 1830, a Michael Kennedy leased farmland in Lissamota, a townland in the Parish of Ballingarry. In any case, it would not have been uncommon for labouring men and women to move between Ballingarry and Newcastle to live and work.

Patrick O'Connor, the Australian patriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*, was born into a harshly divided Ireland. Family folklore ensured he was deeply aware of the proud O'Connor ancient past in County Kerry. Through his eyes and ears, he witnessed first-hand the plight of his family and fellow Irish Catholics in their tenacious fight for survival and fundamental human rights against the tyranny of the Protestant occupiers that now controlled their emerald land. While Patrick's story through the early 1800s is similar to that of a great multitude of Irish, his experiences were much more acute. He lived in the precise area that sparked the Rockite movement across Ireland, and Irish hero Daniel O'Connell touched his life.

Notes

¹ McAuliffe, M. (2014). O'Connor Kerry of Carrigfoyle: History and Memory in Iraghticonnor, *Béaloideas*, No. 82. *Local folk narrative*.

² A cottier was a landless rural labourer in Ireland who rented a tiny cabin and plot of land, usually just enough to grow potatoes, in return for low wages or labour.

³ National Archives of Ireland. (n.d.). *The Tithe Applotment Books, 1823–37: County Limerick* [online database]. Dublin: National Archives of Ireland. Available at: <https://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/pagestab/Limerick/> The Tithe Applotment Books of County Limerick (1823–1837) are survey records listing occupiers of agricultural land and the amount of tithe (a tax to support the Protestant Church of Ireland) each was liable to pay, based on the productive value of their holdings. The Tithe Applotment Books were enumerated by local tithe commissioners or valuers appointed under the Tithe Composition Act (1823), who went parish by parish assessing the productive value of each holding. Once completed, the returns were approved and signed by the parish clergyman of the Church of Ireland (the tithe recipient), together with the local tithe commissioners, before being deposited for official record.

⁴ A parish was originally a church district served by a priest, centred on a parish church and its congregation. By the seventeenth century it was also used for many civil purposes such as recording baptisms, marriages, burials, and collecting local taxes like tithes. Parishes were the everyday units people identified with, often made up of a cluster of townlands. A barony was a larger civil division, created after the Norman invasion and based loosely on earlier Gaelic lordships or territories. Baronies were used by the Crown for administration, taxation, musters, and especially in the 1650s for land surveys such as the Down Survey and for allocating confiscated lands after the Cromwellian conquest.

- ⁵ Lewis, S. (1837). 'County of Limerick' in A *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. S. Lewis & Co., London. Available at: <https://www.libraryireland.com/topog/L/Limerick.php>
- ⁶ Murphy, J.A. (ed.). (2013). *The Desmond Survey* (electronic edition compiled and edited by Emer Purcell), CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork, Text ID E580000-001. Available at: <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E580000-001.html> The Desmond Survey was a commission undertaken by the English Crown in 1584 to survey the lands of the Earl of Desmond, which were forfeited after the Earl's rebellion in Ireland. This detailed survey documented the lands, their occupiers, and resources like woods and fisheries, and included maps. The survey is a valuable source for understanding land ownership, social structure, and economic activity in the region.
- ⁷ Tithe Applotment Books, *op. cit.*
- ⁸ Limerick Local Studies (n.d.). Available at: <https://limericklocalstudies.ie/wp-content/uploads/fieldname/052%20Drumcullaher.pdf>
- ⁹ A townland was the smallest traditional unit of rural land division, typically comprising a defined area of farmland and often only a handful of dwellings used for local identification, tenancy organisation, taxation, and record-keeping within a parish and barony system.
- ¹⁰ Placenames database of Ireland. (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.logainm.ie/en/s?txt=Lisfarran>
- ¹¹ Pender, S. (ed.). (1939). *A Census of Ireland, circa 1659: with supplementary material from the poll money ordinances (1660–1661)*. Stationery Office, Dublin. Irish Manuscripts Commission Digital Edition. Available at: <https://www.irishmanuscripts.ie/product/a-census-of-ireland-circa-1659/> A *Census of Ireland, circa 1659*, often called Pender's Census, was a population survey compiled under Sir William Petty during the Cromwellian administration to record householders, landholders, and the number of English and Irish inhabitants in each barony and parish. Its purpose was to assist the English Crown in assessing the demographic and economic conditions of Ireland following the Cromwellian conquest, serving as a basis for taxation, land redistribution, and control of the transplanted Irish population.
- ¹² Connolly, S. J. (1992). *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ¹³ McBride, I. (2009). *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.
- ¹⁴ An Act for Banishing All Papists Exercising Any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and All Regulars of the Popish Clergy out of This Kingdom. (1697). Dublin: Printed by Andrew Crook. Coverpage.
- ¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Williamite victory, the Banishment Act of 1697 (*An Act for banishing all Papists exercising any ecclesiastical jurisdiction and all regulars of the Popish clergy out of this kingdom*) ordered all Catholic archbishops, bishops, vicars-general, deans, monks, friars, and other regular clergy to leave Ireland by 1 May 1698. This law, part of the wider Penal Laws, was enacted by the English-backed Irish Parliament and sought to dismantle the Catholic Church hierarchy in Ireland. While secular priests were permitted to stay if they registered and posted bonds, the Act made it illegal for Catholic bishops to remain in the country, and those who returned faced imprisonment, transportation, or death under subsequent legislation.
- ¹⁶ Ó Buachalla, B. (1988). *Aisling Ghéar: Na Stiobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn, 1603–1788* [*Sharp Vision: The Stuarts and the Learned Class, 1603–1788*]. Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Indreabhán.
- ¹⁷ The American Revolution (1775–1783) was a colonial revolt in which the thirteen American colonies successfully fought for independence from British rule, leading to the creation of the United States of America.
- ¹⁸ The French Revolution (1789–1799) was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France during which the monarchy was overthrown, feudal privileges were abolished, and revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity reshaped the nation and inspired movements worldwide.
- ¹⁹ Bartlett, T. (1992). *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question, 1690–1830*. Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.
- ²⁰ Bartlett, T. (1998). *Rebellion: Ireland in 1798*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- ²¹ Foran, E. (n.d.). The 1798 Irish Rebellion. Public Domain. Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=105751851> Fr. Edward Foran (1861-1938)
- ²² Find a Grave. (n.d.). Echuca Cemetery. Available at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167386418/patrick-o'connor>
- ²³ Ancestry.com. (2010). *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA. Original data: Compiled from publicly available sources.
- ²⁴ At this time across Ireland the only instances where children are born to a father and mother named William Connors (O'Connor) and Ellen Hogan respectively occur in the Parish of Newcastle West.
- ²⁵ Newcastle Parish sits within west County Limerick. Over time, *Newcastle, West Limerick* was corrupted to *Newcastle West*.
- ²⁶ National Library of Ireland. (n.d.). *Catholic Parish Registers* [online database]. Limerick Newcastle West. Dublin: National Library of Ireland. Available at: <https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000635002#page/1/mode/1up>
- ²⁷ Tithe Applotment Books, *op. cit.*
- ²⁸ National Library of Ireland, *op. cit.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* The sponsors present at Margaret's baptism in 1823 at Newcastle West were *Patt Connors* and Catherine Connors. William's son Patrick was only 12 years old at this time, so the sponsor Patrick is likely William's brother and neighbour.
- ³⁰ Tithe Applotment Books, *op. cit.* The O'Connors in the townland Glenastar are simply noted as *Messrs* simply meaning the names of two or more related men involved in leasing the farmland.
- ³¹ The Irish Famine (1845–1852), caused primarily by successive potato crop failures and compounded by poverty and British policy, led to mass starvation, disease, and emigration across Ireland. County Limerick suffered heavily as tenant farmers were evicted, workhouses overflowed, and thousands fled or perished, leaving deep demographic and social scars.
- ³² National Archives of Ireland. (n.d.). *Valuation Office House, Field, Tenure and Quarto Books, 1824–1856*. Dublin: National Archives of Ireland. Available at: <https://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/>
- ³³ Ask About Ireland / Valuation Office Ireland. (n.d.). *Griffith's Valuation (Primary Valuation of Ireland): County Limerick* [online database]. Available at: <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>
- ³⁴ National Archives of Ireland. (n.d.). *Census of Ireland, 1901* [online database]. Dublin: National Archives of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>
- ³⁵ O'Connors from Glenastar, Ardagh, Limerick, Ireland. (n.d.) Available at: <https://www.genealogistsforum.co.uk/forum/showthread.php?t=25777&utm>
- ³⁶ The 1798 Rebellion, inspired by the ideals of the French and American revolutions, was led by the United Irishmen to unite Catholics and Protestants to overthrow British rule, but it was brutally suppressed with mass killings and widespread destruction. For Catholic Ireland, the failure was a bitter disappointment, as hopes for emancipation and equality were crushed, leaving repression and mistrust in its wake.

- ³⁷ Geoghegan, P.M. (1999). *The Irish Act of Union: A Study in High Politics, 1798–1801*. St. Martin's Press, New York.
- ³⁸ Irish Cottier Cabin. (c1840). Public domain. Available at: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/articles/world-records/full-list-of-the-irish-family-history-records/institutions-and-organisations/ireland-poverty-relief-loans-1821-1874> (Mary Evans Picture Library).
- ³⁹ McNamara Cob (mud) House in Tullaroe. Public domain. Available at: <https://kilkee.clareheritage.org/new-contributions/one-of-the-last-surviving-vernacular-cob-mud-houses-in-west-clare>
- ⁴⁰ Clarkson, L.A. and Crawford, E.M. (2001). *Feast and Famine: Food and Nutrition in Ireland 1500–1920*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- ⁴¹ Ó Gráda, C. (1995). *The Great Irish Famine*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- ⁴² Donnelly, J. S. (2001). *The Great Irish Potato Famine*. Sutton Publishing, Stroud.
- ⁴³ Available at: <https://roaringwaterjournal.com/tag/standish-ogrady/>
- ⁴⁴ Connell, K. H. (1950). *The Population of Ireland, 1750–1845*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ⁴⁵ Foster, R. F. (1988). *Modern Ireland 1600–1972*. Penguin, London.
- ⁴⁶ Bartlett, T. (2010). *Ireland: A History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- ⁴⁷ Foster, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁸ Donnelly (2001), *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁹ Bartlett, *op. cit.*
- ⁵⁰ University of Galway (n.d.). *Landed Estates: Ireland's Landed Estates and Historic Houses* [online database]. Galway: University of Galway. Available at: <https://landedestates.ie/estate/2196>
- ⁵¹ Westropp, T. J. (1983). *The Desmond Castle, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick*. The Castle Committee, Newcastle West.
- ⁵² University of Galway, *op. cit.* Available at: <https://landedestates.ie/estate/2458>
- ⁵³ The Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) were a series of conflicts across Europe, primarily between England and France. For Ireland, the wars created both opportunities and hardships: demand for agricultural produce rose to feed armies and cities, but so did prices and taxes, leaving small tenant farmers under pressure. Also, British blockades drove up food prices, leading to high profits for grain and livestock exports that encouraged increased tillage and expansion of agricultural production. When the wars ended, falling grain prices, reduced demand, and continuing high rents led to severe economic distress in rural Ireland, worsening poverty and dependency on the potato crop.
- ⁵⁴ An abatement in renting property is a temporary reduction, suspension, or waiver of rent—usually because the tenant can't use all or part of the premises for reasons beyond their control.
- ⁵⁵ Donnelly, J. S. (2007). Captain Rock: The Origins of the Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821–24. *New Hibernia Review*, Volume 11, Number 4.
- ⁵⁶ The Rockite movement of the 1820s was a secret agrarian insurgency across Ireland, driven by rural poverty, high rents, tithes, and resentment of landlords and middlemen. Supporters, often calling themselves followers of “Captain Rock,” engaged in threatening letters, attacks, and protests to defend tenant rights and resist eviction.
- ⁵⁷ The British Museum. (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/01613850638-captain-rocks-banditti-swearing-in-a-new-member-image.html>
- ⁵⁸ Conacre was a short-term and “off the books” system of land letting in Ireland, usually for 11 months, where cottiers or landless labourers were given a small patch of ground by a tenant farmer to grow a potato crop and erect a rudimentary dwelling for himself and his family in exchange for labour and a fee.
- ⁵⁹ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*
- ⁶⁰ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*
- ⁶¹ Anonymous. (1822). *Old Bailey Solicitor*. The only known surviving copy of this pamphlet is that in the possession of a notable man called John Cussen, who had a deep interest in the history of Newcastle West and its vicinity. Cited in Donnelly (2007), *Ibid.*
- ⁶² Dore, M. (1983). The Murder of Thomas Hoskins. *Annual Observer*, Volume 40, Number 1. *Annual Observer* was a publication of the Newcastle West Historical Society.
- ⁶³ Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847), known as “The Liberator,” was an Irish lawyer and political leader who campaigned for Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Act of Union. In the Parish of Newcastle, County Limerick, he acted as counsel for local defendants linked to the Rockite disturbances, vigorously challenging landlord testimony and securing acquittals that boosted his reputation among the rural poor.
- ⁶⁴ Smyth, J. (1982). The Rockite Movement, 1821–1824, *Irish Historical Studies*, Volume 23, Number 92, pp. 377–397.
- ⁶⁵ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁷ *Dublin Evening Post*, Wednesday 23 October 1822
- ⁶⁸ *Westmorland Gazette*, Saturday 27 October 1821
- ⁶⁹ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*
- ⁷⁰ *London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post*, Friday 15 February 1822
- ⁷¹ *Sun (London)*, Monday 11 March 1822
- ⁷² *Dublin Weekly Register*, Saturday 10 August 1822
- ⁷³ *Dublin Evening Post*, Thursday 17 October 1822
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ *Sun (London)*, Wednesday 18 September 1822
- ⁷⁶ *Sanders's News-Letter*, Tuesday 4 June 1822
- ⁷⁷ Find your Convict Ancestors. (n.d.). Available at: <https://convictrecords.com.au/>
- ⁷⁸ The Whiteboy Acts were eighteenth-century Irish statutes (from 1775 onward) aimed at crushing agrarian secret societies: they criminalised night-time assemblies, disguises, unlawful oaths, and attacks on property, and gave magistrates sweeping powers—curfews, house searches, military support, and severe penalties up to transportation or death.
- ⁷⁹ The Whiteboys (1760s–1780s) were mostly Irish Catholic farmers who mustered at night in white shirts for recognition, swore mutual oaths, issued threatening notices, and targeted enclosures, tithe-proctors, rack-renting landlords, and middlemen by levelling hedges, seizing or houghing cattle, and obstructing seizures. Their modus operandi relied on secrecy, ritual, and selective violence—parish-based cells, passwords and signals, and dramatic nocturnal marches, meant to enforce customary rights and local price/rent norms rather than overthrow the state.

⁸⁰ Connolly, S. J. (2008). *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630–1800*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² State Library of New South Wales. (n.d.). 'Correspondence relative to the collection of tithes payable to the Rev. Thomas Locke, rector of Newcastle, county of Limerick [electronic resource]' [library catalogue record].

⁸³ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, Saturday 9 May 1835

⁸⁴ *Dublin Morning Register*, Monday 30 November 1835

⁸⁵ Distraintment refers to the legal process where a creditor, typically a landlord, seizes and sells a debtor's personal property (like stock or chattels) to satisfy a debt, most commonly for unpaid rent.

⁸⁶ Museums of History New South Wales. (n.d.). *Assisted immigrants digitised shipping lists 1828-1896*. Available at:

https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?context=L&vid=61SRA&lang=en_US&docid=INDEX3101040 The manifest for the Westminster lists Ballingarry, County Limerick as the place of origin for both Patrick and Margaret O'Connor.

⁸⁷ Find a Grave, *op. cit.* Available at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167344746/margaret-o-connor>

DRAFT

Chapter 2

A New Horizon 1838 – 1839

In 1838, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, along with their infant son Michael, lived in the Parish of Ballingarry in County Wick. Patrick was a farmer and Margaret as a dairywoman. Patrick and Margaret lived in a small cottage on a small-acre tenant farming, cottier system. They were like many others of their time, who sought a future elsewhere. While many emigrated to England, Scotland, and Wales, where some had relatives who had already emigrated, others sought a half a world away and a new horizon. This chapter explores the circumstances under which Patrick and his infant son Michael, and Margaret, decided to emigrate to Australia, along with

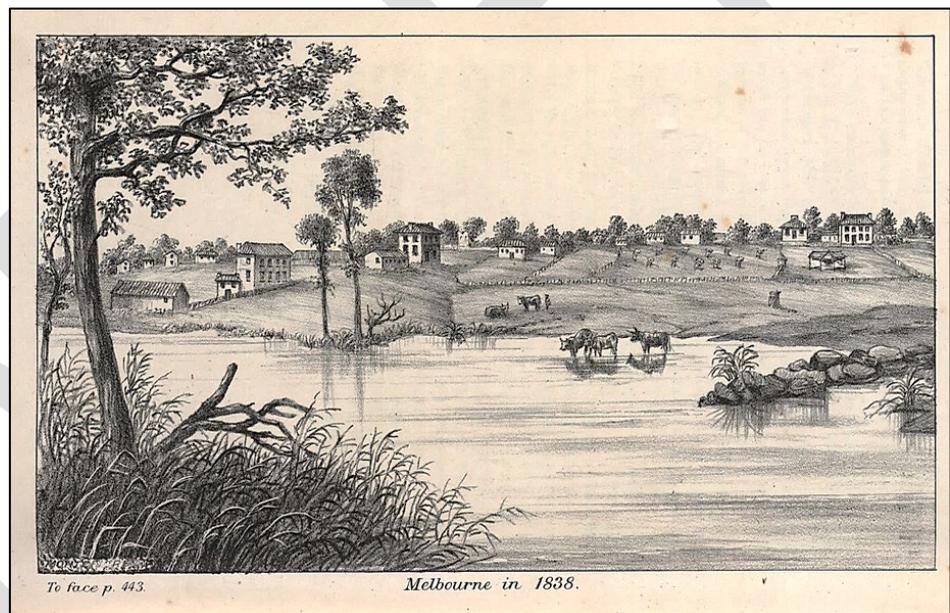
Australia – Half a World Away

The British settlement of Australia began in 1788 when the British government decided to establish a penal colony. The British government wanted to expand its prisons in Britain and expand British influence in the Pacific. Approximately 162,000 convicts were transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868, of whom about one-fifth were women. The convicts worked on farms and helping to build the colony. The demand for labour beyond convict labour was necessary for the development of the colony. The Dividing Range, which separates the Blue Mountains from the Sydney basin, precipitated further colonial expansion. The demand for labour requiring significantly more labour.^{3 4 5} To meet the demand, the British government

instigated an assisted emigration scheme in 1831 for eligible British, including the Irish.⁶ In addition to providing a much-needed workforce, the British viewed assisted emigration as an opportunity to reduce the unwanted flood of Irish into England, Scotland, and Wales. The great irony here is that the influx was the product of centuries of British occupation that had denied the Irish an economic opportunity to thrive and prosper in their own country.

During the 1830s, Port Phillip and the broader Melbourne area, still a part of the Colony of New South Wales, emerged as a key growth area due to the region's abundant, fertile land and excellent water supply. It was here that Melbourne was founded in 1835, quickly evolving from a fledgling settlement into a thriving frontier town (**below**).⁷ In 1838, the British government extended the assisted emigration scheme to the Port Phillip district, encouraging settlement to support pastoral expansion and economic development.

Melbourne in 1838 drawn by John Helder Wedge.



In August 1838, a committee of the Legislative Council at Sydney reported:

A merchant resident in Sydney, and having grazing establishments, in the district of Port Phillip, near Mount Macedon, between 400 and 500 miles from Sydney, stated that he had recently returned from Port Phillip, after being there nearly a month, where he found a great want of labour, wages being 15s. a week...The establishments in Port Phillip are much in want of labour; in fact are decidedly distressed for it...in a district comprised within a line drawn from Geelong on the west to Mount Macedon,

thence to the River Goulburn, and along that river and the Yarra Yarra, so as to terminate at Western Port, from 1000 to 1500 shepherds and labourers might find employment immediately.⁸

The Legislative Council Report found its way to the quick to advise prospective emigrants about the

Port Philip is apparently one of the most remote places we have heard very little of it. It is at the southern extremity of the settlement of New South Wales, and 600 miles from Melbourne, the chief town...stands on a peninsula, almost locked on all sides. A despatch of Sir George Gipps mentioned more than 3000 inhabitants.⁹

A follow-up communiqué between Sir

I beg leave to recommend to your Lordship, if possible, be sent to Port Phillip, and thence

The second ship recommended by Gipps was the *Michael*, and Nora O'Connor onboard. This is depicted on a 1999 British stamp (below).^{11 12}



The Australian Dream

Aside from their abysmal living circumstances, Margaret O'Connor to look to Australia. This story appeared in a November 1836 edition of *The Limerick Chronicle*, caught their eye.¹³

Competition for a berth on an assisted emigrant ship bound for Australia during the 1830s was intense, with newspapers across Ireland carrying advertisements and editorials about assisted emigration to Australia.

<p>EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA.</p> <p>We visited yesterday the ship 'Lady Macnaghten,' which has been lying at Cove for the last ten days, for the purpose of conveying emigrants to Sydney, in New South Wales—and although we had often to perform the pleasing duty of remarking upon the vessels destined for such a perilous voyage—upon their peculiar adaptation to the wants and requirements of the emigrants, and upon their capabilities for the preservation of comfort and cleanliness; still never have we performed it with a greater degree of pleasure than we do upon the present occasion. This ship is, along with all the others that have hitherto left our port, the selection of Mr. John Marshall, of London. She is 558 tons register, and is beyond all question the most superb and best adapted vessel that has ever entered Cove for the intended purpose. Her accommodations below decks are on the most extensive scale. Provisions of the best and rarest descriptions have been supplied most abundantly—salutary regulations have been adopted for the observance of order and propriety, and as regards sheeting and bedding, the most particular care has been taken to afford an ample supply of each and all. The captain is an experienced and kind-hearted man, of an affable and generous disposition and benevolent mind. While on this part of the subject, it may not be irrelevant to mention that since the London Emigration Committee have commenced their labours in this country, the average number of deaths on those voyages have not exceeded one in 300! and by the ship, <i>James Pattison</i>, which left this port last year, and whose arrival in Sydney we announced some months since, not a single death occurred on board during the voyage. This is a very striking, and by no means uninteresting fact, when we consider that the average number of deaths in these kingdoms is greater in proportion than any that have taken place on those voyages. Especial care has been taken by the Committee on the present occasion, not to send out any females, as emigrants, unless they have their parents or guardians along with them. This is a most wise and salutary regulation; for hitherto many doubts and fears were entertained lest that on their arrival in Sydney, the unprotected females might become a prey to licentiousness and immorality. By this regulation being carried into force, such doubts and fears are completely rendered groundless, and utterly untenable. There are proceeding by this vessel 284 souls in all, comprising men, women and children. The adults, male and female, amount to 218. The children from seven to fourteen years of age amount to 90, which, calculated at two each, amount to 45 adults. The children under seven years of age amount to 63, which calculated at three each, amount to 21</p>	<p>adults; and these together make in all, 284 souls.—They have been selected from a vast number of applicants by that humane and respected emigration agent in this city, Lieutenant Friend, R. N. and also by an esteemed and respected officer in Limerick, Lieut. Lynch, R.N. The selection appears to have been made very carefully and very discriminatingly, and it was gratifying to observe that all the arrangements made in this port by those two officers have received from Mr. Pinnock, his Majesty's Agent-general for emigration, the most marked approval. Upon the whole it was truly delightful to witness so many happy countenances as presented themselves on board the vessel yesterday. The young women were all life and good humour—the more sedate matrons were enjoying the agreeable and palatable change of diet they were receiving on board, and were almost forgetting the smoky cabin, the ill-thatched roof, and the fetid slough by the door-side.—Cork Herald.</p> <p>We (LIMERICK CHRONICLE) annex to this gratifying account, a copy of the supplies of the Ship <i>Lady Macnaghten</i>, with emigrants, for New South Wales, as certified by Captain Hustwick, the Commander.</p> <p>150 tons filtered water, independent of the supply for the crew; 60 bushels of oat meal; 100 barrels of flour; 2½ cwt. Scotch Barley; 1 ton of rice; 300 bushels of Peas; 75 tierces India. pork and new beef; 35 cwt. sugar; 300 gallons vinegar; 6 cwt. met; 8 chests tea; 6 chests cocoa; 10 chests Raisins; 6 dozen port wine, for medical use; 300 Gallons lemon juice; 1 hogshead molasses; 12 dozen wine; 8 cwt. cheese; 1 hogshead Brandy; 12lb mustard; a quantity of salt; 4 dozen quart hooped tin pots; 20 ditto plates; 20 ditto tea spoons; 20 ditto pewter spoons; 20 ditto half-pint pannikins for tea; 20 ditto knives and forks; 2 pair of carvers; 2 steels; 1 large slipper bath; a quantity C. lime, for fumigating; medicine chest complete, with a full supply of every thing required, as approved and ordered by Dr. Hawkins, the surgeon. 40 6-gallon water kegs, 6 wash tubs, iron bound; with bed fittings, bedding, blankets, &c. all new and complete for all the berths, in number 345 berths; 25 tons potatoes; a quantity of preserved provisions, and milk for medical comforts; 3 cwt. of soap; 10 quarters of fresh beef, and 12 tons of bread.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A call for emigration to Australia.</p>
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During the first half of 1839, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor underwent the challenging selection process for Australian Packet Ships to become assisted emigrants to Australia. The

Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, in their Instructions to Emigration Agents (1838), made it very clear to John Marshall the regulations for the recruitment, embarkation, and supervision of assisted emigrants to Australia.¹⁴ Emigrants had to be free of any criminal conviction, healthy, of good moral character, and capable of earning a living in the colonies, with a preference for agricultural labourers and female domestic servants. Married couples (men under 40 and women under 35) with children were encouraged, with single women particularly sought to balance the sexes. Single men were only approved if they had trade skills. Irish Catholics required a testimonial from their parish priest to attest to their character, sobriety, and baptism. Lastly, Marshall needed to affirm that prospective assisted emigrants were unable to afford their own passage but not destitute.¹⁵ Aside from meeting the eligibility requirements, assisted emigrants needed to secure goods and provisions for the lengthy voyage, as well as the initial funds required to establish themselves in a foreign land.

On 17 July 1839, *The Limerick Chronicle* ran two advertisements about free passage for assisted emigrants, including the scheduled departure of the *Westminster* from Gravesend on Sunday, 18 August 1839 (below).¹⁶

AUSTRALIAN

PACKET  SHIPS.

EMIGRATION TO NEW SOUTH WALES.
Free Passage.

THE Ship "WILLIAM MERCALFE," of 550 Tons, will sail from Gravesend on the 10th July, and from Plymouth on the 22nd July, direct for PORT PHILLIP and SYDNEY; the ship "MARY," of 680 Tons register, will leave Gravesend on the 28th of July, and Plymouth on the 5th. August, for SYDNEY; the Ship "WESTMINSTER," of 610 Tons register, will leave Gravesend on the 18th. and Plymouth, on the 26th August, for PORT PHILLIP and SYDNEY, and the Ships "JOHN BULL," 705 Tons register, and "ALFRED," of 716 Tons register, will sail from Gravesend on the 8th, and Plymouth on the 16th of September, for SYDNEY.

These Ships are all First Class, have Poops and first order of Accommodations; will carry experienced Surgeons, and sail with strict punctuality.

MARRIED MECHANICS, LABOURERS, and SINGLE FEMALE SERVANTS, are much wanted in the Colony, and can proceed by the above Ships "Free." Such persons as may apply will please state their age and occupation, and by whom they can be recommended. SINGLE FARM LABOURERS, wishing to go out on special agreement can do so on most encouraging terms, and free of any cost.

All particulars known on application to
JOHN BESNARD, Jun.
Australian Emigration Agent,
19, Church-Street, Cork.

N. B.—First Class Ships will be despatched every three weeks, with strict punctuality.
Post-paid letters only will be answered.

PASSAGE TO AUSTRALIA.

SHIPS for PORT PHILLIP and SYDNEY are despatched regularly every month from LONDON and PLYMOUTH. They are all of the first class, of large tonnage, carry experienced Surgeons, have Poops, and the best arrangements for Cabin, Intermediate, and Steerage Passengers, and sail with undeviating punctuality on fixed days. Agricultural Servants and Mechanics, of suitable age and character, are conveyed in these Ships nearly free.—All particulars may be known on application to Mr. JOHN MARSHALL, Australian Emigration Agent, 26, Birchin Lane, Cornhill, London.

N. B.—Post-paid letters only will be answered.
June 15.

**Free emigrant passage to
Australia. Apply now!**

At around this time, the O'Connors would have received notice that their applications had been successful, with an expectation of a steamer at Cobh, County Cork, providing emigration ships bound for Australia. Dublin (Ireland), Leith (Scotland), and Glasgow (Scotland). Unfortunately for the O'Connors, the weather was poor, which meant at least a week of land

The O'Connors travelled under the auspices of a major player in the organised emigration business. Through his business, Australian Immigration Commissioner and government and colonial authority, Marshall provided and provision ships, and hire surgeons to attend during the voyage.¹⁷ Marshall worked across Counties Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, and the Irish, especially agricultural labourers (and marriage prospects), and entire families. A child that he successfully assisted

Most of the Irish who sought assistance were in the lure of free passage the defining factor. The government between 1830 and 1870 provided a demand for assisted emigration to Australia that skyrocketed from 1837, with over 100,000 people. This number included hundreds of thousands of people, there is no evidence that either Patrick or Mary had the colony before their departure.¹⁸

The Walk to Cork

Patrick O'Connor and his family set out on Saturday, 10 August. Their 90-kilometre journey was punctuated by two overnight stays. The first was at second at Cork city, where, the day after, they travelled to the estuary to the port at Cobh. Cobh was a crucial staging area for emigration, where Patrick

and his family met many fellow emigrants and officers from Australian Packet Ships, who had arranged their passage to Gravesend on a paddle steamer.

The day of leaving would have been devastating for both the O'Connor and Kennedy families and their friends. While Patrick, Margaret, and Nora were excited, if not a little anxious, they felt a pervading sorrow as they bid their final goodbyes to those they loved and would never see again. It was common for the parish priest to bless the group before their departure (**below**).²² With a small cart drawn by a single donkey or horse and stacked with three wooden trunks, Margaret climbed aboard with Michael in her arms while Nora gave her siblings a final embrace. Patrick stepped to the front, took hold of the reins, and as the traces tightened, the cart jolted forward, beginning the journey that would shape all their lives. Some family and friends, overcome with emotion, would have walked with them for some distance, sobbing and crying, eventually leaving one or two to bring the cart back to Ballingarry. Farmer Nicholas Hennessy, his wife Anne and their 15-year-old daughter Margaret, as well as two single house servants, Bridget Collins and Bridget Doughan, all from the Parish of Newcastle, too, were passengers on the *Westminster*, and in all likelihood, they joined with the O'Connors for the walk to Cork.²³



**Irish
Emigrants
– The
Priest's
Blessing.**

Gravesend, County Kent, England

Gravesend, some 40km downstream from London on the River Thames, was a busy riverside town, with wharves and piers bustling with maritime activity (**below**).²⁴ Patrick and his family would have arrived one or two days before their departure, staying in one of the many lodging houses adjacent to the newly built Town Pier. How anxious but excited they must have felt on the day before departure as they first spotted the imposing and freshly built *Westminster*, standing tall, anchored in the lower reaches of the River Thames, as dockworkers busily finished the intricate and complex task of checking and loading, by smaller boat, the ship's cargo, which included the wooden travel crates containing the personal effects for each passenger, as well as the supplies necessary for the long voyage including goats, chickens, pigs, biscuits, salted beef, salted pork, dried peas, rice, flour, suet, sugar, tea, treacle, vinegar, lime juice, water, dried fruit, mustard, pepper, salt, medical supplies, and firewood/coal. The ship also loaded the special consignment of a prized Durham cow with two calves and six pure merino rams. Unfortunately, the rams died en route to their buyer in Melbourne.²⁵



The busy maritime scene at Gravesend in the 1830s painted by Thomas Mann Baynes. A ship similar to the *Westminster* is anchored as a paddle steamer carrying passengers, like the one used by the O'Connors, passes swiftly by.

On board the *Westminster*

Friday, 16 August 1839, was an important day for Nora. She met with officers from the ship to discuss the Surgeon-Superintendent to have her health assessed. The commission imposed strict rules on the eligibility requirements, or the physical condition, debility, or females more than six months pregnant. Travellers must have felt the following: they must be able to board a small boat which rowed to the ship, have their berths and with their luggage below deck, and be in the muster, where the Surgeon-Superintendent would inspect them. Regulations. Under the regulations, the ship was to be cleaned with vinegar twice weekly; hatchways were to be kept in obedience to orders from the ship's officers. Daily rations of flour, oatmeal, beef, and butter were given per person per day.²⁶

Space on the ship was very tight. There were no stowage goods for the journey and the narrow berths were only two feet (120cm) and two feet (60cm) wide. Utensils, toiletries, small tools, kegs, and other items were stowed in the hold.

How fortunate the O'Connors must have been to survive the death, blood, stench, and tears of the voyage. The *Westminster* had a crew of 100 men, a Surgeon-Superintendent Mr Davis, a first mate, a steward, stewards, and a team of able and strong men who supervised the single women, including the O'Connors.

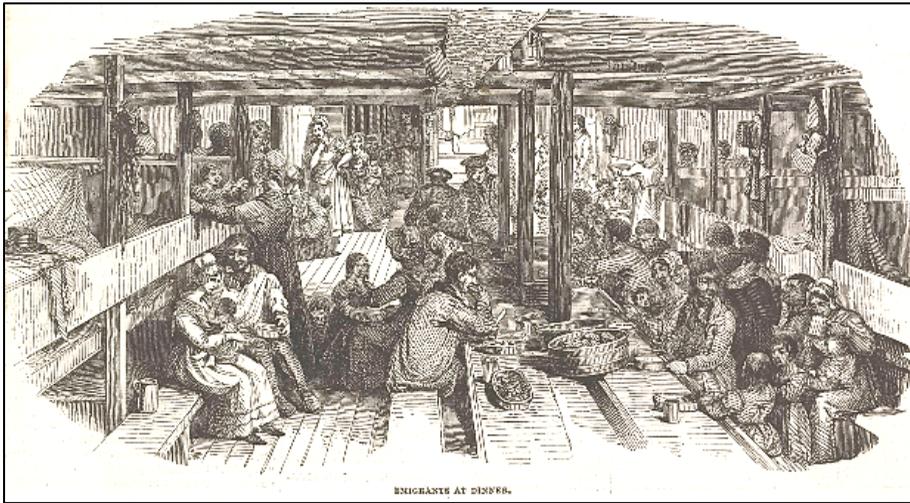
The manifest for the voyage included 100 passengers (across 30 families), 43 single men, 14 men, five women, and five women in intermediate class. The passengers included farm labourers, servants, dairywomen, cooks, carpenters, masons, bricklayers,

cabinetmakers, tailors, sawyers, reapers, shearers, gardeners, ploughmen, shepherds, weavers, housemaids, dressmakers, and seamstresses. Sadly, the surviving manifest for the *Westminster* is woefully incomplete and does not include the names of any infants, such as Michael O'Connor, who travelled in the care of their mother. Most assisted emigrant ship manifests included this detail, including the names of those youngsters who died in transit, which, regrettably, was quite common.

Following the evening muster, Captain Mollison, satisfied the ship was ready to sail, ordered all passengers to their berths to ready themselves for departure on the morning tide.²⁷ Imagine the excitement amongst the passengers as they woke to the smell of oakum,²⁸ rope-tar, and river mud and when the tide was sufficiently full for Captain Mollison, standing alongside a river pilot on the poop-deck, barking the order to the mates, *Heave short! Hands to the windlass—man your bars!* The crew scurried, heaving in the anchor and loosening topsails and sheets. Blocks creaked, and some sails thudded open. By mid-morning, the tide turned. Mollison raised his speaking-trumpet and commanded, *loose away the head-sails! Helm a-lee—let her fall off with the tide!* The *Westminster* gathered way, her bows turning eastward down the widening Thames. A tugboat's paddle-wash foamed against her stern as it helped her to the estuary. By afternoon, the last of the Thames estuary was behind her. The crew braced the yards for a south-westerly course, the pilot disembarked, and Mollison signed the pilot's clearance in his log. With the blue line of the coast fading astern, he yelled stoutly, *Set the royals. We'll stand down-Channel with the evening ebb.* The ship's great canvas filled, her timbers creaked, and she began the long southern reach toward the open Atlantic, carrying her human cargo toward Port Phillip Bay and the edge of the known world.²⁹

The single males travelled in the lower deck at the front of the ship, each with a small bunk with little to no privacy. The front of the boat endured the worst of the conditions as the *Westminster* heaved, swayed, and buckled across seas and oceans. Emigrant families had a special section midship and below decks. Each family slept together in a bunk, partitioned for modest privacy. Given the prevailing tensions between the Irish and the English, Captain Mollison ensured the various ethnicities and religions were, as best as possible, separated for the voyage, with Patrick, Margaret, and Michael's bunk huddled amongst other Irish Catholic families from counties Fermanagh, Galway, Waterford, Tipperary, Cork, and Limerick. Nora, though, was separated from her family for much of the voyage in a closed-

off section at the rear of the ship. The O'Connors took their meals in a communal galley running between their bunks (**below**).³⁰



Emigrant families preparing and taking their evening meals.

The passengers in first class enjoyed private cabins on the upper rear part of the ship, well away from the animals, noises, and smells. They joined Mr Mollison and Mr Davis in enjoying a dedicated steward service, a saloon space for socialising, a private dining area, and fresh meat, milk, and eggs courtesy of the goats, cows, chickens, and pigs onboard. Predictably, all 24 of these elite souls spent time under the care of Mr Davis in the ship's hospital cabin.

Despite the evident heartache and anxiety associated with leaving their families, Patrick and Margaret would have felt a deep relief as they were leaving extreme hardship for what they hoped and prayed would be a better life. The *Illustrated London News* reported that it was common to see Irish emigrants singing and dancing merrily on board, with those skilled in the flute or fiddle in constant demand throughout the voyage.³¹ It is easy to imagine Patrick O'Connor on the right of the picture, gleefully playing his fiddle (**next page**).³²

Although arduous, the voyage would have been an incredible experience for Patrick and his family. The *Westminster* first crossed the Atlantic Ocean, passing the Cape Verde Islands off the west coast of Africa and then Rio de Janeiro off the east coast of South America. It crossed the Atlantic once more to the southern tip of Africa, rounding the Cape of Good Hope. From

the Cape, her sails filled generous
way to the Bass Strait and Port

On 13 December 1839, Captain M
through the surging rip current be
tranquillity of Port Phillip Bay, be
bellowed, *Let go the anchor!* At this
from four months at sea, roared e
the sea journey for Patrick O'Com
had only just begun!

**The Irish making
the most of their
voyage – dancing
between decks.**



Melbourne

After deploying the ship's boats, t
belongings to the beach at William
the banks of the Yarra Yarra River
accommodation. Eager for their a

were well-fed and comfortable before each met with a Colonial Immigration Agent at Marshall's Immigration Office, where their health and bounty eligibility were assessed.³⁶ Details registered for each immigrant included their name, age, trade, native place, religion, ability to read or write, sponsor agent, the amount of bounty payable to the agent, the name and location of the employer, and the agreed-upon wage and terms of employment.³⁷

*List of Immigrants British subjects who have been
sent to Melbourne 1859
by Mr. John Marshall of London per ship Westminster from
610 TONS, master, KLOLISCH*

No.	Name	Age	Trade	Native place	Religion	
19	John D ^r	30	gent. servant	"	"	
20	Patrick Connor	28	Farmer	Ballingary Co. Limerick	R. Catholic	
21	Marg ^r D ^r	24	Day woman	"	"	
22	Chas ^r Dixon	24	Taylor	London	Protestant	
3	Elizabeth Gole	18	House Maid	Co. Limerick	R. Catholic	
4	Nora Connor	14	Day Maid	Co. Limerick	R. Catholic	
60	Margaret Collins	Iron servant	21	"	"	Gone up the country
61	Margaret Connor	Day maids	24	"	"	Gone up the country
62	Korah In		14	"	"	
63	Patrick Connor	agricultural labour	28	"	"	do
64	Catherine Davis	General serv	26	"	"	Not engaged

Extracts from the Westminster manifest record their travel particulars and assignments in Melbourne.

Employers in Melbourne, like the wealthy squatter C. H. Ebdon, quickly negotiated employment terms with many immigrants. His Melbourne office, as well as Marshall's Immigration Office, are pictured (next page).³⁸ The assignment notes for about a third of the Westminster passengers, chiefly the Irish, including Patrick, Margaret, and Nora O'Connor, stated simply, *gone up country*, meaning they were hired by agents representing squatters and settlers some distance from Melbourne, with the Mount Macedon region the most common

The Irish were considered ignorant, superstitious, and ill-equipped to add value to Australian life. It was further argued that Australia was a pastoral sheep-farming country and that the Irish were ill-suited because all they knew was how to grow potatoes and farm pigs!⁴¹ Paradoxically, it was the Irish, among them the O'Connors, who provided the labour, endurance, and determination that sustained and expanded pastoral Australia.

Patrick and Margaret O'Connor were as Irish as they come, being first-language Irish speakers. Unable to read and write in English, they were to experience the same racial, cultural, and religious discrimination they hoped to have put behind them. Despite settling among substantial Irish immigrant communities in the Macedon Ranges, the O'Connors lived largely within Irish social enclaves, where opportunities remained constrained by English hegemony, and advancement remained elusive for much of their lives.

Macedon Ranges

The land journey from Melbourne to Mount Macedon and the Macedon Ranges was approximately 90 kilometres. Imagine how the Irish O'Connors would have felt upon arriving in Melbourne during an Australian summer, when temperatures could reach well over 40 °C (104 °F). Imagine again their journey and settlement in the Macedon Ranges, where they encountered the planet's deadliest spiders and snakes, as well as screeching galahs, laughing kookaburras, lizards, two-metre-long goannas, koalas, echidnas, wombats, emus, kangaroos, and wallabies. They must have thought they were in another world, and indeed they were! It was, though, a beautiful new world described by the editor of the *Port Phillip Gazette* in their advice to new immigrants in 1840, thus:

*Mount Macedon, in the Port Phillip district, is a fine bold mass, the commencement of a wooded range, extending for the greater part easterly; its height is estimated at above three thousand feet, but clothed with trees to the very summit. It may be crossed by a traveller on horseback, and commands a beautiful view to the south of Port Phillip—to the north of an expanse of country diversified with hill and plain—in the distance the sheen of a riverline or body of water, backed by ranges of blue hills—at hand a forest of noble timber, opening in its deepest recesses plains of rich herbage, and watered by running streams... These rivers, including their tributaries, of which the largest is the Campaspee, rising at the foot of Mount Macedon, water a considerable tract of fertile country.*⁴²

Conclusion

By Christmas 1839, after almost 140 days of travel, 117 of them tossed on the high seas by the *Westminster*, the O'Connors were finally settled on a sheep station below Mount Macedon. They now stood on the far edge of the world, in a country wholly unfamiliar and astonishingly different from the soft emerald-green fields of Limerick. One can only imagine the churn of emotions in Patrick, Margaret, and young Norah: the ache of farewell, but also the stirring of optimism as new possibilities unfolded before them. They were part of a growing Irish trickle that would soon become a stream, as assisted emigration brought thousands more to this new land. Their new life had begun, and this history remembers them as pioneers of Australia.

Notes

¹ New South Wales State Archives and Records. (n.d.). *Assisted Immigrants Shipping Lists, 1839 — Barque Westminster* (arrived Port Phillip, 15 Dec 1839). Available at: https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/primis-explorer/fulldisplay?context=L&vid=61SRA&lang=en_US&docid=INDEX3101040

² The Great Hunger (An Gorta Mór) which struck Ireland between 1845 and 1852 caused mass starvation, disease and emigration because of repeated potato-blight failures compounded by social and economic vulnerability. In the Newcastle region of County Limerick tenant families were thrown into destitution, many were evicted or entered workhouses, and thousands emigrated — leaving depopulated townlands and an enduring legacy of cultural loss. Notably, while the famine raged, large quantities of foodstuffs such as grain and livestock were exported from Ireland to Britain, and many Irish nationalist commentators argue these exports, alongside British governmental policy failures, outlined a case for genocide. In time, Patrick, Margaret, Nora, and Michael O'Connor, along with others that emigrated prior to *The Great Hunger* would have been considered by those who survived locally as *the lucky ones* who managed to avoid the heartache of death and destruction. Many within the O'Connor families in west County Limerick perished.

³ Hughes, R. (1987). *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding*. Pan Books, London.

⁴ Shaw, A.G.L. (1966). *Convicts and the Colonies: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to Australia and other Parts of the Empire*. Faber and Faber, London.

⁵ The crossing of the Blue Mountains (Great Dividing Range) in 1813 by Gregory Blaxland, William Lawson, and William Charles Wentworth was pivotal because it opened a practical route from the confined Sydney basin to the vast grazing lands of the interior. This breakthrough enabled rapid pastoral expansion, encouraged inland exploration and settlement, and transformed the economic future of the colony by allowing agriculture and sheep grazing to develop beyond the coastal limits.

⁶ National Museum of Australia. (2023). *Assisted Migration*. Available at: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/assisted-migration> The assisted immigration scheme to Australia was a government-sponsored program that subsidised or fully paid the passage of selected migrants—mainly labourers, tradespeople, and domestic servants—to help populate the colonies and meet labour shortages. Beginning in 1831 under the British Colonial Office, it aimed to attract young, healthy, and morally upright settlers, often favouring single women to balance gender ratios in the colonies. Funded largely by the sale of colonial lands, the scheme brought hundreds of thousands of migrants, including many Irish, to New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, South Australia, and later Victoria and Queensland throughout the 19th century.

⁷ John Helder Wedge (n.d.). Melbourne in 1838 Victorian Collections. Public domain. Available at: <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/5759194bd0cdd10f9c21c982>

⁸ Labilliere, F. P. (1878). *Early History of the Colony of Victoria*. Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, London. Available at: <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1301991h.html>

⁹ *Carlisle Patriot*, Saturday 14 December 1839

¹⁰ Labilliere, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Available at: https://colnect.com/en/stamps/stamp/812453-Westminster_1837-Sailing_Ships-British_Indian_Ocean_Territory

¹² The 610-ton, three-masted barque *Westminster* was built in 1837 and registered in London in March 1838.

¹³ *Limerick Chronicle*, Wednesday 9 November 1836

¹⁴ Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners. (1838). *Instructions to Emigration Agents and Surgeons on Board Emigrant Ships*. London: HMSO.

¹⁵ Ancestry.com, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, Wednesday 17 July 1839

¹⁷ Haines, R. (1997). *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831–60*. Macmillan, London.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ McDonald, J. and Richards, E. (1997). The Great Emigration of 1841: Recruitment for New South Wales in British Emigration Fields. *Population Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 3.

²⁰ Ancestry.com. (2007). *New South Wales, Australia, Assisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1828-1896* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc.

²¹ Ancestry.com. (2009). *Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1839-1923* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc.

²² *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 10 May 1851

²³ The emigration authorities encouraged assisted emigrants from the same location to travel in a group.

²⁴ Baynes, T. M. (1830). Public domain. Available at: <https://www.meisterdrucke.us/fine-art-prints/Thomas-Mann-Baynes/1208003/Gravesend.-Kent.-c.-1830.html>

²⁵ *Port Phillip Gazette*, Wednesday 18 December 1839

²⁶ Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, *op. cit.*

²⁷ *Times (London)*, Monday 19 August 1839

²⁸ Oakum is a coarse, tarred fibre traditionally made by loosening and unpicking old ropes that had been used aboard ships. The fibres were then impregnated with tar or pitch to make them waterproof. Oakum was packed into the seams between wooden planks on ships' hulls and decks to make them watertight.

²⁹ Haines, R. (1994). *Life and Death in the Age of Sail: The Passage to Australia*. UNSW Press, Sydney.

³⁰ *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 13 April 1844

³¹ *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 6 July 1850

³² It is highly likely that Patrick O'Connor played the fiddle as his grandchildren played the fiddle, presumably taught by their father William, who in turn was almost certainly tutored in the instrument by his father Patrick.

³³ The *Roaring Forties* refer to a powerful and constant system of westerly winds that blow in the Southern Hemisphere, roughly between the latitudes of 40 and 50 degrees. These winds are known for their strength and consistency, often reaching gale force and creating turbulent conditions at sea. The name *Roaring Forties* was coined due to the fierce howling sound produced by these winds as they whip through the region. These winds have historically posed challenges to sailors, as they generate large swells and unpredictable weather patterns. However, the Roaring Forties have also been utilized by seafarers for faster sailing routes, particularly during the age of sail when ships could harness their power to facilitate quicker voyages.

³⁴ Richards, E. (2008). *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia since 1901*. UNSW Press, Sydney.

³⁵ *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, Monday 16 December 1839

³⁶ Based on the account of the arrival of the *David Clarke* in the *Port Phillip Gazette*, Wednesday 6 November 1839. The *David Clarke* was the first assisted immigrant ship to arrive in Melbourne directly from Great Britain. The *Westminster* was the second.

³⁷ New South Wales State Archives and Records, *op. cit.*

³⁸ State Library of Victoria. (n.d.). Public domain. Available at: <https://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/>

³⁹ In early colonial New South Wales, prominent religious leaders such as the Anglican clergyman Samuel Marsden and the Scottish Presbyterian minister John Dunmore Lang expressed deep hostility toward the Irish, particularly Irish Catholics, reflecting broader British sectarian and ethnic prejudices of the period. Marsden, a powerful magistrate as well as a minister, regarded Irish convicts as inherently rebellious and morally suspect, attitudes shaped by fears of Irish resistance following events such as the 1798 rebellion and reinforced after the Castle Hill uprising of 1804, which he interpreted as evidence of Catholic disloyalty. Lang, though later an advocate for free immigration, frequently portrayed the Irish as socially backward and politically dangerous, arguing that Catholic influence threatened the moral and Protestant character he envisioned for the colony. Such rhetoric helped legitimise discriminatory policies and social exclusion, fostering an environment in which Irish settlers often faced suspicion, limited opportunity, and entrenched sectarian division well into the 1900s.

⁴⁰ O'Farrell, P. (2000). *The Irish in Australia*. University NSW Press, Sydney.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Port Phillip Gazette*. (1840). Latest information about Australia Felix, the Finest Province of the Great Territory of New South Wales; including The History, geography, natural resources, Government, Commerce, and Finances of Port Phillip; Sketches of the Aboriginal Population and Advice to Immigrants; by The Editor of the Port Phillip Gazette, Melbourne. Arden and Strode, Printers, Gazette Office, Australia Felix.

Chapter 3

Pioneers 1840 – 1877

There was little resemblance between Patrick and Margaret O'Connor's new lives in Australia and their past in Ireland. The landscape, climate, agriculture, plants, people, animals, and the sheer expanse and newness of their new country precipitated a whole new way of life—an Australian pioneering life. Clearly, the knowledge, skills and dispositions learned by them as pioneers passed from father and mother to sons and daughters, laying the platform for generations of successful Australian dryland wheat and sheep farmers.

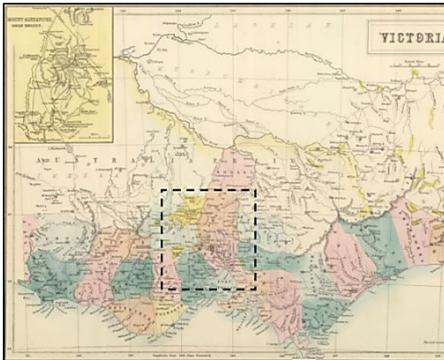


There were no snakes in Ireland!

The O'Connors must have thought they were in a different world when they arrived in the Macedon ranges.

Chapter 3 – Pioneers 1840 – 1877 tracks the extraordinary *Balboora O'Connors* from their early days on a Squatter's run in the Macedon Ranges, through to their first farm in the parish of Carlsruhe, near the new township of Kyneton, then to more substantial leaseholds in the nearby Parishes of Langley and Baynton. The chapter concludes with the auction of their holdings in the Parish of Langley and the decision by Patrick and Margaret, along with their adult children William, James, Margaret, and Catherine, to relocate to new leaseholds at Terrick Terrick East, near Echuca in the Northern Plains of Victoria.

The Macedon Ranges



Map of Victoria 1854

(Central Victoria has been expanded)

The blue-shaded area is where Patrick O'Connor and his family lived, firstly with Patrick and Margaret as indentured assisted immigrants, and then as farm workers from 1840 to about 1855.

The small, green-shaded area is where Patrick O'Connor and family lived between about 1855 to about 1865.

The red-shaded area is where Patrick O'Connor, and later his three sons Michael, William and James, owned land from about 1865 to about 1877.

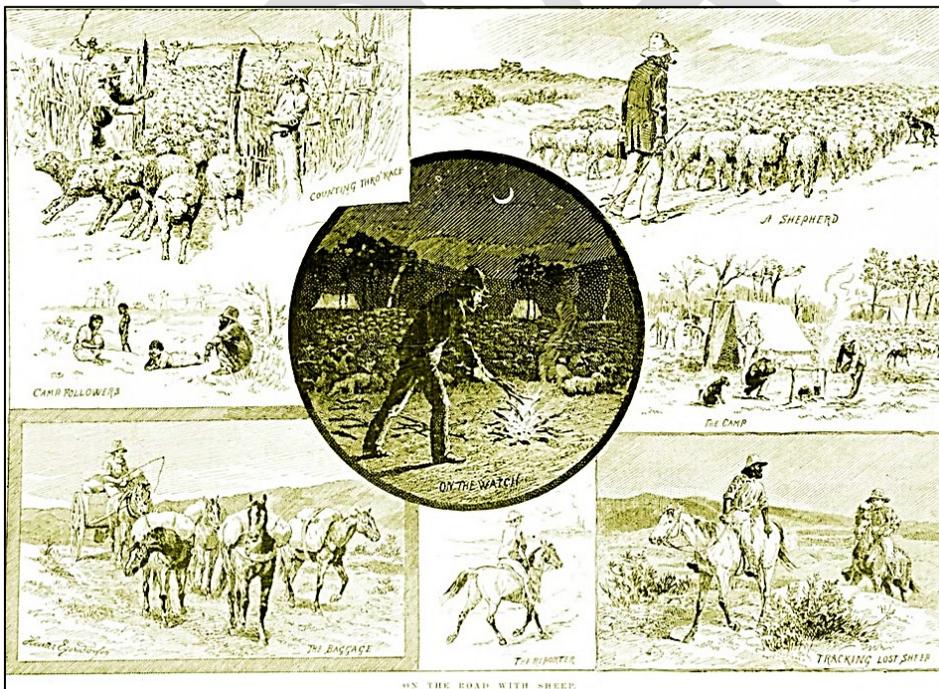
Between 1840 and 1877, the *Balboora* northwest of Melbourne, their home. *O'Connors* lived, including *Carlsruhe*,

The Squatter's Run

At the time of Patrick and Margaret, the area was a squatter-dominated pastoral frontier. Settlers occupied Crown land beyond the limits of the cattle during the 1830s and 1840s. The colonial government later legalised the practice, transforming them into a powerful class. At the back of the highly lucrative Australian wool trade, Parramatta and Camden, John Macarthur's existing colonial flock, including a

sheep from South Africa, to selectively breed with fine-wool Spanish Merino sheep. The resulting Australian Merino breed adapted well to dry conditions and became the basis for high-quality wool production during the colonial pastoral boom.

Prominent squatters in the Macedon Ranges included Charles Ebden and Alexander Mollison. In 1837, Ebden led one of the earliest overland pastoral expeditions, driving about 9,000 sheep, 30 horses, and nine bullock drays from his Murray River station in New South Wales into the Macedon Ranges. By May that year, he had established the Karlsruhe run on the Campaspe River west of Mount Macedon. Following his lead, Alexander Mollison drove his livestock from the Murrumbidgee River and took up the Coliban run in January 1838, stocking it with 5,000 sheep, 634 cattle, 28 bullocks, and 22 horses.² Both men relied heavily on the assisted immigration scheme to augment their labour needs, with Patrick, Margaret and Norah probably secured by one of them, most likely Ebden.³ They would have initially agreed to a 12-month employment term, with wages, duties, and provisions, including accommodation and food, negotiated with the squatter's agent upon disembarking from the *Westminster* in Melbourne. Patrick, Margaret and Norah each earned about £10 in their first year in Australia. The image depicts life on a squatter's run (**below**).



The work of a station hand on a squatter's run.

In County Limerick, Norah O'Connor had received a basic education and was a valuable support to Patrick and Margaret. Not only did she help with the care of their children, but Norah also assisted Patrick and Margaret in navigating the many English literacy challenges they faced as native Irish speakers who were unable to read or write in English.

Over the next decade or so, Patrick O'Connor and his family consolidated an Australian pioneering life, and despite not having the means to purchase land, they had guaranteed employment and lived in circumstances far better than they had experienced in Ireland. Within three years of their arrival, the young Michael had two little sisters: Mary in 1840 and Ellen in 1843. Two brothers followed, William in 1847 and James in 1850, and by the time Michael was a young man, two more sisters had joined the family, Margaret in 1853 and Catherine in 1857.

Their Australian life, though, was often shadowed by moments of melancholy, as thoughts of family left behind in Ireland resurfaced, particularly when working and socialising among fellow Irish immigrants or when hearing fresh news from newly arrived countrymen. The O'Connors would have been keenly aware of the devastation wrought by the Great Hunger between 1845 and 1852, and must have feared that many relatives and friends had not survived.⁶ Until 1854, communication between the O'Connors in Australia and their kin in Ireland was effectively impossible, but the introduction of the British–Australian Postal Convention brought cheaper and more reliable mail services, finally allowing correspondence to pass between the two worlds.⁷ Records show that at least one letter was sent from Ireland to the Balboora O'Connors, and for much of 1856, a letter addressed jointly to Margaret and Norah O'Connor lay among numerous unclaimed letters at the Melbourne General Post Office.⁸ Newspapers, including the *Kyneton Observer*, regularly published lists of such letters, raising the hopeful possibility that Margaret and Norah eventually learned of its arrival and were able to read and reply. The letter bearing Norah's name is the last time her name appears in any record, and sadly, her life in Australia after 1856 remains in the blank pages of history. It is probable, though, that she stayed with Patrick and Margaret until Patrick approved a good nuptial match for his much-cherished sister.⁹

Gold Fever

The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 triggered a massive gold rush to Ballarat, Bendigo, and Mount Alexander (Castlemaine). Thousands of Irish immigrants were drawn to the

diggings, including many who had been working in the colony. Stations are run by shepherds, bullock drivers, and farmers. I guess whether Patrick O'Connor joined the diggings in October 1852 at Forest Creek, Kyneton, for ...*digging for gold with* who was again fined £5 in February. The picture (**below**) depicts Forest Creek

Although Patrick O'Connor likely tried his luck in the goldfields, we will never know for sure!



The first O'Connor farm

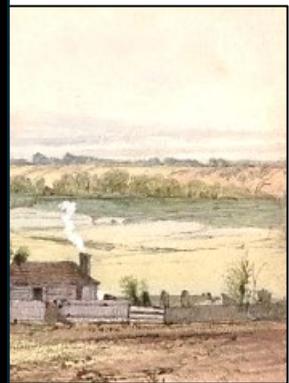
By the birth of Patrick and Margaret had left their employment on a square of Karlsruhe.^{13 14} During the mid to of Kyneton, and once forming part allotments ranging from 20 to 500 a land releases aimed to reduce the to smaller farming settlers.¹⁵ The late prompting Irish-born journalist W

through the *sweet hamlet of Carlsruhe ... that assumed an air of an old agricultural settlement,*
subdivided into ... *ry, perfectly surprised*
me on the high ... ing operations
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The O'Connors ... [val]. The Royal family
was to have a ... d Margaret's
children, Wil ... ne niece and nephew
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(below), the la ... nors remained as his
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-1850s, very near the
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Like they had done on a squatter's run, the O'Connors, in exchange for a reasonable living, added significant value to the land they worked. One of the most demanding tasks was clearing land for cultivation, which had been home to thousands of squatter's sheep for the previous twenty years. Not only was the land heavily wooded with White Gum and Stringy Bark trees, but it was also littered with granular quartz and granite.²⁰ Patrick and Michael lifted almost every granite stone on the property, using them to build the all-important fences that marked boundaries and protected crops from roaming livestock. If you travel through this area today, you are immediately taken by the vast array of dry-stone fences, standing defiantly against time, an epitaph to the blood and sweat of the Irish families, such as the O'Connors, who built them. The trees felled by Patrick and Michael also provided the resources to construct their hut and other farm buildings. Their first home on this block was likely a one-room, windowless timber slab cottage like the one pictured **(next page)**.²¹ With good access to water from Post Office Creek, Patrick and his family farmed sheep, dairy cattle and pigs, and grew potatoes, wheat, barley, and oaten hay.^{22 23 24 25} The following extracts from a *Descriptive Sketch of Victoria, circa 1860*, give some insight into the life and times of the O'Connor family during this period:²⁶

The first settlers endured the inclement climate and the harshness of the bush as they went forth into the forest with the manly determination to reclaim the wilderness and to make themselves a home in its previously unbroken solitudes. To do this, has involved no small amount of courage, of patient endurance, of steadfast hope, of physical strength and of pertinacious toil. Most of the selector's capital consists of these admirable qualities, for his stock of ready money is usually exhausted by the time he has ringed and felled a few trees upon the site of his future homestead, erected a hut of slabs and bark, furnished it with a trestle bed and blankets, a rudely-constructed table and bench, a few cooking utensils, an axe, a spade, a crosscut saw, and a supply of flour, tea and sugar.

He knows that he must "shun delights and live laborious days," and when he has broken up a few perches of land and put in his first crop, he is not unfrequently compelled to seek for work in the neighbourhood at fencing or road-making, in order to maintain himself until the "kindly earth" shall have yielded him her increase...He is thus enabled to purchase a few head of stock or a better description of plough, to build a more commodious hut, and to supply the wife and children, for whom he has been making a home in the bush, with such articles of wearing apparel as they may stand in need. There is plenty of hard work and very little recreation in such a life, and the most lively imagination would fail to invest its prosaic realities with a halo of romance or with an air of poetry.



With thousands of men on the goldfields, oppo
labour soared. This empowered working-class
demand better working and living conditions a
50-year-old Patrick seized the opportunity and
his services, along with those of the 25-year-old
council and other clients, undertaking road wo

By 1860, with a population exceeding 2,000 pe
barracks, post office, banks, hotels, shops, chur
evolved from a frontier outpost to a valuable s
families. The town's weekly markets enabled B
and livestock prices. It was here that he sold hi
livestock. Kyneton was also where the young C
celebrated Mass. The photograph (next page) is
on the route to several goldfields, Kyneton was
and those of farmers, serviced by Cobb & Co. o
1860s enabled ready access to Melbourne.

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Kyneton in 1861 showing the Royal Oak Hotel (right), the Kyneton Loan and Discount Banking Company (right), and the two-storey Crown



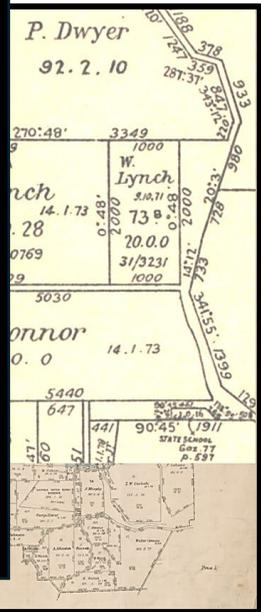
The O'Connors look to Langley and Baynton

In 1862, Patrick O'Connor and his family leased 148 acres from William Royal in the Parish of Carlsruhe, supplementing his farm income as a road and bridge repair contractor. A new *Land Act* of this same year made it easier for Irish settlers to secure multiple 20-acre blocks to build houses and operate small farms. The annual license fee was two shillings per acre, payable each year, with an option to purchase the land outright after three years, provided the farmer lived on the land, kept at least a quarter under cultivation, and made improvements, such as fencing the property.

Kyneton Guardian,
Saturday 14 April 1866.

I PATRICK CONNOR of Langley in the Colony of Victoria, do hereby give notice that I have applied to the President of the Board of Land and Works under the above Act, for a license to reside on or cultivate twenty acres of land, as per plan accompanying the said application, and hereunder described, that is to say, County of Dalhousie, parish of Baynton part of unsurveyed land east of block 63 area 20 acres. To be surveyed by Mr James Bowman Government Contract Surveyor.
Dated this 9th day of April 1866.
PATRICK CONNOR.

Finally, in 1866, after 27 years in the colony, the middle-aged Patrick and the 29-year-old Michael had each secured three parcels of land, including the adjoining Parishes of Langley and Baynton (previous page).³⁰ Even better news came when the Victorian Land Act of 1869 enabled them to purchase their own land in the same area. The O'Connors seized the opportunity, Patrick, along with William and James, each had secured 320 acres at Baynton (below).^{31 32 33}



Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Surveys for Langley and Baynton, County of Dalhousie.

Their leases came with several conditions. Each had to reside on their land and, within the first five years, make improvements, including fencing the property and ensuring at least one-tenth of the land was under cultivation. The Department of Lands and Survey accepted the modest annual rent paid for each block as part payment of the land's value. After six years, the O'Connors each had the option to own all or part of the land as a Crown Grant, held under freehold, by paying the remaining principal. Alternatively, they could extend their lease to 14 years, after which the land would become theirs under freehold.³⁴

Again, the O'Connors found themselves in the familiar situation of establishing new farms and farmsteads on largely unimproved country, but this time, the aging Patrick had the support of three strong sons.

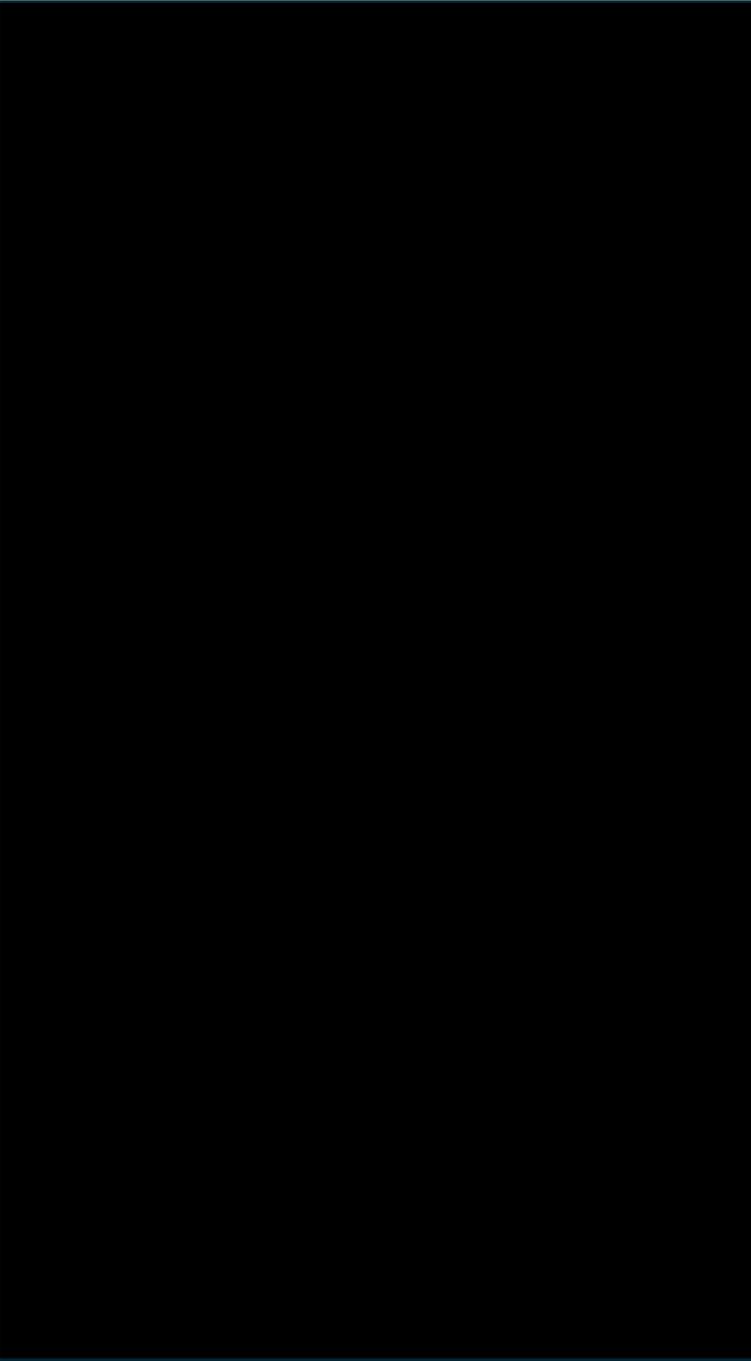
The Irish Catholic Community

Kyneton and its surrounding districts had one of the most vibrant Irish immigrant communities in the colony, so significant that the *Kyneton Guardian* proclaimed St. Patrick the *Patron Saint of Kyneton*.³⁵ The Irish families living near the O'Connors at Langley and Baynton bore the surnames Brien, Callinan, Coman, Cullen, Danaher, Dwyer, Fahey, Feeney, Fitzgerald, Forde, Gallagher, Howe, Kelly, Kennedy, Kenny, Keogh, Lowry, Lynch, McAlpin, McCauley, McGrath, McKenna, McMahan, Murphy, O'Farrell, O'Meara, O'Shea, Power, Royal (Ryall), Ryan, Sheedy, and Walsh. Almost all these families, like the O'Connors, were young pioneers forced by poverty to leave their homeland and seek new lives in Australia. Many of these families hailed from Limerick, Cork, and Tipperary, and so had much in common with Patrick and Margaret. The O'Connors developed strong bonds with some of them as they worked in meitheal,³⁶ raised money for Irish causes, observed their Catholicism, rejoiced on St. Patrick's Day, intermarried, celebrated their births, and mourned their deaths.

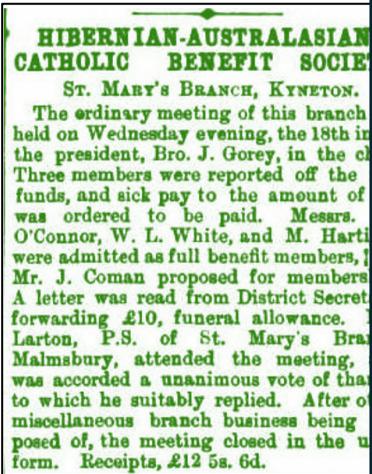
Other than Mass, local societies like the Hibernian-Australian Catholic Benefit Society (HACBS) St. Mary's Branch, Kyneton and the Kyneton St. Patrick Association ensured the *Balboora* O'Connors had the place and space to maintain their strong heritage and celebrate all things Irish, including keeping abreast of matters in Ireland and hosting social functions such as Balls and sports days. The Hibernian Australian Catholic Benefit Society, with branches throughout Victoria, was a cornerstone of the community. It attracted membership of almost all of the Irish in the district, no matter their status, and had the express aims to:

... firstly promote the social and moral advancement of its members; secondly, for the purpose of assisting any of the members or those depending upon them, from time to time who may be in trouble or tribulation; and thirdly, for the purpose of cherishing the memory of those who have been dear and ever cherished memory for the

In August 1875, the Australian Catholic Society, mutual support for the conduct, and to uphold the principles of the subjects within the colony (b



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The Irish farmers around Kyneton to exhibit the quality of their thoroughbreds at race meeting contests, a point noted by Irish Melbourne-based Catholic w

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... the substantial town of Kyneton is beautifully situated and is the centre of a far-famed splendour and popularity on Patrick's Day. On both the near - friendly gatherings

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The O'Connors loved their the best horses across the colony. S. Cox, of whom one of the world's premier weight-for-age races today, the W.S.Cox Plate, is

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named. Race meetings were also popular in the townships and districts around Kyneton, including Baynton (**below**), where on St. Patrick's Day 1867, Patrick O'Connor raced his horse *Paddy* in both races one and three! Irish luck, though, was not on Patrick's side in either race, but he did lodge a protest in the third race to disqualify the winner because the winning owner, Mr Oliver, was not a bona fide farmer!⁴¹ His son William was also a keen racehorse breeder, winning best in show for his three-year-old thoroughbred gelding and third place for his one-year-old colt at the 1877 *Kyneton Agricultural Show*.⁴² Even though Patrick or William never won the famed Kyneton Cup, Patrick's grandson and namesake, who resided at *Balboora*, Pastoria, was a very successful racehorse owner and trainer, winning the Kyneton Cup on *St. Patrick's Day* in both 1914 and 1916 with his champion horse, *Lucky Bean*. Known as the *Bush Carbine*, *Lucky Bean* was a prolific winner across country Victoria (**below**).⁴³

The Kyneton Observer,
Tuesday 19 March 1867

The Melbourne Herald,
Saturday 18 March 1916

BAYNTON AND GLENHOPE RACES

These races were held last Saturday, on a very good course, looked out by Mr Wheeler opposite the Baynton and Glenhope Hotel. There was a very fair attendance and the races were kept up until late in the evening. Mr Wm Miller, acted as starter, and Mr J. M. Little as judge.

FIRST RACE

Males Plate—Of 2 sets, for all horses that have won an advertised prize. Entrance 10s. Mile heats, weight for age.

Mr Ryan's Lady Zebra	1
John Ryan's Fast Nought	2
Bradley's Polly	3
Conroy's Paddy	0

Lady Zebra was easily but a protest was entered by Mr Ryan on the ground that Mr Ryan's mare had previously won an advertised prize.

SECOND RACE

Kyneton and Glenhope Plate—Of 2 sets, open to all horses. Entrance 10s. Three miles. Weight for age.

Mr Oliver's Cutaway	1
Oliver's Charlie	2
Wheeler's Hunter	3

He has went off with the lead, with Charlie close at his heels. Cutaway is very handy, allowing the other two to get about 200 yards ahead of him, at the end of the 2nd mile Bradley was pulled up and the race let to the other two, Cutaway winning by two lengths.

THIRD RACE

Farmers' Purse—Of 5 sets open to all horses, the free sde property of Farmers residing within 10 miles of the Baynton and Glenhope Hotel. Entrance 10s. Two miles, weight for age.

Mr Oliver's Cutaway	1
Bradley's Polly	2
Conroy's Paddy	3

Cutaway again made a very bad start, but managed to withstand to come in an easy winner. A protest was entered by Messrs Bradley and Oliver, against Cutaway, on the ground that Mr Oliver is not a bona fide farmer.

FOURTH RACE

Ladies' Purse—Of 3 sets open for all horses. Entrance 10s. Mile heats, weight for age.

Mr Daliston's Langley	1	1
Flynn's Harprow	2	2
Bradley's Donovan Brown	3	3

Langley was easily.

FIFTH RACE

Rolling Hack Race—Of 3 sets, entrance 10s. 4 sets open for all horses. The winner to be sold for eight shillings, any surplus to go to the race fund. Mile heats, weight for age.

Mr Bradley's Polly	1
Woods' Burnard	2
Geo. Dixon's Lady Bell	3
Little's Hunter	0
J. Kelly's Paddy	0
Wagon's Donovan Brown	0
Conroy's Paddy	0
Daliston's Charlie	0

In the last heat Polly was jockeyed by a very tight fight in the second heat, but she pulled it through. A protest was entered by the other competitors on the ground that there was no horse of equal age to her, and she was not a bona fide farmer, and the protest was entered against her on the ground that she was not a bona fide farmer, and the protest was rejected.

SIXTH RACE

Consolation Plate—Of 2 sets open to all horses that have won an advertised prize. Entrance 7-61. Two miles, weight for age.

Mr Wm Miller's Prospect	1
Conroy's Paddy	2

Conroy's Paddy was the only horse in the evening that was not off with a tremendous lead, owing to this, she having backed twice in the first heat, but she won the race of the people admirably and easily in the first heat by about three lengths.

BACKERS DELIGHTED
AT LUCKY BEAN'S WIN

KYNETON RACES EVENTFUL

BY "AUSTRIAL"

Cheers were given and hats thrown into the air when it was seen that Lucky Bean had won the Kyneton Cup yesterday. The demonstration began as Lucky Bean entered the straight in the lead, and it was kept up until A. Fitzsimmons, the rider, had weighed in, and disappeared into the jockeys' room. No more popular win has been scored at a country meeting for many years, and it may be added that no horse has more deserved public approval than the Carbine of the bush. Lucky Bean is a remarkably consistent gelding, and Mr Paddy O'Connor, his owner, has reason to be proud both of his horse and his own reputation as a straight-going sportsman.

Lucky Bean won the Kyneton Cup in 1914, and last year was beaten in it by Jullundur by a narrow margin. But for leaving the rails on that occasion the up-country champion probably would have captured the event three times in succession. Lucky Bean has won almost every important race decided at Woodend, Kyneton, and Hanging Rock at least once. The Menchikoff gelding started at 10 to 1 yesterday, but Kyneton to a man was on him. Women are not supposed to bet, directly; but few of the large number present were without an investment on Lucky Bean. In handing Mr O'Connor the handsome silver cup, Cr Legg congratulated him on owning such a good horse and running it to win on every occasion. It was rather amusing to note that the only toast received with musical honors was that of Lucky Bean. Most of those present backed Lucky Bean—Mr O'Connor is a member of the committee, and he gave them the tip—and their winnings stimulated their vocal powers, and they sang, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" with heartiness.

Ploughing matches were popular events across the Kyneton district, offering farmers an opportunity to showcase their cultivation skills. George and Frederick Royal were very accomplished with the plough, keenly contesting numerous ploughing matches, while the 17-year-old James O'Connor in 1877 won £2 for his skills in wielding the family's locally made *Hutcheson and Walker* plough to finish second in the Under 18 ploughing match in Kyneton.^{44 45} Pictured is a ploughing match taken during the mid-1870s (**below**).



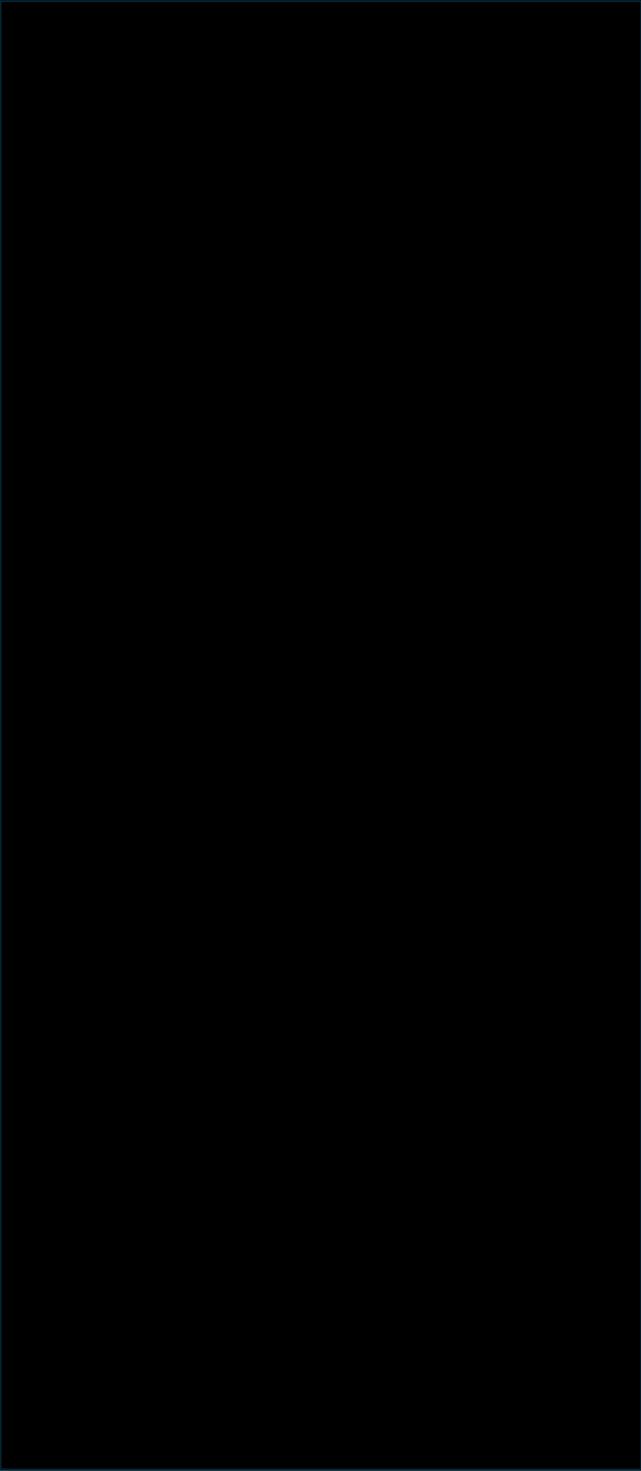
Ploughing matches were organised by agricultural societies, with competitors assigned marked plots to be ploughed within a set time using horse-drawn ploughs under specified conditions. Judging focused on workmanship rather than speed, assessing straightness, uniform depth, clean turning of the sod, neat finishing, and control of horses.

Patrick and his family, along with many other Irish immigrants in the area, played a central role in the fundraising and building effort that resulted in the impressive bluestone St. Mary's Catholic Church, now known as Our Lady of the Rosary, completed in 1861 (**next page**). Before its construction, Mass was celebrated at the Gold Diggers Arms Hotel. With the arrival of the Christian Brothers in 1873 and the Sisters of Mercy in 1874, the O'Connors provided strong support as both St Mary's Boys' School and St Mary's Girls' School, which had operated under lay teachers since the 1850s, transitioned to Christian Brothers College and St Mary's Convent School.⁴⁶ The O'Connor children, particularly William and James, received a thorough grounding in catechism, writing, reading, arithmetic, and classical education, while Margie and Kate's lessons also included needlework and music.⁴⁷

By the mid-1870s, Michael O'Connor had married Ellen Howe, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer from County Tipperary. A close relationship had developed between Michael and Ellen, who also farmed land on the *Jew's Harp Creek*, near Kyneton. In the 1860s, Patrick, Margaret, and their family moved to Carlsruhe, just east of Kyneton, for at least a year. Margaret, married siblings Caroline Mary and George William, took place at St Mary's Catholic Church, Kyneton, on 10th August 1874. Margaret in July 1874. Both marriages were surrounded by kin and countrymen who gathered for the Harp of Erin hotel, the Irish-born and the soda bread, mutton stew, and boiled baccalao. The celebration of faith, love, and the far emerald

Irishman Father Horatio Geoghegan P.P. began his ministry at Kyneton in 1859 and remained there until his death in 1895.

Caroline and George William Royal's father was a brother. George Royal arrived in Australia as an immigrant on board the *Arab* in 1842. In 1843, he took advantage of opportunities available in the Port Phillip



Corrigan from County Louth, Ireland, at St. Francis Catholic Church in Melbourne. Despite the somewhat curious surname, these *Royals* were Catholic and of Irish heritage, with a probable surname of *Ryall*, which had been anglicised as both Royal and Royle during their passage to and life in Australia.⁵⁰



The Harp of Erin Hotel (right) in Piper Street, Kyneton in 1861.

The O'Connors are again on the move

The land Patrick and his family farmed in the Kyneton district was extraordinarily fertile, regarded as equal to the best in the colony, and ideal for small-scale mixed farming. For over twenty years, farmers had engaged in a profitable four-year rotation of wheat, barley, and oats. Aside from the potato, no root crops were included in the rotation, and the ground never lay fallow until its fertility was exhausted. Once land became unproductive, farmers simply cleared more land for cultivation. The relentless cropping began to affect yields, prompting many farmers to shift from mixed farming to a sole focus on grazing sheep and cattle, which required more land. As such, wealthier farmers sought to acquire their neighbours' leaseholds and freeholds, and by 1875, many began leaving the district to take advantage of new, cheaper leasehold selections in the Northern Plains, particularly around Shepparton and Echuca.⁵¹ In selling up, farmers could auction any freehold land held under a Crown Grant. Land held under leasehold, though, could not be sold. Any improvements made by the lessee, though, could be auctioned if the Local Land Board, which managed land affairs locally on behalf of the Department of Lands and Survey, agreed to reissue the lease to the successful bidder.⁵²

Friday, 28th June.

...ors, and Others.

PASTORAL LAND

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...t Hotel, Kyneton,
...o'clock, the whole

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...in all 960 acres
... Messrs H. and J

is a Crown Grant;
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ES YOUNG,
...ioneer, Kyneton.

Kynet
Satu

The O'Connors, considering their approximately 33 into their 60s and William (28), Jan consolidate their under Crown Gr homes on their leaseholds (above).³³ Neighbour, John Ross, was the successful bidder. The leasehold land at Terrick Terrick East was less expensive than the land at Langley. The move

likely provided the O'Connors and the Royals with a modest dividend, giving them some cash for a fresh start.

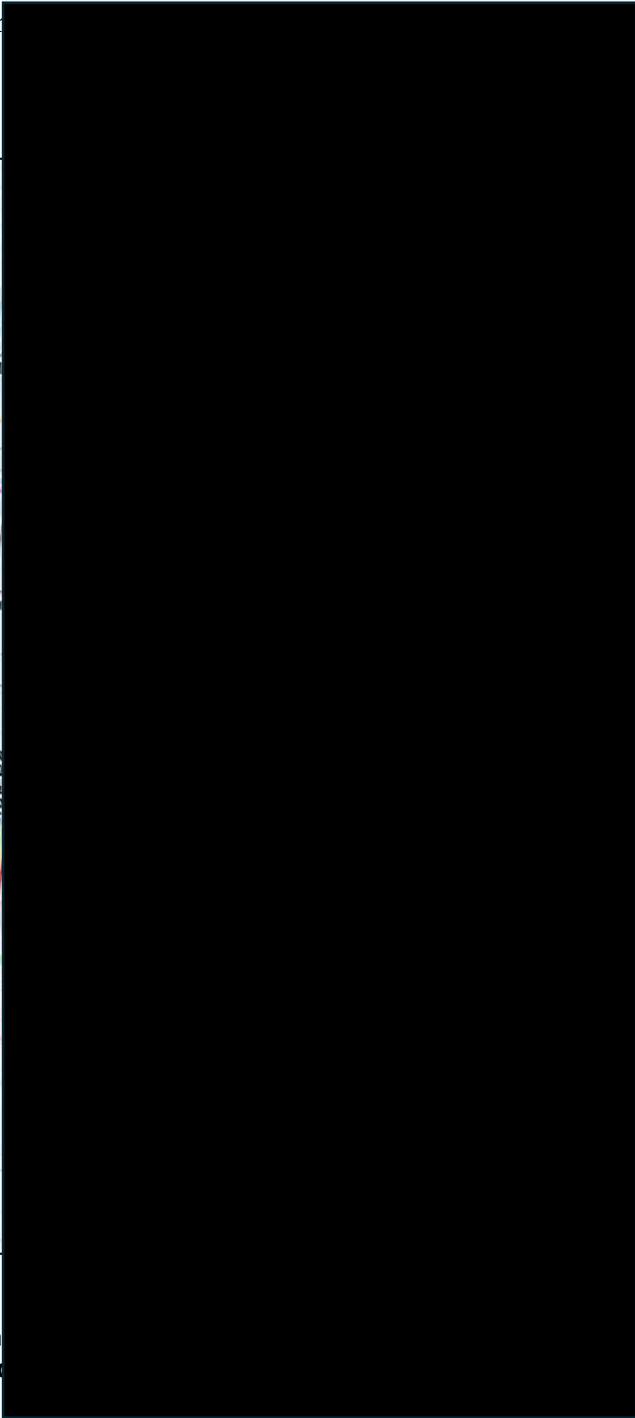
In 1873, George Royal senior had already sold his freehold farm at Glenhope near Baynton, including his draught horses, a dray, a four-horse wagon, a chaff cutter, a roller, and a plate plough. By 1875, most of the Royal holdings and improvements around Kyneton had been sold.⁵⁴ Frederick Royal, Caroline O'Connor's brother, was already established at Terrick Terrick East as early as 1875, where he had married Mary Reilly, the daughter of local farmer Michael Reilly, and ran a general store that he hoped to develop into a hotel.⁵⁵

In 1876, the *Government Gazette* records that George and Margaret Royal (O'Connor) and George's brothers, Frederick and John, had each acquired a 320-acre leasehold at Terrick Terrick East, while the 19-year-old Catherine O'Connor also successfully selected a 294-acre block adjacent to that of George and Margaret Royal. Less than a year later, Patrick and William O'Connor had each secured 320-acre selections near those of Margaret and Catherine. Interestingly, there was no block immediately available for James O'Connor. Sadly, John Royal lost his life in a horse fall in February 1878, and Frederick Royal transferred ownership of his block to James O'Connor in 1878, presumably because he had taken over John's holding.^{56 57}

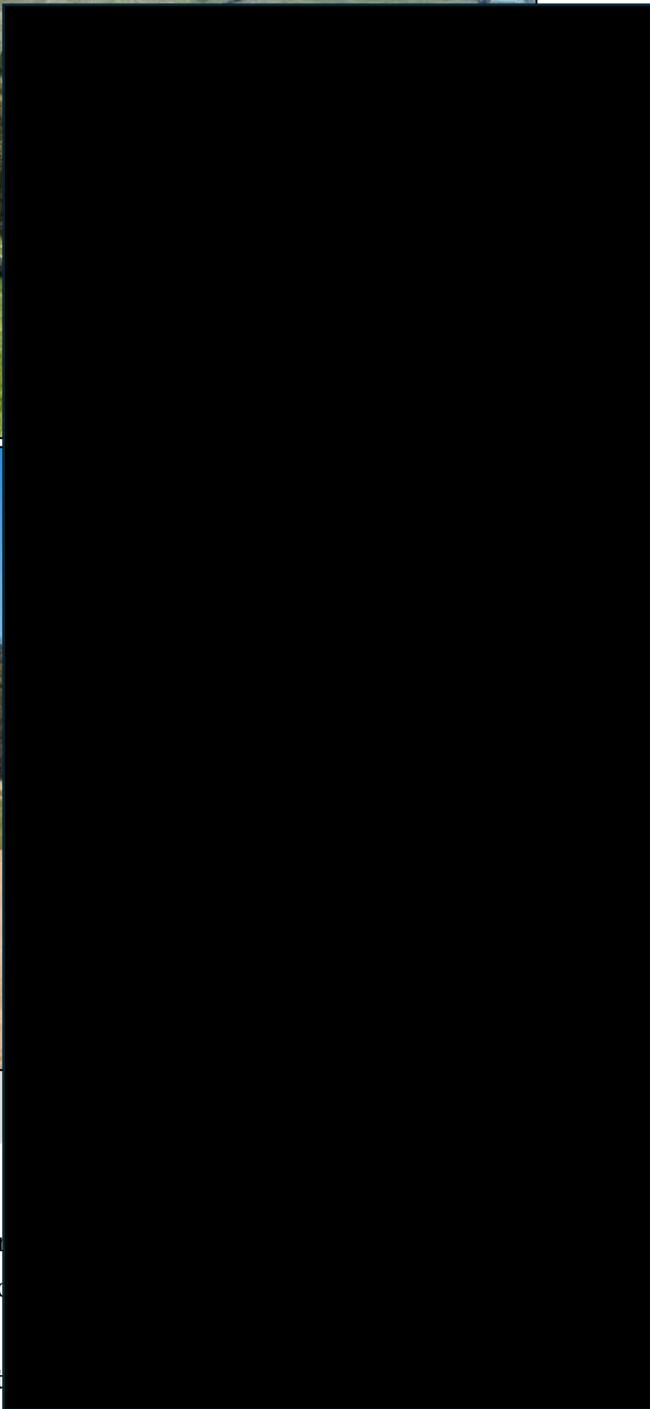
Apart from their birth records, no records exist about the lives of Patrick and Margaret's eldest daughters, Mary and Ellen. Presumably, they married well and enjoyed long and happy lives in the Kyneton district.

Michael O'Connor, now over 40 years old, remained in the Kyneton area and acquired additional property nearby in Pastoria. Michael was to make Pastoria his family home, complete with a 1,300-acre (528-hectare) farm he named *Balboora*. Michael, the last of the Irish-born O'Connors, passed away in 1910, with *Balboora* remaining with his children until its sale in 1926 upon the death of his son, Patrick. At the time of the sale, *Balboora* was described as: *a splendid grazing property...well watered by springs and creeks, and a good well at the house, subdivided into nine paddocks...improvements consist of a comfortable 6-roomed dwelling, woolshed, and all necessary outbuildings and yards. Both sheep and cattle do exceedingly well, and the land has a very good carrying capacity.*⁵⁸ It is unclear what happened to *Balboora* after 1926, but in 2025, *Balboora* at Pastoria was listed for sale as a *highly productive livestock grazing operation.*⁵⁹

Aside from the *Balboora* farm name and the gravestones of Michael O'Connor and his family in the Kyneton cemetery, there is no other evidence of his presence in the Kyneton district is to the west of the *Jew's Harp Creek* at Pastoria.⁶⁰



A modern map of La... and O'Connor's Hill located in the circle



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Conclusion

Patrick and Margaret O'Connor was a wild, open frontier on the very edge of they embodied the pioneering spirit of these from fewer than 40 European inhabitants commercial

was a wild, they these from commercial

town of over 2,500 people. It was here, under the umbrella of an Irish immigrant enclave, that they worked back-breaking days to raise their children, Michael, Mary, Ellen, William, James, Margaret, and Catherine, profoundly appreciative of the opportunities available to them in *Australia Felix*.⁶¹

Notes

¹ Roberts, S.H. (1935). *The Squatting Age in Australia, 1835–1847*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

² Macedon Ranges Shire (2023). *Thematic Environmental History*. Prepared for Macedon Ranges Shire Council. GML Heritage Victoria. Available at: www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Build-Plan/Heritage-Protection-and-Planning/Thematic-Environmental-History

³ State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales (NSW State Archives) 1839–1842, *Colonial Secretary: Correspondence*, NRS 5316. Noted that Ebdon and Mollison employed assisted immigrant shepherds and dairywomen from ships arriving in Port Phillip.

⁴ State Library of Victoria. (n.d.). Glimpses of moving sheep in the Australian bush, from *The Illustrated Australian News and Musical Times*. Available at: <https://yallambie.wordpress.com/2017/06/04/squatting-on-the-lower-plenty-1837/>

⁵ State Library of Victoria. (n.d.). Wool-drays. Depicts a procession of three heavily laden wool drays. The main dray is pulled by a team of bullocks, with a bullocky cracking his stockwhip, urging them down the slope towards the road. The wool bales are branded B in a rectangle. The load is partly covered by canvas, and a kettle and two kerosine lamps hang below the bottom of the dray. Author/Creator: Gill, ST, 1818-1880. Date: Hamel & Ferguson, Melbourne, [1864]. Public domain. Available at: <https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/YLV1031454/Wool-drays>

⁶ The Great Hunger (An Gorta Mór) which struck Ireland between 1845 and 1852 caused mass starvation, disease and emigration because of repeated potato-blight failures compounded by social and economic vulnerability. In the Newcastle region of County Limerick tenant families were thrown into destitution, many were evicted or entered workhouses, and thousands emigrated — leaving depopulated townlands and an enduring legacy of cultural loss. Notably, while the famine raged, large quantities of foodstuffs such as grain and livestock were exported from Ireland to Britain, and many Irish nationalist commentators argue these exports, alongside British governmental policy failures, outlined a case for genocide. In time, Patrick, Margaret, Norah, and Michael O'Connor, along with others that emigrated prior to *The Great Hunger* would have been considered by those who survived locally as *the lucky ones* who managed to avoid the heartache of death and destruction. Many within the O'Connor families in west County Limerick perished.

⁷ The 1854 British–Australian Postal Convention was an agreement between Britain and the Australian colonies that standardised and reduced postal rates, established regular mail routes via the Cape of Good Hope and Suez, and created a unified system for handling overseas correspondence between Australia and the United Kingdom.

⁸ *Argus*, Friday 11 April 1856; *Argus*, Friday 11 July 1856; *Argus*, Wednesday 23 July 1856; and *Argus*, Friday 12 December 1856

⁹ In the colony at this time a woman required the permission of a parent or guardian to marry before the age of 21.

¹⁰ *Argus*, Saturday 13 November 1852

¹¹ *Mount Alexander Mail*, Friday 16 February 1855

¹² Ham, T. (1852). *Forest Creek, Mt Alexander*. Available at: <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/534748169821f420f8c03846>

¹³ 1856 Electoral Rolls for Kyneton. Patrick Connor was listed in East Kyneton, in the Parish of Carlsruhe as a farmer under occupation on freehold land. Available at: <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/96843>

¹⁴ *The Kyneton Observer*, Tuesday 15 May 1860. Patrick Connor listed as a registered elector in Carlsruhe Division of Kyneton.

¹⁵ Bick, D. (1990). *Shire of Kyneton Heritage Study*. Kyneton. Available at: <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Build-Plan/Heritage-Protection-and-Planning/Heritage-Studies/Shire-of-Kyneton-Conservation-Heritage-Study-1990>

¹⁶ Kelly, W. (1859). *Life in Victoria; or, Victoria in 1853, and Victoria in 1858: Showing the March of Improvement Made by the Colony Within Those Periods, in Town and Country, Cities and Diggings*. Chapman and Hall, London. Available at: <https://viewer.slv.vic.gov.au/?entity=IE20488941&file=FL20502566&mode=browse>

Kelly, W. (1859–60). *Life in Victoria; or, Victoria in 1853, and Victoria in 1858*. Chapman & Hall, London.

William Kelly was an Irish traveller, writer, and keen observer who toured Victoria between 1853 and 1857, recording his experiences in a detailed account titled "Life in Victoria", published in 1859. Originally arriving during the height of the gold rush, Kelly travelled extensively through the colony—including towns like Kyneton, Castlemaine, Bendigo, and the pastoral districts—carefully noting the rapid transformations caused by gold discoveries, immigration, land disputes, and social changes. He had a sharp eye for detail and his writings provide one of the most vivid contemporary descriptions of colonial Victoria, touching on everything from squatter society and township development to the hardships of the goldfields and the tensions between the wealthy and working classes. Kelly was sympathetic to the Irish settlers and critical of the treatment of labourers, offering rare insight into the lives of the Irish Catholic immigrants working on squatter runs or digging for gold, particularly around areas like Mount Macedon, Kyneton, and the surrounding districts.

¹⁷ *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 21 Apr 1860

¹⁸ Royle's block at Carlsruhe in 1865. Available at: <https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/F102CB38-F843-11E9-AE98-D55017C0D823>

¹⁹ Vickers, A. H. (1853). *Apperley's Hotel Kyneton*. La Trobe Picture Collection State Library of Victoria. Public domain. Available at: <https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/YLV1009071/Apperleys-Hotel-Kyneton-Victoria>

²⁰ Maps and physical geography of Carlsruhe. Available at: <https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/F102CB38-F843-11E9-AE98-D55017C0D823?image=1>

- ²¹ Photograph c 1850s from the collection of Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society. Public domain. Available at: <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/604ffb8b817e01ad38176c98>
- ²² Kelly, *op. cit.*
- ²³ Cumming, D.A. & Graeme G. (1981). *The History of the Shire of Kyneton*. Lowden Publishing, Melbourne. This local history provides excellent material on the early Irish settlement in Carlsruhe, Post Office Creek, and Kyneton districts, describing building techniques, land clearing, and the establishment of Catholic communities.
- ²⁴ Public Record Office Victoria. Land Selection Files, Parish of Carlsruhe, 1850s–1870s. These include direct archival material showing land selections, stone fencing conditions, and simple farm descriptions from early settlers in the Carlsruhe area. Available at: <https://prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/explore-topic/researching-land-and-property>
- ²⁵ Bick, *op. cit.*
- ²⁶ Garran, A.C. (ed.) (1886). *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*. Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, Sydney. Available at: <http://romseyaustralia.com/houses.html>
- ²⁷ Serle, G. (1963). *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851–1861*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- During the 1850s and 1860s, many Irish immigrants in country Victoria found employment as road and bridge repair contractors, supplying essential labour for the construction and maintenance of transport routes that connected goldfields, farming districts, and emerging townships, often working under government tenders or local road boards. Their work was critical to colonial expansion, enabling the movement of wool, agricultural produce, and people across rural districts, while also providing Irish families with one of the few reliable pathways to economic stability in the decades following the gold rushes.
- ²⁸ *Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 29 September 1864; *Kyneton Guardian*, Friday 16 December 1864; *Kyneton Observer*, Tuesday 7 March 1865; and *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 22 March 1865
- ²⁹ Jones, J. H. (c1861). Photograph - Kyneton, High Street from Melbourne end. On the right is the Royal Oak Hotel and the Kyneton Loan & Discount Banking Company. The two-storey building on the left is the Crown Hotel. Public domain. State Library of Victoria.
- ³⁰ *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 7 April 1866; and *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 14 April 1866
- ³¹ *Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 21 September 1871; *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 23 September 1871; *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 7 June 1873; *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 19 August 1874; *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 29 August 1874; *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 29 August 1874; and *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 30 October 1875
- ³² Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. (n.d.). Langley, County of Dalhousie / photo-lithographed at the Department of Lands and Survey Melbourne by J. Noone. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232036869/view>
- ³³ Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. (n.d.). Baynton, County of Dalhousie / photo-lithographed at the Department of Lands and Survey Melbourne by J. Noone. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232035825/view>
- ³⁴ Ballantyne, J. (1880). *Hutchinson's Handbook of Victoria: Our Colony in 1880, International Exhibition 1880, Visitors' Guide to Melbourne, Pictorial & Descriptive*, M. L. Hutchinson, Glasgow Book Warehouse, 15 Collins Street West, Melbourne. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/>
- ³⁵ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 21 March 1877
- ³⁶ Meitheal is the Irish word for a work team and denotes the co-operative labour system where groups of neighbours help each other with farming work, such as harvesting crops.
- ³⁷ *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 22 April 1876
- ³⁸ *Advocate (Melbourne)*, Saturday 28 August 1875
- ³⁹ O'Farrell, P. (2000). *The Irish in Australia*. University NSW Press, Sydney.
- ⁴⁰ Hogan, J. F. (1887). *The Irish in Australia*. Ward & Downey, 12 York Street, Covent Garden, London. James Francis Hogan (1855–1924) was an Irish-born writer, journalist, and scholar who migrated to Australia in 1856, worked as a Catholic editor in Melbourne, and later returned to Britain, where he served as the Member of Parliament for Mid Tipperary from 1893 to 1900.
- ⁴¹ *Kyneton Observer*, Tuesday 19 March 1867
- ⁴² *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 24 November 1877
- ⁴³ *Melbourne Herald*, Saturday 18 March 1916
- ⁴⁴ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 27 August 1873; and *The Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 24 June 1875
- ⁴⁵ *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 30 July 1881. Hutcheson & Walker were local manufacturers of farm machinery.
- ⁴⁶ *Melbourne Advocate*, Saturday 5 March 1870 - *The Christian Brothers*
- ⁴⁷ Catechism refers to a summary or manual of religious doctrine, typically in the form of questions and answers, used for teaching in the Catholic Church.
- ⁴⁸ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 18 September 1867
- ⁴⁹ Jones, J. H. (c1861). Photograph - Kyneton, Piper Street Kyneton with the Harp of Erin Hotel. Public domain. State Library of Victoria.
- ⁵⁰ In the late 1700s, many Irish migrated to England seeking labouring work in an attempt to escape economic hardship and rural poverty. Liverpool and Bristol, which County Somerset just to the south, were common destinations. Many men also enlisted in the British Army and fought in the Napoleonic Wars. The Ryall surname is quite common in Ireland, particularly in Counties Tipperary and Cork. Irish Ryalls begin to appear from the late 1700s in Catholic parish registers and military records in County Somerset, particularly in the towns of Taunton, Bridgewater, Yeovil, and Bath primarily working as farm labourers and domestic servants.
- ⁵¹ Bick, *op. cit.*
- ⁵² Bongiorno, F. (1992). Land, Labour and Politics: Victoria, 1860–1890, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 94, pp. 84–101.
- ⁵³ *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 22 June 1878
- ⁵⁴ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 12 March 1873; and *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 1 May 1875
- ⁵⁵ *Riverine Herald*, Thursday 26 August 1875
- ⁵⁶ *Riverine Herald*, Wednesday 2 October 1878
- ⁵⁷ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 16 December 1878

⁵⁸ *Argus*, Saturday 16 October 1926

⁵⁹ *Balboora* at 1472 Baynton Road, Pastoria, was on the market in 2025 for \$9,000,000 as a *highly productive livestock grazing operation*.

⁶⁰ North Central Catchment Management Authority. Available at: https://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/media/documents/kyneton_woodlands_map.pdf

⁶¹ *Australia Felix* was the name coined by explorer Thomas Mitchell in 1836 to describe the exceptionally fertile, grassy, and well-watered pastoral country of western and central Victoria that he viewed as a fortunate land.

DRAFT

Chapter 4

The Northern Plains & Riverina 1878 – 1901

During the 1870s, many Irish immigrant families living as subsistence farmers in the Macedon Ranges looked to the Northern Plains district of Victoria for further opportunities. In the 1890s, some of these families ventured even further north to the Riverina area of New South Wales.¹ The O'Connors were one of these families, with Patrick and Margaret, along with their adult children William (and his wife Caroline Royal), James, Margaret (and her husband George Royal), and Catherine (**below**), each securing 320-acre selections in 1877 on the Terrick Terrick plains, the same plains crossed by the intrepid in-land explorers Robert O'Hara Burke and William Wills and their camel train, just 17 years earlier.²

The Irish community at Terrick Terrick East included many who had previously lived in the Macedon Ranges, among them a hotelier named Burns from County Clare, as well as families such as the Lynches of Clare, Leahys of Limerick, Lyons of Wicklow, Martins of Fermanagh, McGraths, Monahans, and O'Gormans of Tipperary, McIntyres of Offaly, Mullens and O'Neills of Armagh, Walshes of Galway, Reillys of Mayo, and Powers of Waterford.



**Recent
photograph of
the land farmed
by Catherine
O'Connor at
Terrick Terrick
East.**

Chapter 4 – The Northern Plains and Riverina 1878 – 1901 begins with images of William,

Caroline, and James O'Connor, and

The chapter then takes a deep dive

East, followed by six or so years at

six years they lived on a selection

An 1880 map highlighting Kyneton, Terrick Terrick East, Echuca, Cobram and Jerilderie.



Faces of Yesteryear

Between 1860 and 1880, advances

cheaper, quicker, and far more acc

of issuing *cartes de visite*, or visiting

William, Caroline, and James O'Co

entered the renowned Kyneton stu

sets of visiting cards (**next page**).⁴ T

notoriety in 1870 when he photogr

bushranger was held in the Kyneton lock-up. During the same period he took the O'Connor

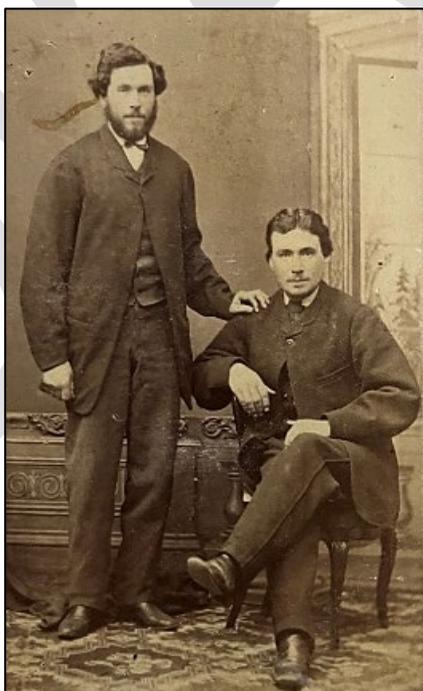
photographs, he also produced visiting cards for Ned's younger brother, Dan Kelly.



William O'Connor.



Caroline O'Connor.



**William (standing)
and James O'Connor.**

The Journey North

The 120-kilometre journey from [redacted] undertaking, one the O'Connors [redacted] 1877–78. By travelling in compar [redacted] to transport as much of their farm [redacted] and water supplies, clothing, beo [redacted] tools, seed grain, ploughs, scythe [redacted] tethered to the drays, chickens w [redacted] probably driven alongside the sl [redacted]

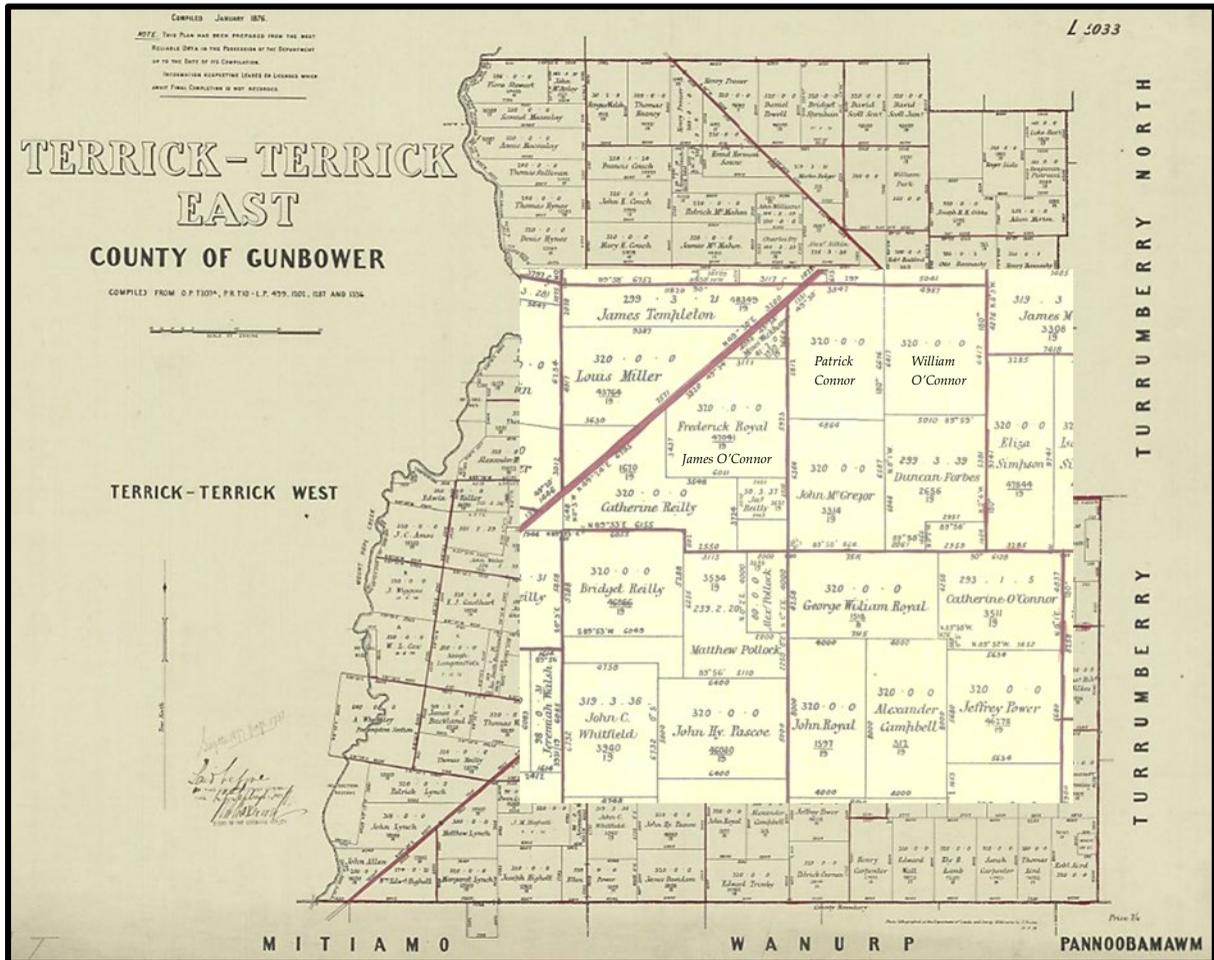


The picture above presents a scene [redacted] Terrick East.

William and Caroline O'Connor [redacted] old, Bridget. William's pregnant [redacted] Margaret at her breast. Caroline, [redacted] Margaret travelled perched amo [redacted] the men walked, driving the bul [redacted] best track. Their caravan would [redacted] established roads, notably crossi [redacted] and stretches of the gold-fields o [redacted] plains of Terrick Terrick East. Tr [redacted] weather and track conditions. Th [redacted] cooking and using tarpaulins or [redacted] rain. The most significant risk w [redacted] Campaspe River, which snaked from Kyneton to Echuca, were damaged. Upon reaching

Terrick Terrick East, they would have initially lived in canvas tents before setting out to make their respective blocks family and farm-ready.

Terrick Terrick East



The Terrick Terrick East selections of Patrick, William, James, Catherine, and Margaret (Royal).

The O'Connors took up their selections at Terrick Terrick East (above) at a very challenging time.⁵ Low winter rainfall in 1878 and 1879 brought crop failure and stock losses across the area, with many shallow dams and wells failing on the open sand plains. The following excerpts from *The Riverine Herald*, published in March 1879, reveal the hardships faced by selectors:

Terrick Terrick (From our own correspondent) ... The weather is beautifully cool, but we badly want rain. In about another week, if it does not rain, the water will be completely dried up here, and the greater part of selectors will then have to go from eight to ten miles for every drop of water they require. No wonder the "cockies" are turning insolvent in all directions.⁶

...and a few weeks later

Terrick Terrick (From our own correspondent) ... The farmers of this district met with another disappointment last week. On Monday the clouds looked as if about to discharge their contents, but they passed over, leaving only a sprinkling behind them. A good fall of rain is much needed to fill the dams, as most of the selectors are subjected to great hardships for the want of water, many of them having to drive their stock twenty miles to water...many farmers have finished sowing, some are busily employed putting the seed in and others are hard at work ploughing. Such an amount of perseverance must surely meet with its due reward. Numbers of others, however, do not intend putting in any crop this season, but will lie on their oats, doing, if possible, a little dealing in stock until things look a little brighter. Three hundred and twenty acres may be sufficient to make a living off in some localities, but I think it will be conceded that it will not do in a dry district like this. Supposing a selector, thinking to make "a rise," puts, say, one hundred and fifty acres under crop, trusting to the chance of a shower of rain now and again to bring it on, and the season fails, as the last three have done, what is he to do? He has nothing to fall back on, being swamped in the endeavour to "make a rise," he goes into debt to carry on for another year, with the result that not making the expected "rise," and being pressed for money, he cannot pay, he is either sold out or files his schedule. I do not think it is possible to find a dozen farmers in this whole district who are making a respectable living off one selection. The well-to-do men are those who, having selected themselves, have purchased other land adjoining, or where a family have obtained selections together.⁷

Although 1880 saw more regular rainfall, water scarcity remained chronic, and settlers increasingly carted water or deepened wells to cope with the unreliable seasons. Conditions fluctuated throughout 1881–1885, but the situation worsened dramatically in 1886–1888, a period recognised as one of the most severe droughts across the Northern Plains. Crops failed almost entirely, stock routes were closed for want of water, and exploding rabbit populations stripped the plains of much-needed feed. Many, including the O'Connors, abandoned their selections and looked to secure a homestead selection north of the Murray River in the Riverina area of New South Wales.⁸

1878 - Annus Horribilis

The harsh farming conditions, compounded by family deaths and internal disagreements, made 1878 an *annus horribilis*⁹ for the O'Connor and Royal families. Remarkably, little more

than a decade after the back-breaking work of establishing farms and homesteads at Langley, the O'Connors again faced the daunting task of transforming four newly acquired 320-acre blocks into productive farms and liveable settlements. Though familiar with the routine, life in their hot, dry new district bore little resemblance to the more temperate and reliable climate of Kyneton. The water and pasture, which was the lifeblood of the growing menace of the drought, was largely free of stone and other obstacles. The men quickly began cutting and splitting the wood before turning to the arduous task of planting season. With no permanent structures, the were dug for household work.

FATAL ACCIDENT occurred in the district of Kyneton, Victoria, on the 10th inst. after some hours of hard work, and falling, a young man was sent for, and found up in an insensible state. A compression fracture of the spine was hopeless from the moment he was found. He died on the 12th day, twenty hours after the accident occurred. The remains were buried in the cemetery.

Not long after the death of Michael O'Connell (O'Connor) sadly lost the life of his youngest son, Michael O'Connell, the infant daughter of Michael O'Connell and Catherine O'Connell, both families of Kyneton. The death of Michael O'Connell, another O'Connell, was a great loss to the family. The 22-year-old Michael O'Connell was buried in Kyneton in 1931, with her eulogy noting her as a doting Aunt to her nieces and nephews, the children of her eldest brother, Michael.

Not everything, though, was sweet and rosy between the O'Connors and the Royals. During the transition period between Langley and Terrick Terrick East, William sought legal action to successfully recover £22 from his father-in-law, George Royal Snr, for money owed due to the sale of eight bullocks, of which William owned two. *The Riverine Herald* reported that George was looking to sell six of his bullocks when William asked if he could include two of his bullocks in the sale to make a complete bullock team. Evidently, George agreed only to renege on giving William his cash.¹¹ No doubt, this soured their relationship and made things somewhat difficult between Caroline O'Connor and her father.

To cap off a year to forget, not just for the O'Connors and the Royals but for everyone in Terrick Terrick East, on November 19, 1878, during a heatwave, the temperature reached 110 degrees Fahrenheit (44 degrees Celsius). It was one of the hottest days the O'Connors had experienced in the Colony, prompting the Terrick Terrick East newspaper correspondent to lament:

*O! Tennent,¹² Foster, and Guinness,
Of all the drinks, I love ye best.
When the weather's hot, and the throat is dry,
When to slake their thirst, the sufferers try.
What drinks like ye? What mortal hand,
Can o'er untie the loving hand,
That lulls me to each well-known brand.¹³*

It was surely a year to drive anybody to drink! One can only imagine how the O'Connors fared in these first few years at Terrick Terrick East. Though arriving at a challenging time, they were experienced mixed farmers, had some cash from their land and improvements auctioned at Kyneton, and, with four 320-acre farms in proximity, some of the adversity was offset through collaboration across their farms. Without this advantage, it is doubtful the O'Connors would have lasted as long as they did on their Terrick Terrick East selections, a point noted in *Hutchinson's Handbook of Victoria: Our Colony in 1880*:

Selectors cleared land for cropping, but in reality, survived on little more than subsistence farming. Small acreages of wheat or oats were cultivated, a vegetable garden planted, and pigs and poultry raised along with a few head of sheep and cattle. Milking cows were kept for the sale of butter and cream. Successful selectors were those who had some financial means, were able to access other land for grazing purposes, or who depended on closely-knit communities based on religion, culture or family.¹⁴

The O'Connors were also confronted with serious difficulties beyond the demands of the farm. In 1879, little more than a year after James had taken up his leasehold, he was prosecuted in the Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria by Charles Young, a prominent Kyneton auctioneer and local politician, over an unpaid debt incurred before he departed from Kyneton. The matter was ultimately settled through the public auction of James's farming equipment, livestock, and the improvements made to his Terrick Terrick East holding. Although William O'Connor's precise involvement remains unclear, the leasehold subsequently transferred from James to his brother.¹⁵ Thereafter, the historical record falls largely silent until 1907, when James was tragically killed in a freak accident while working at Guiseley Station, about 20 kilometres northwest of Walgett (**below**).¹⁶ A New South Wales Coroner determined that he fell while walking beside the bullock team he was driving and was fatally crushed beneath a wheel, after which James O'Connor was laid to rest in the Walgett Cemetery.¹⁷

BULLOCK DRIVER KILLED.
 WALGETT, Tuesday.—James O'Connor, a bullock-driver on Guiseley Station, was last night run over by his waggon and killed.

Daily Telegraph,
Wednesday 22 May 1907.

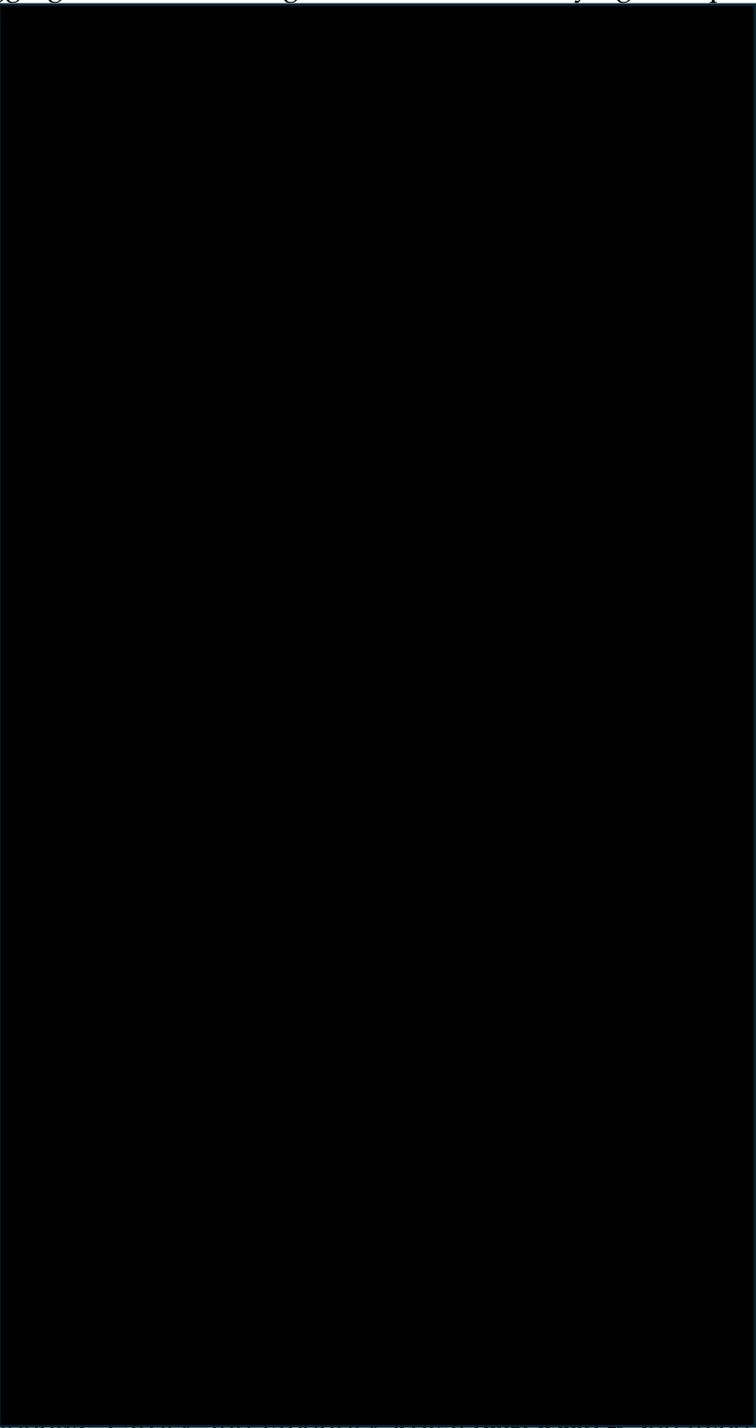
While there were some good seasons, and the 1880s wheat boom brought temporary prosperity to some, this was counterbalanced by a decline in local wool prices as a seemingly endless wool clip wound its way from western NSW on paddle steamers via the vast Darling-Murray River system to the river port of Echuca, and then to the Port of Melbourne by train.¹⁸ Farmers at Terrick Terrick East had become trapped in a boom-or-bust farming economy and an unavoidable cycle of debt. Further tough years in 1881-1882 left many farmers broke, with every edition of the *Government Gazette* and *The Riverine Herald* listing farmers, including the O'Connors, with unpaid rates and leasehold arrears. Many leaseholds were suspended or, indeed, relet, including the 71-year-old Patrick O'Connor's, which reverted to the original lessee, Luke Daffey, in 1881.^{19 20}

Despite the challenges, William O'Connor made the most of the cards he had been dealt, working long days to build a better life for himself and his family. Ideally located near a good local road, it is very likely William supplemented his farm income by labouring for

others, building fences, digging wells and sinking dams, as well as carrying farm produce with horse and bullock dra

Farewell, Terrick T

The mid-1880s saw a mass moved to Echuca, where th labouring and commercial and her husband George, a Kanyappela, respectively. Margaret and George at K leasehold or lived with her



t. Many nited t Royal d d with own

Echuca on the Murray River, circa 1870.



During 1886, both George sales and sold the improve reported in *The Riverine He*

aring le

On Tuesday, the 16th F acres, 1 rood 18 perches ranging from £4 to £7 satisfactory prices.^{23 24}

293 S, ly

In 1893, Catherine was inv involved her two young nephews, Patrick and Frederick Royal (next page). She lived at

so

Kanyappela for nearly a decade, presumably to help care for her parents, before returning to Kyneton in the 1890s to reunite with her brother Michael and his family. At Kyneton, she continued to farm sheep on a block in the Parish of Metcalfe, ten kilometres north of Kyneton and 10 kilometres west of *Balboora*, her brother Michael's farm at Pastoria.²⁶ Catherine, or Kate as she was known, died in 1931 at Victoria House, a Kyneton guesthouse run by her niece, Catherine Donaldson, bringing to a close a remarkable life. Catherine, who never married, worked the land her entire existence and embodied the pluck, guts and grit required to succeed as a pioneering woman. Her many nieces and nephews cherished her, especially the children of her brother, Michael, and sister, Margaret, all mentioned in her obituary:

*On the 30th May, at Victoria House, Kyneton, Catherine O'Connor, beloved aunt of Mary, Margaret, Catherine (Mrs. Donaldson), William, Michael and Patrick (deceased); also Frederick and Parick Royal, Vera (Mrs. R. Power), Mona (Mrs. T. Power). Angela (Mrs J. Hart), and Mary (Mrs Feegan), aged 74 years. R.I.P.*²⁷

Catherine's body was returned to Echuca, where she was buried with her parents.

VEHICULAR ACCIDENT.—On Saturday afternoon, about four o'clock, an accident took place, which, though a very painful one, might have ended far more seriously, happened near O'Rourke's Hotel. It appears from what information we could glean, that a spring-cart, with horse attached, and in which were seated a Miss O'Connor and her two nephews, the latter being sons of Mr George Royal, who resides near the Goulburn, was being driven along Packerham-street. When near the level-crossing the "belly" band of the saddle broke, and caused the horse to bolt. He turned sharply round the corner into Annesley-street, and, when in front of Hansen's blacksmith's shop, the cart collided with the railway fence, and threw the occupants out. Miss O'Connor, when picked up, appeared to be badly injured, and was conveyed to O'Rourke's hotel, and Dr Eakin's was sent for. On that gentleman arriving he found that the young lady had sustained several severe cuts and wounds on the head and face, which necessitated the insertion of about two dozen stitches. She had also sustained internal wounds in the chest. The eldest of the boys had received two or three flesh wounds on the head and face, but the other was uninjured. The cart had both shafts broken off, and the sides were considerably damaged, but the horse was not hurt in the slightest.

Catherine O'Connor receives significant facial injuries following a horse and cart accident in Echuca.

The Melbourne Advocate, Saturday 26 July 1902.

The Riverine Herald, Wednesday 16 July 1902.

DEATHS.

O'CONNOR.—Died at the residence of his son-in-law, George Royal, Kanyappela, near Echuca, on July 14, Patrick O'Connor, aged 91 years. Patrick O'Connor was born in the year 1811, on the 17th of March, in the parish of Newcastle, Limerick, Ireland, and came to Melbourne in the ship West Minister, landing on the 15th of August, 1839. R.I.P.

FUNERAL NOTICES.

THE friends of Mr. and Mrs. Royal and Miss O'Connor are respectfully invited to follow the remains of their late father, Mr. Patrick O'Connor to his last resting place the Echuca Cemetery, the funeral to leave his late residence, Kanyappela WEDNESDAY, 16th at 11 a.m. 11

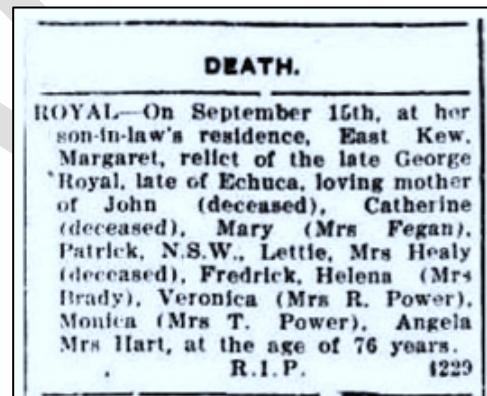
Rest in Peace, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor

Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, the patriarch and matriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*, spent their final years living with their daughter Margaret at Kanyappela. Margaret died aged 80 in 1895, while the old Irishman, Patrick, passed away at 91 in 1902 (**above**).^{28 29} They arrived when Melbourne, part of the Colony of New South Wales, was little more than dirt tracks and scattered timber buildings. They witnessed first-hand the infant colony grow into nationhood, with Patrick living long enough to see their adopted land become the Commonwealth of Australia, and Edmund Barton sworn in as the first Prime Minister.³⁰

Margaret's Sadness

Of all of Patrick and Margaret's children, it was Margaret who had experienced the most profound sadness and grief in her Australian life. She passed away in 1930, with her final resting place at Echuca Cemetery (**below**).³¹

The Riverine Herald, Tuesday
16 September 1930.



Her husband, George William Royal, suffered in his later years, dying in tragic circumstances, while five of her twelve children predeceased her, with four dying in horrific circumstances. In their first year at the Terrick Terrick East, George and Margaret lost their young girls, Margaret and Catherine. At Kanyappela, they leased a small farm, and George supplemented his farm income with farm labour, which took a disastrous turn when, not long after his arrival, he severely injured his left hand in a chaff cutter (**next page**).³² George's capacity to work declined, and in 1912, he drowned in suspicious circumstances (**next page**).³³ The sadness for Margaret continued when her daughter, Catherine, who had married Thomas Power in 1906, was accidentally shot dead in 1918! The incident, widely reported

across Victoria, was sensational because of Mr Power's community standing. The piece from *The Ararat Chronicle* captured the scene (below).³⁴ The following year, Thomas Power married his late wife's younger sister, Caroline. The unfortunate Catherine lies at rest with her grandparents, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, and her namesake, her Aunt Catherine, at Echuca. To cap off these devastating events, Margaret's eldest son, John, who had spent some time as a mining engineer in Western Australia, lost his left hand in almost identical circumstances to his father. Sadly, John's hand was so severely injured that he died from blood loss (below).³⁵

<p>SERIOUS ACCIDENT AT KANYAPELLA.</p> <p>Yesterday morning a man named George William Royal, in the employ of Mr Robert Chambers, farmer of Kanyapella, met with a very serious accident, by which he lost the fingers of his left hand. He was engaged in feeding the chaff-cutting machine, when, by some means his hand got drawn by the rollers under the knives, when, in an instant the whole of the fingers of the left hand, close to the palm and the thumb from the first joint were cut off. So soon as Mr Chambers became aware of the accident he, with great promptitude tied a ligature across the wrist, and at once arrested the flow of blood. He then harnessed up the horse, and brought the unfortunate man to Echuca, a distance of over nine miles, arriving here within an hour, and took him to Mr Geo. Miller's Farmers' Arms Hotel. Dr Eakins was at once sent for, and, in conjunction with Dr Osborne, put the patient under chloroform. In this state he remained from 11 o'clock until 1 o'clock, during which time they amputated the injured limb, taking away the fingers completely. Up to a late hour last night the patient was progressing as favorably as could be expected. Mr Royal is well known and respected in the district, where he has been a resident for about 11 years; he is a married man, having a family of six children. His brother is a well known farmer, residing at Kanyapella.</p>	<p>FATALITIES AND ACCIDENTS.</p> <p>DROWNED IN A DAM. Koondrook, 12th February.</p> <p>George Royal, aged about 60 years, was found drowned in a dam on Gunbower Creek yesterday by a girl named Adeline Smith. Deceased had been about the district for some years working on a threshing machine. A bottle of brandy was discovered on the bank of the dam, and deceased's dog was keeping watch. Mr. G. Vane, J.P., conducted an inquiry, and recorded a verdict of death by drowning. The remains were interred in the local cemetery to-day.</p>
<p>FARMER'S WIFE SHOT.</p> <p>Mrs. Power, wife of Mr. T. M. Power, J.P., farmer, of Cornelia Creek, Kyabram, was accidentally shot dead last Wednesday afternoon. Mrs. Power and her husband were having afternoon tea about 4 o'clock. She complained that crows were worrying her young turkeys. Mr. Power got his gun and went out. His wife said she thought one of the turkeys had flown into the windmill tank. Mr. Power climbed to the tank, and while there heard a shot, followed by a moan. On scrambling down off the tank he found his wife lying dead alongside the dog kennel; she had been shot under the arm. It is surmised that she picked up the gun, and with it in her possession, was tying up the dog when the gun went off. Mrs. Power was about 35 years of age. She leaves no family.</p>	<p>OBITUARY.</p> <p>Mr John Royal.</p> <p>The death is reported from Echuca of Mr John Royal, formerly of Kyabram. During the last three years deceased had resided at Echuca East, whence he operated a chaff-cutting plant. On Tuesday last he was engaged cutting chaff at Mr H. L. Baillieu's property, Torumbarry, when his left hand was severely mangled, having been caught in the cutting section of the machinery. He was taken to the Echuca Hospital. There was a great loss of blood. An operation was performed, but deceased did not regain consciousness. Deceased, who was 47 years of age, leaves a widow and four children. Mrs Royal was a daughter of Mrs Ryan, of Lancaster. Deceased lived some years in Kyabram, and his death will be regretted by a large circle of friends. The funeral took place at Kyabram cemetery yesterday afternoon. The cortege was a lengthy one. A number of wreaths were placed upon the coffin.</p>

The Riverine Herald,
Wednesday 13 October 1886.

Bendigo Advertiser, Tuesday
13 February 1912.

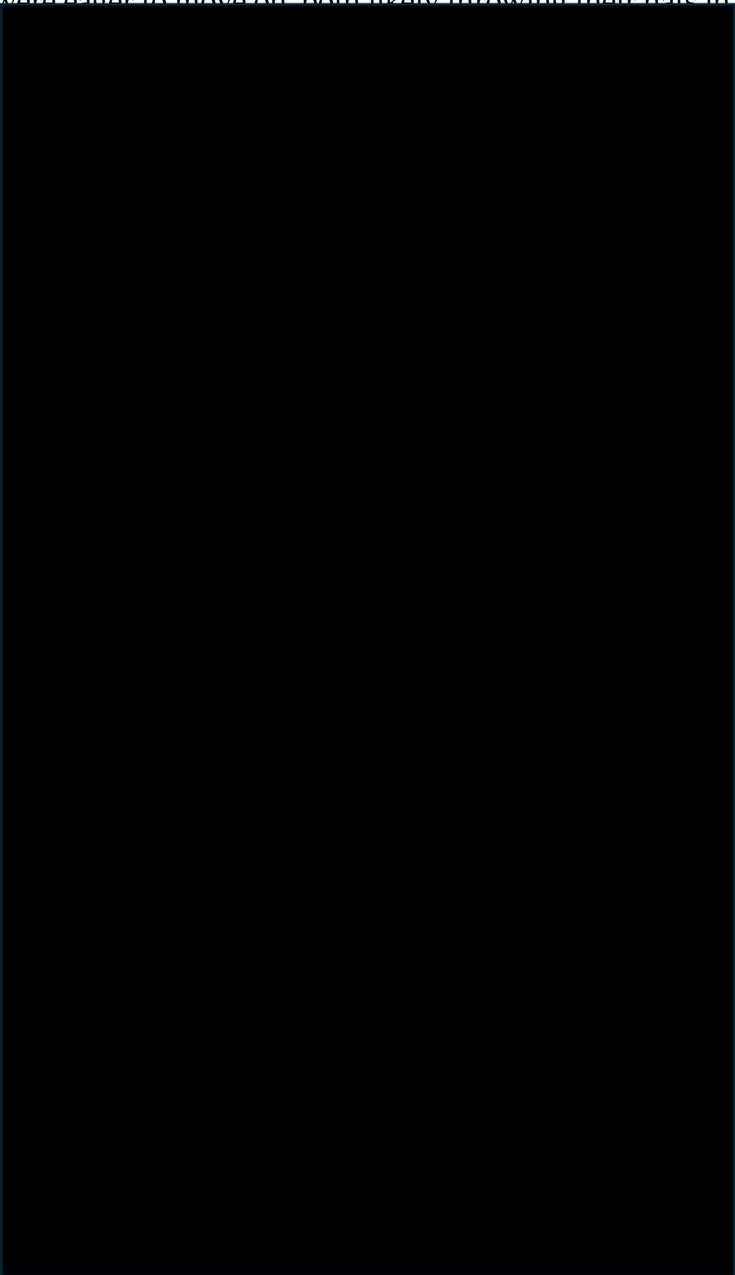
Ararat Chronicle, Tuesday 17
September 1918.

Kyabram Free Press, Friday
27 March 1925.

William and Caroline Pack Their Bags

By the mid-1880s, William and Caroline O'Connor had probably had enough of Terrick Terrick East. They were eager to move on, both likely throwing their hats in the ring for land selections near Echuca. In 1886, William and Caroline O'Connor made on their leasehold, including

The River
25 July



MARCH, 1887.
Terricks East.
and Co. are favored
from Mr. William
e, by public auction
on Saturday, 19th
valuable farm —
er, rich agricultural
land, being the
ctions of F. Royal
Wickham, in the
Terricks East.
which is surrounded by
D. Hopper, John
eld, A. Miller, M.
is most favorably
road. The improve-
tial, comprising an
four rooms, large
eral miles of post and
roperty is subdivided
paddocks, and 25
d.
n Lease.
00 cash, balance as
1444

The buyer was James [redacted] 38 Their memories of Terrick Terrick East while their farming enterprise did not cease as where William and Caroline O'Connor children, Bridget (1876) and Mary (1880), George (1882), Patrick (1884) The O'Connors were fortunate to have both the Terrick Terrick East School, which opened in 1876 with 58 children, and St Luke's Catholic Church, built in 1874 and served by priests from St Mary's

Echuca, operating very near their homestead.³⁹ Both the school and the church not only met the young families' educational and spiritual needs, but they also offered a vital opportunity for the Terricks' community to gather. One of the most celebrated gatherings, though, was the annual Terrick Terrick East horse race meeting, where in 1887 William served as the Clerk of the Course and returned from Echuca in 1888 to perform the same role (below).⁴⁰

<p>Racing</p> <p>TERRICKS EAST RACING CLUB.</p> <p>WEDNESDAY, 28th MARCH, 1888.</p> <p>ANNUAL MEETING.</p> <p>President : Topham Forge, Esq. Judge : J. Ferguson, Esq. Starter : Mr P. Murphy. Clerk of Scales : Mr T. A. McIntyre. Clerk of Course : Mr W. O'Connor. Handicapper : Mr G. Vowles.</p> <p>Stewards—Messrs. Pratt, Hynes Monahan, Perrignon, Burns, Lyons, Hornell, Rookford, Crowe, Carey, and Shanahan.</p> <p>PROGRAMME.</p> <p>1. TRIAL STAKES—Of 8 sovs, 1½ miles, weight for age. For all horses that have not won an advertised race exceeding 8 sovs. Entrance, 8s.</p> <p>2. TERRICKS EAST HANDICAP—Of 20 sovs, with a sweep of 7s 6d each to the second horse. One mile and a half. Nomination, 1 sov.</p> <p>3. HANDICAP TROT—Of 7 sovs., with a sweep of 5s to the second horse. Nomination, 7s. Three miles. Weight 11 stone. Ponies under 14 hands, 9 stone.</p> <p>4. HANDICAP HURDLES—Of 15 sovs., with a sweepstakes of 8s to the second horse. Two miles. Nomination, 15s.</p>	<p>5. TWO YEAR OLD STAKES—Of 7 sovs. Six furlongs, weight 8st 7lb. Nomination, 7s.</p> <p>6. MAIDEN TROT—Of 4 guineas, the gift of Pratt Bros. For all mares that have never won public money, and which have been served by the Trotting Stallion "John Brown." Distance 2 miles. Nomination, 4s 6d.</p> <p>7. SELLING RACE—Of 6 sovs., 1 mile. Winner to be sold for 10 sovs., any surplus to go to the race fund. Weight not less than 8 stone. Nomination 6s. Post entry.</p> <p>V.R.C. Rules strictly adhered to.</p> <p>The decision of the stewards in all cases to be final. Nominations for Terricks East Handicap, Handicap Hurdles and Handicap Trot, with names, ages, pedigree, colors and past performances, to be lodged with the secretary, at Terricks East not later than 8 p.m. Monday, 19th March. Entries for Trial Stakes, Maiden Trot, and Two-year old Stakes not later than 11 a.m., morning of the races. Protests to be lodged with the Secretary within a quarter of an hour of each race, accompanied by 1 sov., same to be forfeited if declared frivolous. First race to start at 12.30 p.m. Weights to appear in the <i>Argus</i> 22nd March and <i>Riverine Herald</i> 24th March. All sweepstakes payable at scale.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">P. M. MONAHAN, Hon Sec.</p> <p>1888</p>
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The Riverine Herald, Saturday 17 March 1888.

At Echuca East, William and Caroline had four more children, Michael (1888), Margaret (1892), Catherine (1894), and Thomas (1896). Sadly, they lost both girls in July 1894, who remarkably, were the same ages and bore the same Christian names as those lost by William's sister, Margaret, in 1878! Margaret Mary and Catherine Ellen were buried in the same plot, at seemingly the same time, which suggests they passed away in tragic circumstances, either by illness or accident.⁴¹ The precise details of their deaths are not in the historical record.

All of the *Balboora O'Connors* buried at the Echuca Cemetery are together in the same section.⁴²

The Great Land Rush

Corowa Free Press, Friday 10
April 1896.

Pastoral Times, Saturday 14
August 1897.

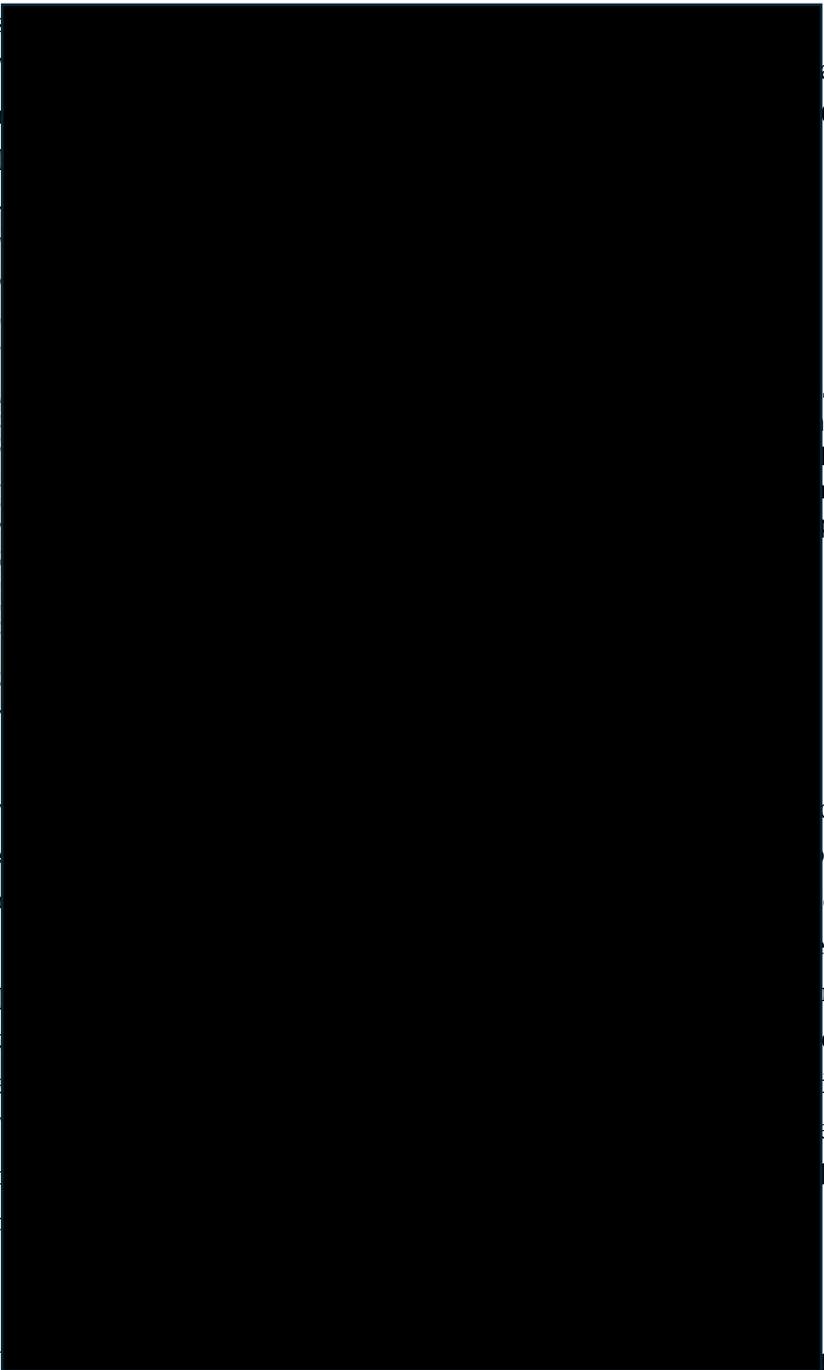
The Riverine Herald, Friday 6
December 1895.

Daily Telegraph, Friday 11
September 1896.



The Crown Lands Acts of 1895 precipitated a great land rush as people, especially farmers living south of the Murray, applied with great zeal for selections in the Riverina of New South Wales (above).^{43 44} The Government opened millions of acres for selection, and because demand far outstripped supply, ballots and priority lists, jubilation and heartache, became the norm. With farmers required to make individual applications, either in person or through an agent, and be present on the day of the ballot, large crowds formed outside land offices, with would-be selectors camping for days to secure a chance at winning a block. The well-watered, fertile plains surrounding towns like Jerilderie, Deniliquin, Finley, Corowa, and Narrandera were particularly popular. Many of the selectors were the children of Irish immigrants who migrated north from Victoria in search of better opportunities. They brought valuable farming experience and contributed to the growth of Catholic communities, establishing schools, churches, and strong rural networks in places such as Jerilderie and Finley.

This frenetic period of land selection laid the foundation for the Riverina's rise as one of Australia's most... obligations at Echuca East, W... ary, and James, would h... George and Margaret Royal



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...t
...parish.

In 1896, the Go... or Homestead Selection (**above** Booroobanilly, immediately so... onnor, who was recorded a... re not permitted to re... m had journeyed hund... o witness William's name... with his success, one of William'... e, bemoaning to all and sund... be unsuccessful at

Jerilderie

In the mid-1890... the Billabong Creek, serving a rapidly growing farming community on newly opened selections, including William O'Connor's block at Booroobanilly.⁴⁷ It was a time described as:

...the most progressive and busy period of Jerilderie's history. The annual show was a big thing in those days and extending over three days in duration. The Yanko and Jerilderie and St Patrick's Race Clubs were founded and flourished. The Town Bank and Caledonian Society were born, and active associations like the Farmers and Settlers' body came into being. The rash of settlers and the busy, populous stations made Jerilderie a hive of activity.⁴⁸

The Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday 17 November 1897.

JERILDERIE, Tuesday.
A representative meeting of residents of the district was held in the Mechanics' Institute here on Saturday night. Mr. William O'Connor, of Boorobanilly, was voted to the chair and briefly stated the object of the meeting, which was to discuss the best means of urging on the Lands Department to immediately open a direct route along the surveyed road, a distance of five miles, from Jerilderie to Cores South, so as to enable farmers to reach the town for water for themselves and stock and also to give access to the railway. It was resolved that a letter be forwarded from the farmers of the South Cores district to the department asking that immediate steps be taken to have the road declared open for traffic.
The weather is hot, the thermometer registering over 100° the last two days.

At Jerildie, William became heavily involved in local political and farming matters (above).⁴⁹ He was a founding member and secretary of the vice-president of the Jerilderie District Farmers' Union, and secretary of the Jerilderie Farmers and Settlers' Association (below).⁵⁰ At a time when the Department of Lands delegated land management decisions to local Land Boards and Councils, William rallied farmers to ensure they had a voice in decisions affecting their farming livelihoods, including water rights, access roads, railways, and homestead selection rents. His deep involvement in advocating for the rights of Jerilderie farmers and settlers led to his election to represent them at state-level meetings.⁵¹

Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser, Friday 4 May 1900.

Farmers & Settlers' Association
JERILDERIE BRANCH.
THE Monthly Meeting of the Committee of the above will be held in the Jerilderie Mechanics' Institute on SATURDAY, 12th MARCH, at 3 p.m.
By order of the President.
WM. O'CONNOR,
Secretary.

meetings, publishing pamphlets, lobbying politicians, and mobilising popular support for the union. William O'Connor, clearly a committed Federalist, played a leading role in establishing the Jerilderie Federation League (**previous page**), as these organisations encouraged farmers, townspeople, merchants, labourers, and civic leaders alike to embrace Federation as a pathway to economic unity, stronger defence, and a shared national identity.^{53 54}

The last of William and Caroline's 12 children, Edward Joseph O'Connor, was born in April 1899 at Jerilderie and baptised a month later in Narrandera. While Edward lived and died as William and Caroline's son, he was actually the child of their daughter Mary.^{55 56} Mary would marry Bernard Gannon in Narrandera in 1901, and the couple moved to Hawthorne, Victoria. William and Caroline's eldest, Bridget, married John Hennessy, also at Narrandera.⁵⁷ Bridget passed away in Narrandera in 1944, with her obituary noting that she had come to the Narrandera district from Jerilderie.⁵⁸

**Mark Whitby's
Wheelwright,
Blacksmith and Coach
Factory, Jerilderie,
1896.**



Conclusion

In 1901, fresh from his successful Federation campaign, William O'Connor once again turned to the Homestead Selection system in search of prospects beyond Jerilderie. With his eldest sons, James, John, and George, now young men and eager to secure futures of their own, they too looked to select land. By August, their course was set when William and George successfully secured adjoining selections in the Parish of Collie, County of Ewenmar, some 60 kilometres northwest of Dubbo.

The move to Collie marked the close of William and Caroline's twenty-two years of farming across the Northern Plains of Victoria and the Riverina of New South Wales, a period defined by both hardship and achievement. Through faith, resilience, determination, and steadfast parenting, they equipped their children, Bridget, Mary, James, John, George, Patrick, Frederick, Michael, Thomas, and Edward with the skills and character needed to forge independent lives. William continued his political and community advocacy until about 1903, when his name faded from the local press, leaving Jerilderie as a respected and influential citizen whose efforts had made a lasting contribution to the community.

Notes

¹ O'Farrell, P. (2000). *The Irish in Australia*. UNSW Press, Sydney.

² The Burke and Wills expedition (1860–1861) was an ambitious Victorian government funded journey led by Robert O'Hara Burke to cross Australia from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria, aiming to be the first to do so. Although the party successfully reached the northern coast, poor leadership, inadequate planning, and tragic misjudgements led to the deaths of Burke, Wills, and several others on the return journey.

³ The *Visiting Card* was a small photographic print (about 6 x 9 centimetres) mounted on card. It functioned like a calling card to announce a visit, express condolences, or congratulate, all essential rituals of a polite society. The standard order was a dozen cards.

⁴ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. William O'Connor, Caroline O'Connor, and William and James O'Connor.

⁵ Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. (n.d.). Terrick Terrick East, County of Gunbower / photo-lithographed at the Department of Lands and Survey Melbourne by J. Noone. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232056167/view>

⁶ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 3 March 1879

⁷ *Riverine Herald*, Thursday 27 March 1879

⁸ Powell, J.M. (1970). *The Public Lands of Australia Felix: Settlement and Land Appraisal in Victoria 1834–91*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/aehr.112br4>

⁹ A year of disaster or misfortune

¹⁰ *Riverine Herald*, Tuesday 26 February 1878

¹¹ *Riverine Herald*, Friday 29 November 1878

¹² Scottish beer

¹³ *Kerang Times and Swan Hill Gazette*, Friday 22 November 1878

¹⁴ Ballantyne, J. (1880). *Hutchinson's Handbook of Victoria: Our Colony in 1880, International Exhibition 1880, Visitors' Guide to Melbourne, Pictorial & Descriptive*, M. L. Hutchinson, Glasgow Book Warehouse, 15 Collins Street West, Melbourne.

¹⁵ *Bendigo Advertiser*, Saturday 28 June 1879

¹⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 22 May 1907

¹⁷ Find a Grave. (n.d.). Walgett Cemetery. Available at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/230069456/james-o-connor> The burial details noted that James was the son of Patrick and Margaret O'Connor.

¹⁸ When wool from New South Wales arrived by paddle steamer at the river port of Echuca, it was unloaded at the great timber wharf, stored briefly in large wool sheds, and then transferred directly onto the Echuca–Melbourne railway line, which had been built to speed the movement of river-borne cargo to the coast. From there the bales travelled swiftly to Melbourne's port, where they were graded, pressed, warehoused and loaded onto international sailing ships and later steamships bound for London, Liverpool, Antwerp and other European markets, making Echuca the crucial link between the pastoral interior of the Murray–Darling Basin and the global wool trade.

¹⁹ *Riverine Herald*, Thursday 1 December 1881

²⁰ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 14 October 1878; *Riverine Herald*, Tuesday 12 November 1878; and *Kerang Times and Swan Hill Gazette*, Tuesday 14 February 1882

²¹ The township of Echuca on the River Murray 1869 [picture]. Public domain. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/443/nla.obj-133212099>

²² *Riverine Herald*, Fri 31 May 1889. An advertisement notes Catherine O'Connor seeking compensation for a steer that wandered into her paddock at Kanyapella.

²³ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 22 February 1886

²⁴ Roods (1 rood = ¼ acre), Perches (1 perch = 1/40 of a rood = 1/160 of an acre), Steer (male cow that has been castrated before reaching sexual maturity), Heifer (young female cow that has not yet had a calf), Milch cow (a cow that is currently producing milk), and Springer (pregnant cow that is close to calving).

²⁵ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 4 September 1893

²⁶ *Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 28 October 1897; and *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 28 April 1917

- ²⁷ *Melbourne Age*, Tuesday 2 June 1931
- ²⁸ *Melbourne Advocate*, Saturday 26 July 1902; and *Riverine Herald*, Wednesday 16 July 1902
- ²⁹ There is an error in the death notice. The Westminster did not land in August 1839, it left England in August 1839.
- ³⁰ Australian Federation refers to the process by which the six British colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania united to form the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901.
- ³¹ *Riverine Herald*, Tuesday 16 September 1930
- ³² *Riverine Herald*, Wednesday 13 October 1886
- ³³ *Bendigo Advertiser*, Tuesday 13 February 1912
- ³⁴ *Ararat Chronicle*, Tuesday 17 September 1918
- ³⁵ *Kyabram Free Press*, Friday 27 March 1925
- ³⁶ *Riverine Herald*, Friday 12 August 1892
- ³⁷ *Riverine Herald*, Friday 12 August 1892
- ³⁸ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 25 July 1887
- ³⁹ Ballinger, R., with Andrew Ward & Associates & TBA Planners. (1999). *Loddon Shire Heritage Study: Stage 1, Thematic Environmental History*. Loddon Shire Council. Available at: <https://www.loddon.vic.gov.au/>
- ⁴⁰ *Riverine Herald*, Saturday 17 March 1888
- ⁴¹ Find a Grave. (n.d.). Echuca Cemetery. Available at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167344635/margaret-mary-oconnor>
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167344634/catherine-ellen-oconnor>
- ⁴² Echuca Cemetery, Catholic Portion, B Section 15.
- ⁴³ The Acts aimed to break up large pastoral estates and support genuine small-scale farmers. It did this by introducing conditional leases and purchases, stricter residency and improvement requirements, homestead and grazing blocks, and the creation of *Local Land Boards*.
- ⁴⁴ *Corowa Free Press*, Friday 10 April 1896; *Pastoral Times*, Saturday 14 August 1897; *Riverine Herald*, Friday 6 December 1895; and *Daily Telegraph*, Friday 11 September 1896.
- ⁴⁵ Clark, C.M.H. (1978). *A History of Australia. Vol. 4: The Earth Abideth For Ever, 1851–1888*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- ⁴⁶ *Nathalia Herald*, Friday 26 June 1896
- ⁴⁷ New South Wales. Bureau of Statistics 1897, *New South Wales Statistical Register, 1897*, Government Printer, Sydney. Available at : https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/_/ISfBvRHon8gC?hl=en&qbpv=1
- ⁴⁸ Lundy, H.C. (1956). *Jerilderie: 100 Years*, Jerilderie Shire Council, Jerilderie. Available at: https://nla.gov.au/nla_obj-3396799730/view
- ⁴⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 17 November 1897
- ⁵⁰ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 4 May 1900
- ⁵¹ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 13 April 1900; *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 2 Mar 1900; *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 17 November 1897; *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 10 March 1889; *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 14 September 1900; and *Berrigan Advocate*, Friday 26 October 1900.
- ⁵² The Corowa Conference of 1893, attended by delegates from community groups, political organisations, and Federation Leagues across New South Wales and Victoria, met to revive the stalled movement for uniting the Australian colonies. At the conference, Dr John Quick proposed that the people directly elect delegates to a new constitutional convention and vote on the resulting draft constitution—an idea that became known as the “Corowa Plan” and ultimately reshaped the path to Federation.
- ⁵³ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 26 May 1899
- ⁵⁴ Hirst, J. (2000). *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/sentimentalnatio0000hirs/page/n7/mode/2up>
- ⁵⁵ All family documentation such as obituaries and World War I Attestation Papers note that Edward Joseph O'Connor was the son of William and Caroline O'Connor.
- ⁵⁶ Ancestry.com. Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Birth record for Edward O'Connor lists no father and Mary O'Connor as his mother.
- ⁵⁷ *Catholic Press*, Saturday 3 November 1900
- ⁵⁸ *Daily Advertiser Wagga Wagga*, Friday 5 May 1944

Chapter 5

Balboora, Collie

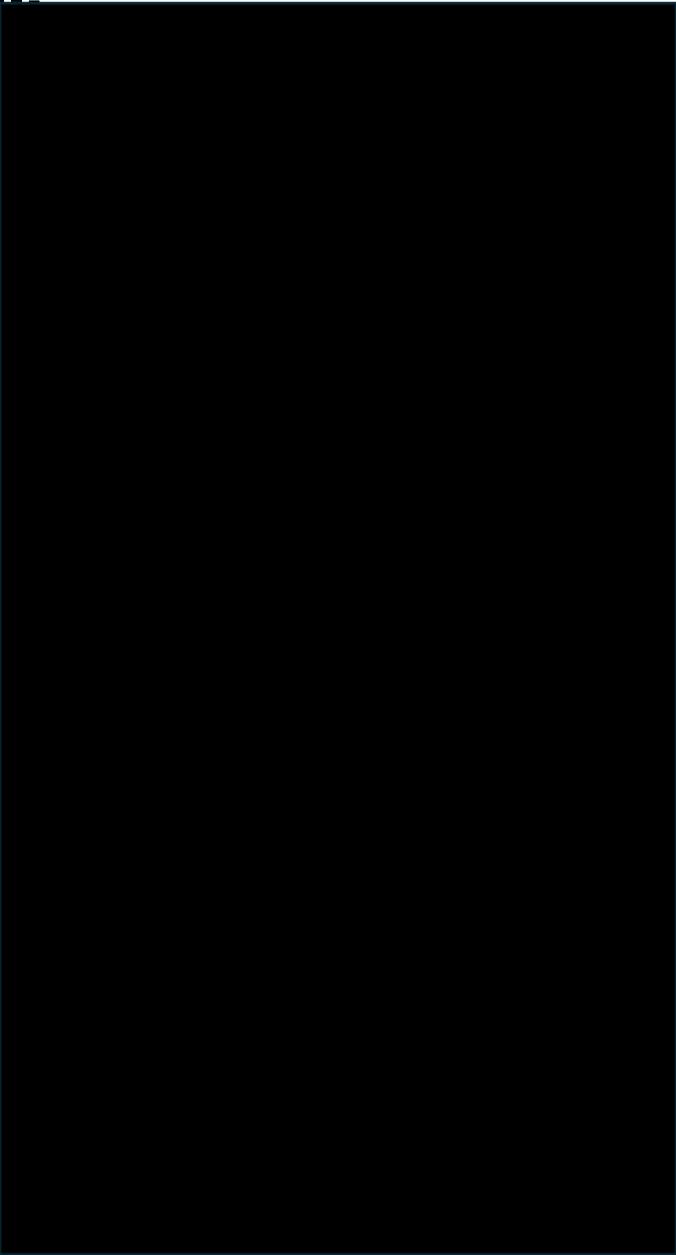
At the dawn of the twentieth century, John and George, began looking beyond the district across western New South Wales at Collie, 60 kilometres north of the O'Connors were once more ex-

Chapter 5 – Balboora, Collie – 1901
the district, from the demands of the farmers and valued members of the community by the profound loss of the Gallipoli Front marked a devastating blow to the district. George lost during hostilities, the O'Connors moved to *Balboora* and *Lisfarran*.

Balboora and Lisfarran

In February 1901, William and Caroline O'Connors made Selections in the Parish of Collie, near Rankmore.¹ The dashed area of land was occupied by William and George O'Connors and the *Dubbo Dispatch* outlined the details.

William and Caroline O'Connors had been relocating and establishing a new home in 1873. Their farming journey had taken them from New South Wales, including leasehold at Booroobanilly, and now Collie.



John and George, began looking beyond the district across western New South Wales at Collie, 60 kilometres north of the O'Connors were once more ex-

decades in the district, from the demands of the farmers and valued members of the community by the profound loss of the Gallipoli Front marked a devastating blow to the district. George lost during hostilities, the O'Connors moved to *Balboora* and *Lisfarran*.

ad the surname of the *Evening Herald* of Rankmore in 1873. New

APPLICATION FOR LAND AT DUBBO.

DUBBO, Friday.

The following applications were lodged at the Dubbo Lands Office yesterday:— P. O'Keefe, conditional purchase 80 acres, conditional lease 240 acres, county Lincoln, parish Terramungahine; E. G. Grogan, conditional lease 81 acres, county Narromine, parish Mingelo; G. F. Nott, settlement lease 5520 acres, county Lincoln, parish Adelyne. The following homestead selections were applied for:— W. A. Jacobsen 82 acres, W. S. Crouch 82 acres, J. Lewis 82 acres, all in county of Narromine, parish Wentworth, G. W. O'Connor, 45 acres, G. W. Rankmore 445 acres, C. A. Rankmore (two applications) 445 acres and 495 acres, W. O'Connor 495 acres, all county of Ewenmar, parish Collie.

DUBBO LAND BOARD.

The sittings of the Dubbo Land Board were resumed on Tuesday, and continued on Wednesday and Thursday. The members present were the Chairman (Mr. W. C. Cardew), and Messrs. James Samuels and W. Leslie.

HOMESTEAD SELECTIONS.

John Thompson, 82 acres, parish of Wentworth, county of Narromine; disallowed, deposit to be refunded.

William O'Connor, 425 acres, parish of Collie, county of Ewenmar. C. A. Rankmore same block. O'Connor was successful in the ballot, and subsequently the Board confirmed the area to him.

George William O'Connor, 445 acres, parish of Collie, county of Ewenmar. G. W. Rankmore applied for same block. O'Connor won the ballot, and the land was afterwards confirmed to him.

William Alfred Jacobson, 82 acres, parish of Wentworth, county of Narromine; confirmed.

Michael Edward Sharkey, 95 acres, parish of Mingelo, county of Lincoln; confirmed, Crown improvements, £3 17s 6d.

Walter Handley, 251½ acres, parish of Dubbo, county of Gordon; confirmed.

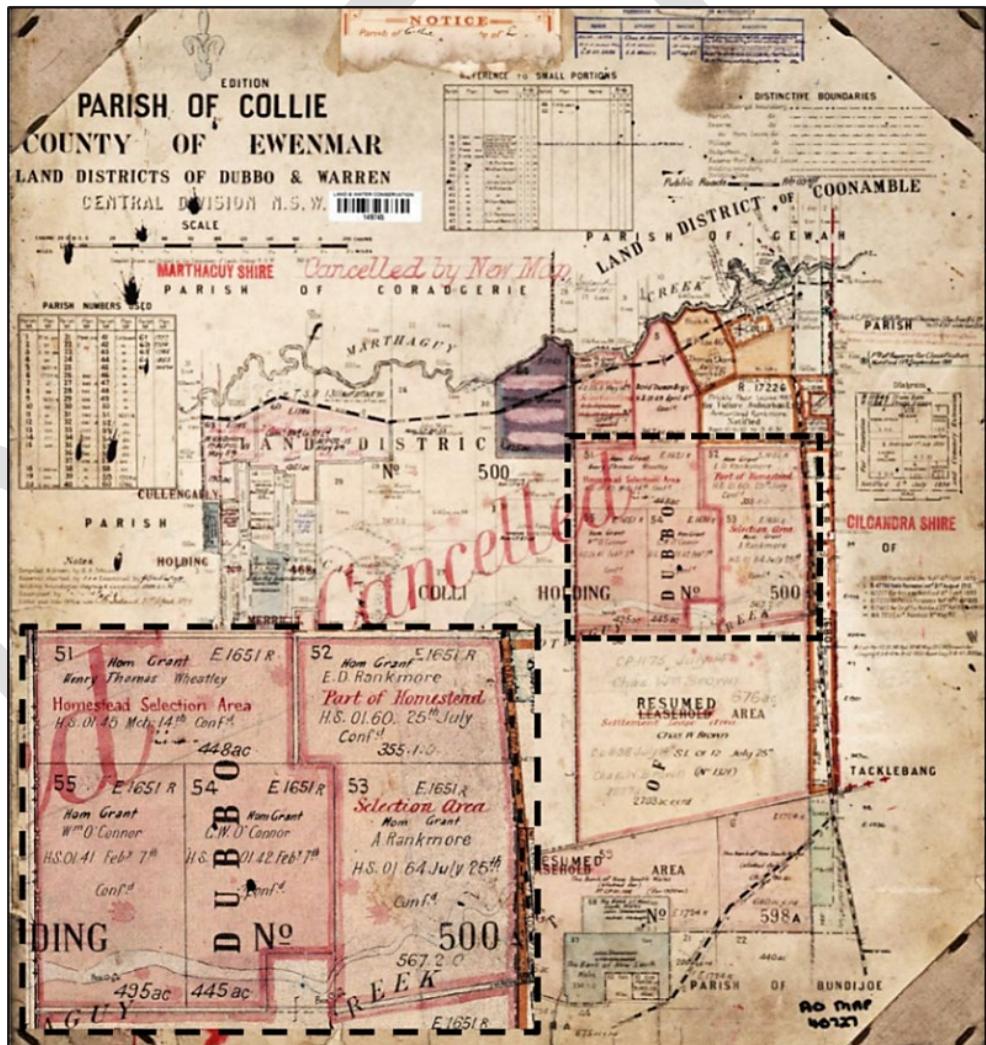
Sydney Morning Herald,
Saturday 9 February 1901.

Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, Saturday 17 August 1901.

As with their earlier relocation to Terrick Terrick East, the O'Connor family's move from Booroobanilly in 1901 was ill-timed, coinciding with the Federation drought, an event that saw Collie and its surrounds record the lowest rainfall in their history.⁴ The drought ravaged pastoral and agricultural holdings, causing numerous small selectors to walk off their land.⁵ The hardships endured by the O'Connors in these initial years were undoubtedly severe. At *Balboora* and *Lisfarran*, the men undertook the laborious tasks of land clearing, sinking wells

and dams, constructing essential buildings, erecting fences, and preparing land for cropping. Caroline played an indispensable role, managing the domestic responsibilities of feeding, caring for, and clothing her husband and sons, while also maintaining the vegetable garden and poultry that supplemented the household's survival. Most of all, she kept their spirits high at such a demanding time. As the drought eased in 1903, it wasn't long before William and the O'Connor brothers were producing fine crops and quality sheep. With approximately 60 per cent of their land under cultivation, their wheat yields consistently fell within the range of four to five bags per acre, an above-average output for farms in the Collie district during that time.⁶ In an excellent season, their yield could triple these numbers. Further dry years of 1905, 1907, and 1911, though, tested their resilience.

The dashed area on the map is enlarged to show the selections of William and George O'Connor.



William and Caroline's Children

The move northward to Collie was made without Bridget and Mary, who remained in Narrandera with their new husbands, John Hennessy and Bernard Gannon, respectively. Bridget and John had three children, Mary, Eileen, and John. Bridget passed away in 1944 (below).⁸

*Daily Advertiser Wagga
Wagga, Friday 5 May
1944.*

*Dubbo Dispatch,
Monday 15 June 1942.*

OBITUARY
MRS MARY TURNER

The death took place at Warren recently of Mrs. Mary Turner, an old and respected resident of the West, at the age of 88 years. She was a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. W. O'Connor, of "Balboora," Collie. Born in Victoria, she had resided at Warren for the past 30 years.

A family of one son and five daughters survive. One sister and three brothers also survive—Mrs. J. Hennessy, Narrandera; Messrs. Frederick O'Connor, "Lisferran," Collie; John O'Connor, "Glenwood," Collie; Michael O'Connor, "Franklands," Eumungerie; and Edward O'Connor, Newcastle.

Interment took place in the Catholic portion of the Warren cemetery.

OBITUARY
MRS. J. HENNESSY

The death occurred on Saturday last of Mrs. Bridget Hennessy, wife of Mr. J. Hennessy, of Narrandera, at the age of 67 years. Mrs. Hennessy was an old and esteemed resident of Narrandera, having come to the town over 40 years ago. She was a native of Kyneton (Vic.), and came to the district from Jerilderie. She was possessed of an amiable disposition, and had many friends among young and old, who will regret to learn of her death. She is survived by her husband and one son and one daughter. The son is Constable Jack Hennessy, of Hurstville, Sydney, and the daughter is Mary (Mrs. F. Kelly), Auburn, Sydney. She is also survived by four brothers, Messrs. Frederick O'Connor, Edward, John (Collie) and Michael (Belladonan). The funeral moved from the St. Mel's Church for the Catholic portion of the Narrandera cemetery. The bearers were Messrs P. J. Kane, J. Groutsch, J. Pearson and M. Bourke. Mrs. F. Lindley carried out the funeral arrangements.

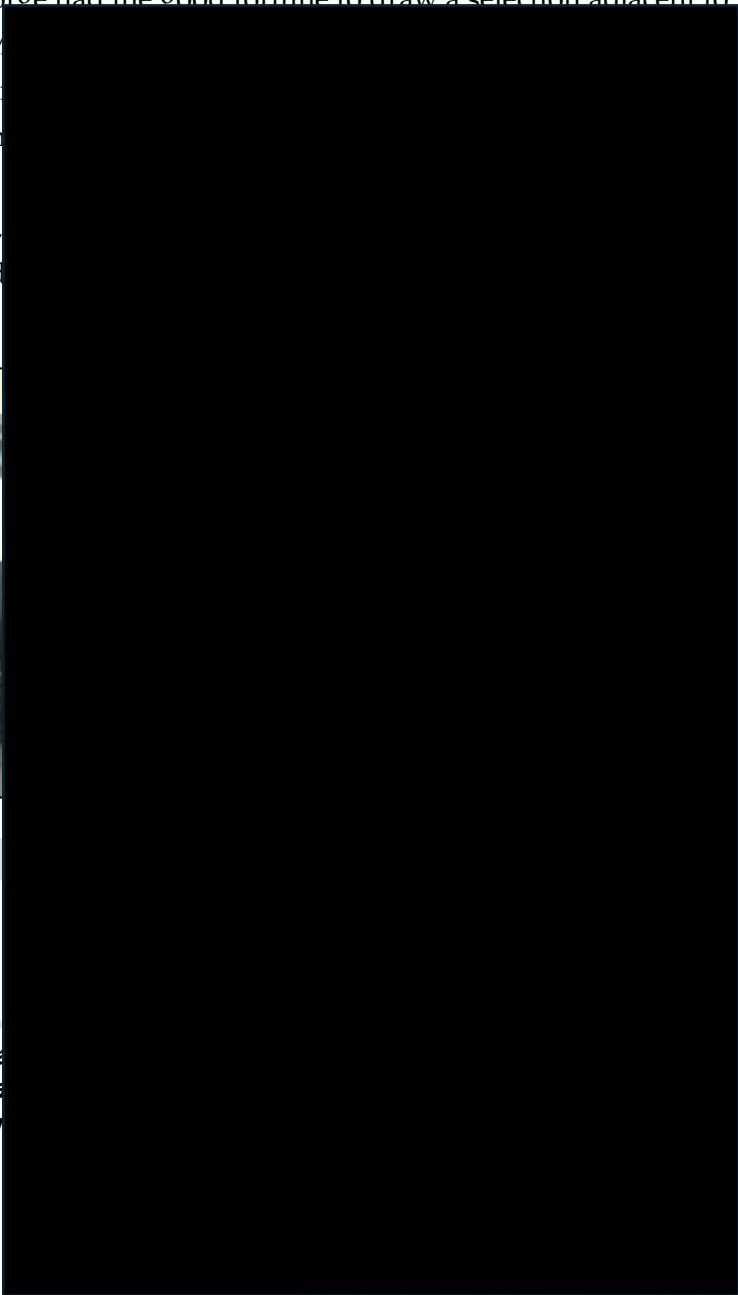
The marriage of Mary and Bernard, though, was cut short by Bernard's untimely death in 1906. Mary had two children with Bernard: Caroline and Michael, known as Clive. In 1923, the 21-year-old Clive Gannon was riding trackwork for his uncle Patrick O'Connor when his racehorse, *Lisfarren*, threw Clive from the saddle, breaking his collarbone and several ribs.⁹ In 1907, Mary moved to the Collie district and married James Bullen. They lived in nearby Warren and had five children: Iris, Kathleen, Arthur, Marrea, and Margaret. James died in 1920, and in 1925, Mary married Charles Turner, a coachman, and passed away at Warren in 1942 (above).¹⁰¹¹

James O'Connor, the eldest of William and Caroline's sons, was 24 years old when the family arrived at Collie. He, along with his younger brothers John and George, had done most of the heavy lifting at Boorobanilly, assisting their father in improving the leasehold into a

productive family farm. As they ventured north, all were keen and ready to establish their own farms. George had the good fortune to draw a selection adjacent to his father. James married Eliza M... about 1915, before moving with El... and newborn Eileen, to a Hon... namble. He remained there... ped farm *Balboora*. James and Jane, Ellen, George, and Patrick. James d...).^{12 13} Eliza O'Connor died



Gilgandra
Castlereagh
Thursday



his
his

... was the eldest son of a
... four girls and eight boys,
... whom answered the call dur-
... rent War, one paying the
... sacrifice. He is survived by
... (who prior to her marri-
... Dubbo was Mrs Jane Mc-
... Collie), six daughters and
... viz.: Margaret (Mrs. P.
... er, Leura), Mary (Coon-
... Nora (Mrs. J. Quilkey,
... e), Catherine (Mrs. J.
... bore Park), Eileen (Collie),
... Killara), and George and
... Collie). Brothers and sist-
... Mrs. Turner (Warren),
... nnessy (Narrandera), Jack
... Fred (Collie), Pat (Syd-
... michael (Balladoran), and
... Joseph (Newcast'e). Two
... and two brothers predecea-
... brother.
... neral took place at 10 a.m.
... day, after a service at St.
... Church had been conducted
... Father Eviston, who also
... at the grave-side service in
... ublic portion of the Gilgan-
... etery. The funeral was
... attended, especially by re-
... of the Collie district.
... al arrangements were car-
... by Mr. A. H. Ross.

... summoned, and Rev. Father
... Eviston also made the trip to the
... homestead. Deceased was conveyed
... into Gilgandra and admitted to the
... District Hospital, where he passed
... away about mid-night without re-
... gaining consciousness.

John, or Jack O'Connor, as he was known, appears to have been a somewhat enigmatic character. In 1900, while the family was living and working in the Riverina, the 20-year-old was in Sydney with a Belgian, Josephine Korsten, registering the birth of a girl named Yvonne Josephine O'Connor. John and Josephine subsequently married in Sydney in 1906 **(below)**.¹⁴ In 1910, John and Josephine travelled to Belgium with the ten-year-old Yvonne, who remained in the care of one of Josephine's sisters.¹⁵ It is unclear when John and Josephine made Collie their home; however, by 1911, they had a modest 430-acre (174-hectare) farm just south of the Collie village, which, in part, surrounded the old showground and horse racetrack.¹⁶ John and Josephine **(below)** had a second daughter, named Josephine, in 1912. Over the ensuing years, they sold their original holding and acquired other farmland in Collie, which they named *Woodlands*, where they remained for the rest of their lives.

**John and Josephine
O'Connor, 1906.**



The O'Connor family quickly established itself as a prominent farming family in the Collie and surrounding districts. William passed on his zeal for civic and farming matters to his sons, especially George, Patrick and Frederick, who all involved themselves in the Collie Farmers and Settlers' Association, with George elected, along with S. K. Murray, in 1910 to represent Collie farmers at the NSW Farmers and Settlers' Annual Conference and the NSW Wheat Growers' Conference.¹⁷ ¹⁸ George also became heavily involved in the Collie push for a Gilgandra to Collie Railway, and as a member of Collie delegations, met with the NSW Minister for Works in 1910 and 1914 to argue the case.¹⁹

Despite being dawn-to-dusk farmers, it was not all work and no play for the O'Connors as they forged many social connections. In 1915, George joined his sister-in-law, Josephine O'Connor, in a local committee to raise money and plan activities for Australia Day. The activities included picnic races, for which George was Vice-President of the Collie Amateur Race Club, with Patrick and Frederick serving on the committee.^{20 21} The O'Connor boys also boasted a much-vaunted reputation as singers and musicians. William, just like his father, Patrick, had taught him, had tutored his sons to become lively fiddlers and passionate singers. Much of their repertoire consisted of songs, tunes, and jigs from their Irish heritage. Balls, socials, and dances were common events at Collie, often raising money for local charities, including hospitals, schools, and the Church (**below**). The musicianship of the O'Connor brothers was in constant demand at these events, and to use a contemporary aphorism, *the party didn't start until the O'Connor boys were in the house.*^{22 23 24 25 26}

<p>COLLIE SOCIAL.</p> <p>Fully 50 couples attended the social in aid of the Collie R.C. Church. The music was supplied by Messrs. G. and M. O'Connor, J. Mitchell and J. Donnelly. Mr. S. Murray was the M.C. The refreshments were provided on a lavish scale, and served up in great style by the ladies.</p>	<p>SOCIAL AT COLLIE.</p> <p>A euchre party and dance at Collie, in aid of the Belgian Fund, was attended by about 50 couples. The prize winners were Miss Clara Smith and Messrs. J. Mitchell and C. Rankmore—a tie. Mr. Fred O'Connor was the musician, and the refreshments were provided by Mesdames C. O'Connor, J. J. O'Connor, Christie, Mitchell, Stewart, McNab, and the Misses Munro. The use of the hall was gratuitously given by Mr. Pearce.</p>
<p>COLLIE HOSPITAL BALL.</p> <p>The ball organised by the residents of Collie in aid of the Gilgandra Hospital funds was a pronounced success. Thirty couples were present, and had a most enjoyable time. The hall was prettily decorated for the occasion, and the arrangements were satisfactorily carried out. Music was gratuitously supplied by Messrs. O'Connor Bros., J. Mitchell and T. Chapman, extras being played by Miss Munro and others. The secretarial duties were in the capable hands of Mr. J. C. Brophy. The net result of the ball will amount to about £23.</p>	<p>COLLIE NEWS</p> <p>On Thursday evening, -25th, at the newly erected residence of Mr. Chas. Monk, a farewell was tendered to Mrs. H. Edwards, of 'Bandy Joe,' prior to her departure from the district. The evening was a most enjoyable one, dancing and card playing being indulged in until the early hours of last Friday morning. Splendid music was supplied by the Messrs. O'Connor Bros. and H. McIntyre (all violinists). At 12 o'clock sharp all present were requested to come to luncheon provided by Mr. Monk and lady friends, which was highly appreciated. Among the visitors present were Jim McKeown (Coo-ee) and Mrs. McKeown.</p>
<p>COLLIE ODDFELLOWS.</p> <p>The annual Oddfellows' social at Collie was a most enjoyable function. The attendance was satisfactory, and the arrangements left nothing to be desired, reflecting great credit on Mr. H. E. Murray, who had the secretarial duties in hand. The music was supplied by Mr. A. E. Perkins, and Messrs. O'Connor and E. Meers played extras.</p>	

The party didn't start until the O'Connor boys were in the house.

Aside from their musical talents, the athletic O'Connor brothers threw themselves into local sporting contests. The Collie Farmers and Settlers' Association hosted an annual carnival where local men and boys participated in various athletic events. The *Dubbo Liberal and Advertiser* reported that the carnival, which attracted entries from all over the district, was a success. For boys did exceptionally well in the various events. Fred took first place in the 100-yard race, off a handicap of five yards in the 200-yard race, and first in the 300-yard race. He also won the carry your chum race, the potato race and the 100-yard, 200-yard, and 300-yard races. Fred took first place in the 100-yard race. The following year he won the 100-yard race and the carry-your-chum race, beating all comers, winning the 100-yard race on the ground.²⁹ Six years later he won second in the wo



A 1915 tennis day at the Collie Farmers and Settlers' Association. The man on the far left is Frederick, (Frederick) Mills is the man holding the baby next to the boy on the middle front right. Note the solid timber tennis post to the far left of the picture!

Tragedy and Sadness

Tragedy shook the O'Connor family in January 1911 when Thomas Francis O'Connor, or Frank as he was known, died suddenly from heart failure, aged just 19, while working with James at Coonamble. Further sadness followed in March 1913 when their beloved father and husband, William, passed away after a long illness, aged 65 years. The 65-year-old William was a highly respected and skilled farmer who had become very adept at farming sheep and cultivating crops such as wheat, oats, and barley in challenging, dry-land conditions. Not only was he an exceptional farmer, but he also continued the advocacy work for settlers and farmers that he had commenced in Jerilderie, quickly becoming an influential member of the Collie Farmers' and Settlers' Association.³¹



The last known photograph of William O'Connor.

William O'Connor was a true Australian pioneer **(above)**.³² He was born in 1847 of Irish Catholic stock on a squatter's sheep run in the Macedon Ranges north of Melbourne, before the Colony of Victoria even existed, and lived to see the Federation of Australia, of which he played an active role! At the time of his death, William, along with his wife, Caroline Royal, had met every challenge of a pioneering life with determination, resilience, and a strength of character that ensured their children were well-equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to succeed.

The following obituary appeared in the *Catholic Press*, Sydney.³³

DEATH OF MR. WILLIAM O'CONNOR

The death occurred recently at the Dubbo District Hospital of Mr. William O'Connor, of "Balboora," Collie, at the age of 65 years. Deceased had been a patient at the hospital at intervals, and bore his long and trying illness with great fortitude. He was a native of Melbourne, and after following farming pursuits in Victoria for a number of years, came to New South Wales some 12 years back, and had been engaged in farming and grazing in the Collie area ever since. During his illness he was attended by the Very Rev. Dr. Brophy and died fortified by the rites of the Church. He leaves a widow, seven sons and two daughters to mourn their loss. The remains were conveyed to Gilgandra by train for interment there. Very Rev. Dr. Brophy officiated at the graveside, R.I.P.

Little detail exists about the lives of William O'Connor's elder sisters, Mary and Ellen. His older brother Michael, who died in 1910, remained in Kyneton, raising his family on a farm he named *Balboora*. Michael's son, Patrick, later earned much public recognition as a successful racehorse owner and breeder. William's younger sister, Margaret, married George William Royal, brother of Caroline O'Connor, and they had twelve children, ten of whom survived to adulthood. However, two, John and Catherine, died in tragic circumstances. William also lost his brother James to a dreadful wool carting accident near Walgett in 1907, while his youngest sister, Catherine, died unmarried at Kyneton in 1931 at the age of 74.

**William O'Connor's niece,
Letitia Royal, who with
her husband Thomas
Healy established
Balboora, Finley.**



Several of the children and grandchildren of George and Margaret Royal (O'Connor), William's sister and brother-in-law, were born in the district. Letitia (previous page), who married in 1880, owned a 1,060-acre (429-hectare) farm in the district. She passed away in 1930, the property was sold in 1931. In 2017, Balboora sold for \$8 million. It is a dairy country, with the best dairies in the district.³⁴

The Great War

Following William's death, the property was retained within the family. Yet new difficulties arose. Drought conditions were tight, and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand would reshape the world. The killing of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire led to a reaction of alliances, nations, and a regional crisis into a global war. In 1914, Australia was automatically at war.

Australia was at war, and C...

The declaration of war came as a shock. The *Sydney Mail* (next page) and other newspapers were uniting Australians in a mix of emotions. Many volunteered in large numbers for the campaign in 1915, followed by the outbreak of hostilities, many went to work in the drought-stricken areas. To manage the 1,060 acres to manage, the O'Connors enlisted. George, Patrick, and others went in 1917. Of the remaining O'Connors, many were married with young children, but the continuity of their farming operations.

The declaration of war stirred deep nationalistic emotion among the young men of Collie.



Many who enlisted in the early months of the war saw service as an exciting adventure. When the O'Connor brothers answered the call, though, the danger and peril of the war were well exposed, and they left Collie under no illusion that they might never see their loved ones again. On Monday, 10 January 1916, the Collie community assembled to farewell seven of their finest, including Michael and Patrick O'Connor, who were just days away from enlisting with the *Kookaburras* at Mendooran on 12 January (next pages).^{35 36} The *Kookaburras* marched from Tooraweenah to Bathurst, rallying support and enlisting men on their way.³⁷

While marching with the *Kookaburras*, Gundy Mills wrote to his mother saying, in part:

Well mother, we are having a bosker time going along, plenty to eat and drink and smoke, it don't cost us much. I hope you are not fretting about me, as I am having the time of my life. Every night the people along the road have a spread for us, and a dance, so you can guess what a time we are having. I hope all the people are well. Remember me to all and give them my love. Tell "Vic" to drop me a line, I wish he was here, as there are some characters amongst us who would just suit him. Von would not know me now, as I got my hair clipped right off as short as I could. We have about 50 Kookaburras now and expect to have 200 before we finish. I think we are going to Bathurst Camp. All the boys here are well. "Mick" and "Paddy" O'Connor and myself are in charge of a section each, we got promoted the first day. We have 12 men each to look after; there are four sections altogether, so we are not doing too bad.³⁸



Pictured at the Collie farwell were Caroline O'Connor at left front, with her son, Michael, next to her. Seated at the front on the right side is Patrick O'Connor, alongside Arthur (Gundy) Mills and his mother. James and Frederick O'Connor are standing on the right immediately behind the two women who are behind Arthur and his mother.

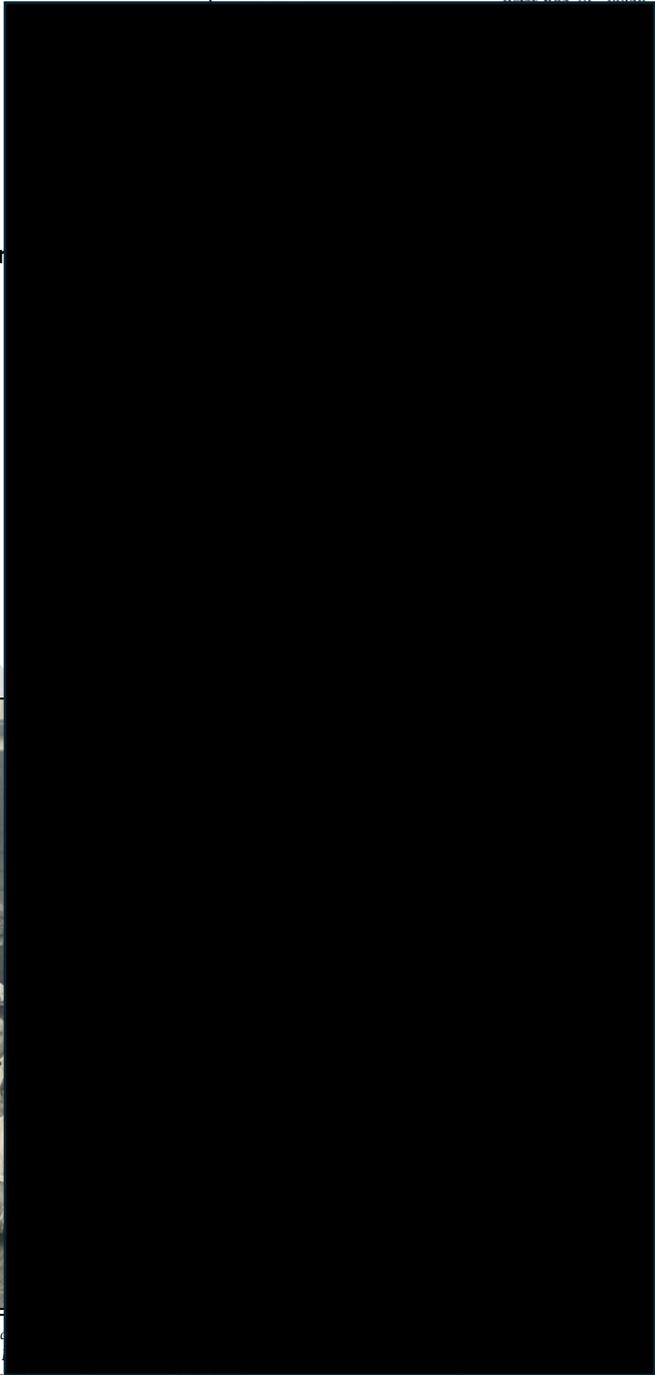
Michael and Patrick were joined by their elder brother George, along with other Collie mates, Theodore Meers and Donald Chisholm, who enlisted at Bathurst on 9 February 1916 (**next pages**).³⁹ At 28, 31, and 33 years, respectively, the O'Connor brothers, popularly known as Mick, Paddy, and Geordie, were a shade over the average age of enlistees, who were mostly in their early to mid-20s. In March 1916, Michael, Patrick, George, and Gundy Mills received one week's leave from their training camp at Bathurst. The young men spent the time catching up with friends and family, including a large gathering at the Collie Hotel (**next page**).⁴⁰ George, while not in this picture, was spoken to by the Collie correspondent for the *Gilgandra Weekly*, who said to him, *Believe the people out there gave you a social evening*, to which George replied, *You're wrong, they gave us a social week!*⁴¹

COLLIE NEWS
 (From Our Correspondent.)
 To those who visited Collie Hall

turn, as there was not sufficient room at the tables for all present to sit down at one sitting. "Good Save the King" was sang and then the health of the soldier sons of Collie was proposed and drank. The next toast was in honor of the wives, sweethearts of the lads who were in a glowing cause the young men for services. Other names mentioned were Mrs McCutcheon, Mrs. McTear and others. The speaker thanked the people for their kindness. The toast that they were given a wristlet and that they were to be sent along with the lads.

E. H. Smith, of the lads God was read by the lads. Greatly appreciative of the lads, the hall was then decorated, and dancing was commenced. Music by M. Hennessy, violin, H. McTear, piano, amongst the lads, G. Mills and being indulged in on Tuesday night. Paddy McGrane acted as the lads out to the present. The lads were banqueted by Michael O'Connor, Giddons, Jack Giddons and Mick

Gilgandra Weekly, Friday
14 January 1916.



Back Row (L-R): 1 Charlie Monk, 2 Bill Bogie, 3 Ted Bogie, 6 Vic
Third Row: 3 Paddy McGrane. Second Row: 4 John Brophy, 7
Michael O'Connor, 4 Gundy Mills, 5 Edward O'Connor, 6 Patrick O'Connor, 7 Vic
Michael O'Connor, 8 Gundy Mills, 9 Ted Bogie.

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<p>MORE OF OUR BOYS FOR THE FRONT.</p> <p>COLLIE ADDS TO ITS CREDIT.</p> <p>THREE MORE FOR THE FIRING LINE.</p> <p>The consistency with which the district of Collie sends its young men to take part in the great war which threatens the supremacy of England, and is a test of efficiency and military strength for the Allies, is amongst the remarkable recruiting incidents in these parts. There has, in some places, been a lot of flag-flapping and beating of drums, and a lot of platform oratory from recruiting agents, members of Parliament, and so on. The young men of Collie, backed by the patriotism and enthusiasm of the older residents, apparently need no such coaxing. Probably the airy eloquence of stamp orators who like to hear their own voices does not appeal to them in the same way as their personal convictions of the war and its consequences. Quite unostentatiously they step out of the home and farm life and join the ranks. Week by week they are going—men who have grown up with each other; some who for years have been companions in the daily vicissitudes of life—they are all going off with hearts full of pride to strike a blow for King, country, and honor. The example set by each man who goes has its moral effect—others follow. This is the recruiting spirit of which the people of Collie can justly feel proud.</p>	<p>During the past week the district people have farewelled three more of their young men—George O'Connor, of "Balboora," Theo. Meers, son of Mr. and Mrs J. Meers, "The Pines," and E. Chisholm, whose people have recently gone to live at Mr. Ballantyne's "Pine Lodge" property, and whom the district welcomes as patriotic citizens. All three are highly respected by the people of the whole district. Their example is splendid. It was a complete surprise, in view of the fact that two of his brothers had already gone, when George O'Connor announced that he was going to throw in his lot with the rest of the boys and don the uniform. His mother, like thousands of other sons' mothers, exhibited that noble, unselfish, sacrificing spirit of which we are all proud, and said, "If it is your duty, go." George has left a good property in order to do his share in the Empire's fight, and, with the other boys who have gone from Collie, we say, "All honor to them." The ranks of our Army include three of that good family—George, Paddy, and Mick.</p> <p>On Saturday night last a complimentary smoko concert was tendered Mr. Geo. O'Connor in the Collie Hall. There was a good attendance, although a number of country people were unable to be present. Apologies were received from Messrs. C. W. Brown, W. Pearse, and the Messrs. Murray. The chair was occupied by Mr. J. C. Brophy, and the gathering was marked by much patriotic enthusiasm. The chairman, in a nice little speech, proposed the toast of "Our Guest," which was supported by Messrs. E. G. Christie,</p>	<p>P. J. McGrane, S. E. Sadler, H. Myers, J. Kerney, E. Bogie, L. Wheatley, C. Monk, J. Mitchell, M. McIntyre, J. Hannigan, and E. Meers. The guest of the evening was presented with a safety razor outfit and a money belt. Mr. O'Connor, in responding, thanked the people of Collie for their kindness. In the course of a very plain and unassuming speech, he said he was going to render what assistance he could in the war, because he thought it was the duty of everyone who could to put everything else aside and give his services to his country. He hoped to be back amongst them when the Australians had helped to win the war. (Applause).</p> <p>During the evening Theo. Meers announced his intention of enlisting, and said he was going to Dabbo for medical examination on Monday. The announcement was received with cheers, for it was known that Theo had been "chafing at the bit" for months past in his eagerness to get away. Quite spontaneously the gathering set about honoring him. A very nice wristlet watch was immediately procured, and young Theo was made the recipient, for which he made a graceful acknowledgment. The health of the parents of the departing soldiers was proposed by Mr. S. E. Sadler, and supported by several of those present. Refreshments were served during the evening, and a very happy time was spent. Songs were rendered by Messrs. O'Connor Bros., and Mr. J. C. Brophy, and Mr. J. Carter, and Mr. E. G. Christie.</p>	<p>On Monday night there was a social gathering tendered Mr. O'Connor and Mr. E. Chisholm. There was a large attendance, and the proceedings were of an enjoyable character, dancing being the chief enjoyment. Mr. Brophy occupied the chair, and eulogistic speeches were delivered by Messrs. Christie, Pearse, McGrane and Bogie. The popular teacher at Collie presented each of the recruits with a wristlet watch, and they each made an effective reply. Songs and recitations were rendered during the evening. During the evening's proceedings it was announced that Mr. and Mrs. Pearse would give between them £40 to the first Collie boy at the front who wins a V.C.</p>
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Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 11 February
1916.

After an orientation and basic training at Bathurst, the O'Connor men, along with the rest of Company B of the 45th Battalion of the Australian Infantry Force (AIF), boarded a train for Sydney. Michael and Patrick must have impressed their superiors during initial training, as both received promotions to Acting Corporal on 29 March 1916.

The Calm Before the Storm

On 14 April, George, Patrick, and Michael O'Connor, along with a handful of their Collie mates, assembled at the Garden Island Wharf, Darling Harbour, Sydney, to embark on the *HMAT A40 Ceramic* bound for Alexandria, Egypt, now as members of the 12th Training Battalion (over pages).⁴² Diaries kept by Private Edward Lynch from Bathurst, who also served with the O'Connors in the 45th Battalion, provide a fascinating insight into the departure of soldiers for the Great War.⁴³ Lynch described in vivid detail the rousing, and often tearful send-off received by soldiers as they marched through Sydney to the Garden Island Wharf,

where a crowd of relatives and an adoring mob of anonymous well-wishers, primarily young women, awaited:

Through flag-bedecked streets we go ever onward. The windows and roofs of shops are gay with bright flags and pretty, laughing girls. The crowds line the footpaths are happy in the bon camaraderie of their farewell to us. Here and there are silent women in black, mute testimony to what has befallen others who have marched before. We swing cheerfully on. ^{44 45}

Soldiers walking along Macquarie Street, Sydney, on their way to their transport ship.



Once the soldiers had boarded (**below**):

...suddenly the gates swing open and the crowd charges onto the wharf. We coo-ee and call and they answer. Streamers are thrown from the wharf and we catch them. We're a happy-go-lucky, carefree lot...we see two older women with eyes ever searching, searching for the last glimpse of a loved face. They're the mothers and wives, the silent sufferers amongst the seemingly carefree throng. Men are there too, brothers and pals calling and cheering us on and dads proudly erect and calm. ^{46 47}

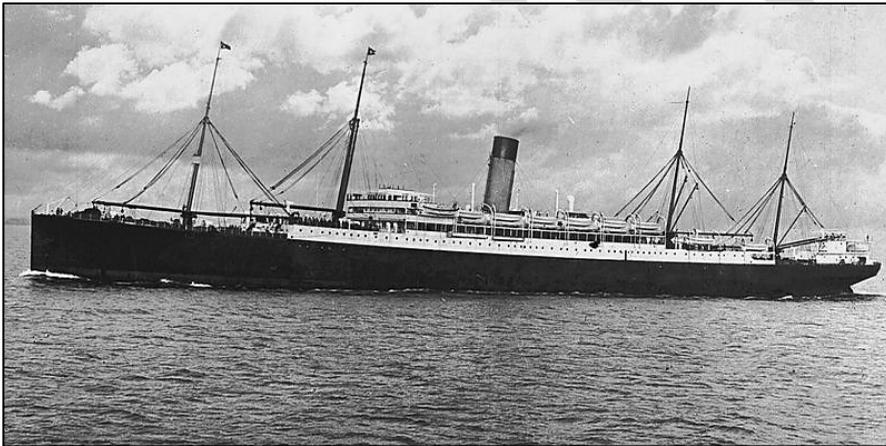
An AIF transport ship ready to leave.



Private Lynch further described the multitude of young women singing *The Boys of the Dardanelles* as they threw halfpennies to the soldiers, each coin adorned with their name and address. By this time, the soldiers had *climbed like monkeys all over the ship*, and as the vessel began to move away from the wharf, Lynch then recalled:

...men perched high in the rigging, commence to sing and soon the whole ship unites in a last song of farewell to old Sydney...

*Good-bye, Sydney town, goodbye,
We are leaving you to-day
For a country far away,
Though today I'm stony broke
Without a single brown,
When I make my fortune
I'll come back and spend it,
In dear old Sydney town.*⁴⁸

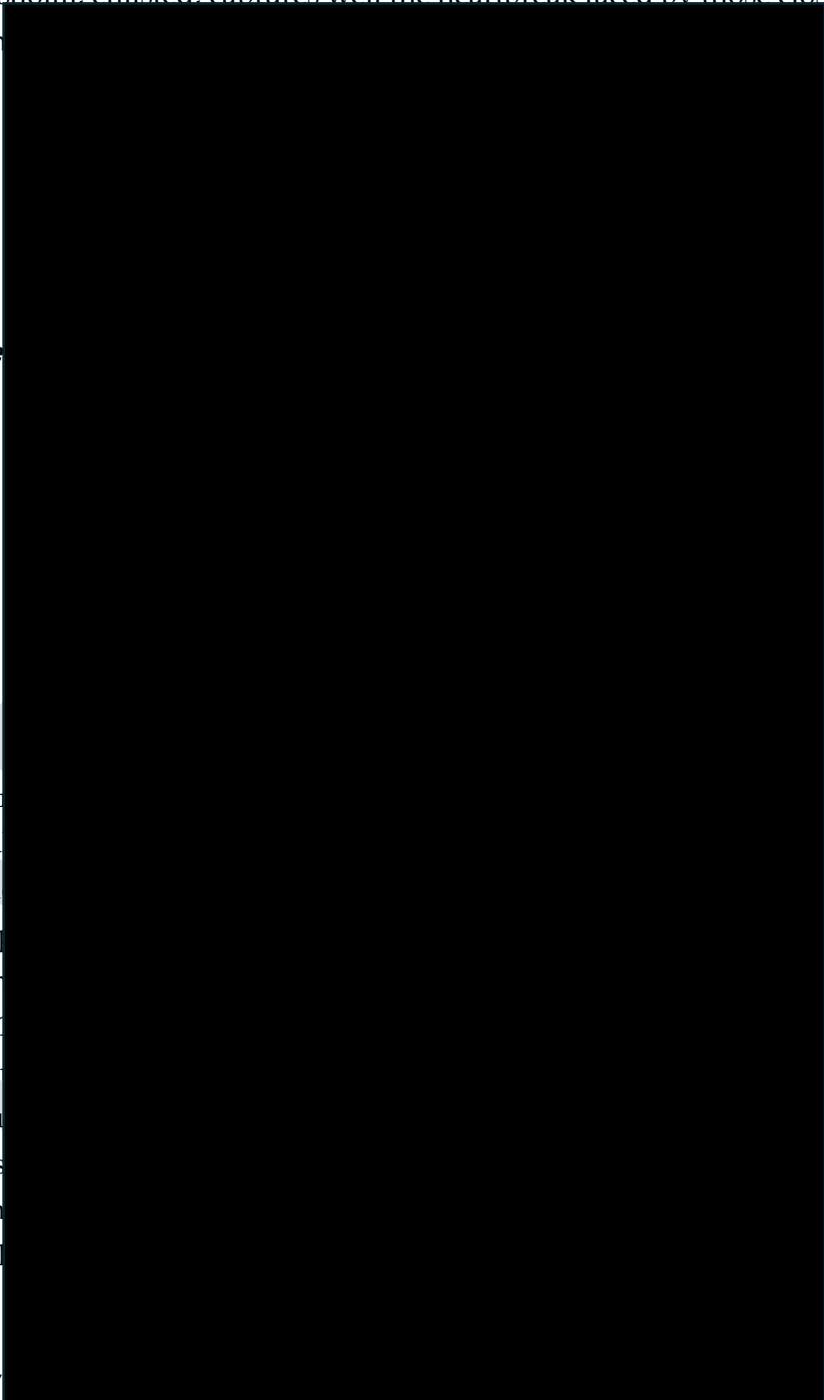


**The HMAT
A40 Ceramic.**

How strange it must have felt for the Collie lads, not only as they waved farewell to their family, friends, and sweethearts, but as they sailed on the around the bottom half of Australia stopping at Freemantle in Western Australia, then to Columbo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Bombay (now Mumbai) in India, through to the Red Sea, navigating the Suez Canal and then a short hop in the Mediterranean to the seaport of Alexandria, near Cairo, Egypt!

The poem (**below**), written by 17-year-old Eileen Chisholm to her sister, just hours after their brother, Donald Chisholm, enlisted, captures well the heartbreak faced by those close to these brave young men.

Gilgandra We
6 April 1917.



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In Egypt, they gathered recruits from New South Wales and Queensland. The brothers received advanced training at an Australian base camp where they learned bayonet use, route marching, and gas mask use. On 6 June 1917 they disembarked on 16 July at Camp on the Salisbury Peninsula, a training base for Australian troops on the Western Front. The training included trench warfare simulations in Belgium.^{50 51 52}

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At Rolleston Camp,

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(**next page**) from George to Eileen Chisholm included a picture of the O'Connor brothers and

Eileen's brother Don immediately after their team won a tug-of-war contest deck side on their voyage to Egypt

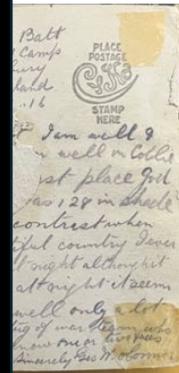
No 1645 Pte G.W.
A Company 12th
Rollestone Camp
Salisbury England
?.6.16

Dear Eileen

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practice.

Yours Sincerely
Geo W. O'Conno

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128 in shade the day after
beautiful country I ever
r time the sun goes down
lot thinner than when we
e Ceramic. You may
g to do and I am out of



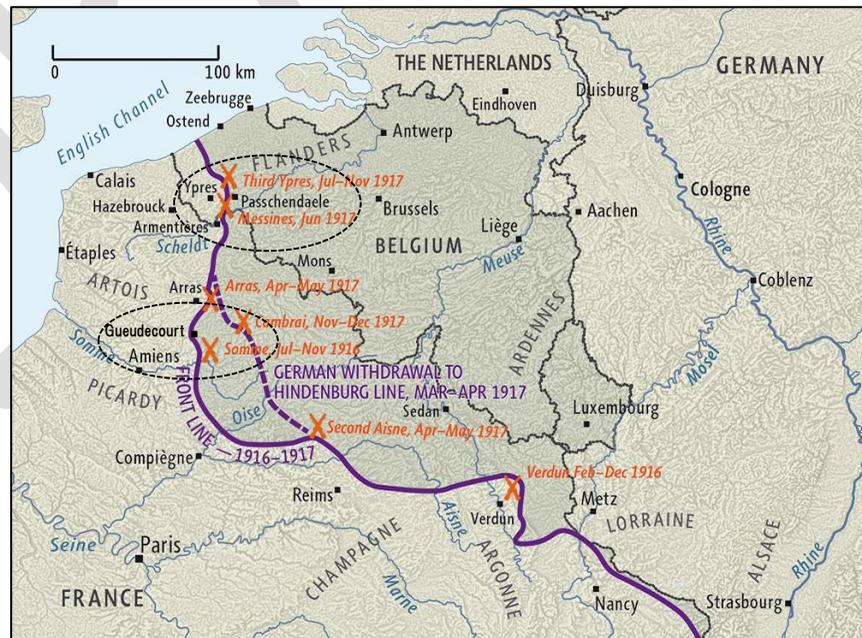
Donnor to
Front L-R –
(and Don)

Michael O'Connor also kept a diary during his service, and in it he described how he and his brothers, while at Bathurst, played cricket against St Stanislaus, where he noted they *got beat by 26 runs*. He spoke fondly of his send-off in Collie and had a *bonser march* through Bathurst before embarking on the *Ceramic*. Michael recounted a stop at Columbo, Ceylon, where he noted *...very pretty sight...had a real good time...plenty of beer*. Michael enjoyed the trip up the Suez Canal, where he *...passed by some big camps, thousands of troops and camels, splendid sights, and saw a seaplane*. He was, though, less favourable in his comments about Egypt, where he lamented *... had a pretty rough time, hot winds had to cart our stuff on vans and pull them ourselves*.⁵⁴

The Western Front

On 5 September 1916, the O'Connor brothers crossed the English Channel, arriving at Étaples, Pas-de-Calais, France, which was home to the largest British Army base and training camp on the Western Front. Here they remained until 22 September 1916, when they were Taken on Strength and rushed into battle in the Somme region, at Gueudecourt, a village in northern France.⁵⁵ As both Michael and Patrick held Acting Corporal positions, their roles reverted to Private level as soon as they entered France. In contrast, on 3 January 1917, George received a substantive promotion in the field to the rank of Lance Corporal.^{56 57 58 59}

The Western Front in 1916 & 1917. Gueudecourt and Messines, the key battle grounds for George, Patrick and Michael O'Connor are marked.



The Germans were determined to capture Gueudecourt, whose extensive cellars and dugouts held considerable strategic value. Throughout the winter of 1916, German artillery pounded the village relentlessly, firing 5.9-inch (15-centimetre) shells at intervals of almost one per minute, day and night. Michael, Patrick, and George, serving with the 45th Battalion, laboured constantly to strengthen trench defences while rotating through intense artillery barrages along the front line. Autumn rains had reduced the battlefield to a sodden quagmire. Although winter brought bitter cold, temperatures rarely dropped low enough to freeze the mud, leaving soldiers to endure exhausting, miserable conditions. The ordeal at Gueudecourt ranked among the harshest experienced by Australian troops during the Great War, and illness became widespread. Patrick fell seriously ill with nephritis on 17 December 1916. He was evacuated to England for treatment, returning to the Western Front on 22 June 1917, only to be hospitalised again a month later with trench fever, a lice-borne disease common in the trenches.⁶⁰ In March 1918, he was again sent to England, suffering from pleurisy and, deemed unfit for further active service, was repatriated to Sydney aboard the hospital ship *Medic*, arriving on 9 October 1918.^{61 62}

The Germans desperately sought to capture Gueudecourt, as the village's cellars and dugouts were of immense strategic importance. Night and day throughout the winter of 1916, the Germans fired 5.9-inch (15 centimetre) shells at the rate of one per minute into the village. Michael, Patrick, and George, along with the 45th Battalion, worked hard to reinforce their trench positions and rotate through artillery barrages on the front lines. The autumn rains, though, had turned the ground into a quagmire, and as winter set in, it became bitterly cold, but not cold enough to freeze the mud, which made it extremely difficult for the soldiers in the trenches.

Michael was fortunate to survive his service on the Western Front. On 22 December 1916, he became gravely ill with spinal meningitis and was admitted to a field hospital, prompting authorities to inform his mother, Caroline, that his condition was considered life-threatening.⁶³ He was soon evacuated to England and admitted to Beaufort Military Hospital in Bristol, where he was declared medically unfit for further service. Michael returned to Australia aboard the hospital ship *Barambah*, arriving in Sydney on 8 April 1917, and after a period of convalescence was formally discharged on 26 July 1917.⁶⁴ George also fell ill during

It was well-known in the O'Connor family that Edward was itching to wear the uniform and join the fight against the Germans. On 4 June 1917, his mother, Caroline, signed her permission for her youngest to enlist at Dubbo, and the Collie community gave him a rousing send-off (below).^{69 70 71}



<p>SEND-OFF AT COLLIE</p> <p>TO PRIVATE NED O'CONNOR</p> <p>[From our Representative.]</p> <p>A very enjoyable farewell was tendered to Private Ned O'Connor in the Collie Hall, on Thursday night last (July 26th). Dancing was the chief amusement of the evening. Refreshments were provided as usual. During the evening complimentary references were made to Private O'Connor by several gentlemen present.</p> <p>Mr. M. J. Brophy commended Private O'Connor on his action in offering his services to the military authorities. He said he knew how determined young O'Connor was, and he gave him credit for the manner in which he had entered into the thing. He also made reference to the splendid sacrifice Mrs. O'Connor had made in allowing the fourth son to serve his country.</p>	<p>Mr W. Pearce also made similar reference to our young friend, and both speakers remarks were endorsed by Mr O. J. Reynolds, of "Bon Accord," Gilgandra.</p> <p>In response, Private O'Connor thanked those present for the splendid farewell they had given him. He said he had spent many happy moments with them, and hoped to go to the war and return, and spend many more of them. Again he wished to thank them.</p> <p>Miss Kathleen O'Connell favoured the company with a recitation entitled "Australia's Heroes," which was well received. Later Master Ken O'Connell recited "Lays of Ancient Rome" with great credit.</p> <p>Mr. Vin Fenton acted as M.C., and was ably assisted with excellent dance music by Miss E. O'Connell, Messrs J. Wheatley, Ray Mauro, H. Kilby, and O'Connor Bros.</p>
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**Gilgandra
Weekly, Friday
10 August 1917.**

Edward O'Connor

Edward O'Connor formally enlisted at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, on 3 August 1917, and was immediately included with the Machine Gun Reinforcements Technical Training Battalion at Liverpool. Following his initial training, he embarked with the 1st Pioneers on the *HMAT A38 Ulysses* on 19 December 1917, bound for England. The ship was part of a convoy led by the British warship *HMS Encounter*, with Australian destroyers *HMAS Parramatta* and *HMAS Yarra* providing escorts for sections of the journey. During this time, German submarines, called U-boats, were actively targeting troop ships in the North Atlantic Ocean. Rather than steering a course directly for England, the *HMAT A38 Ulysses* first arrived in Suez, Egypt, on 16 January 1918. After a short stay, the ship then embarked on a brief sea journey to Port Said, Egypt, where the *HMAT A38 Ulysses* crossed the Mediterranean Sea and disembarked the 1st Pioneers at Taranto, Italy. The 1st Pioneers then took a lengthy train journey to Cherbourg, France, where they boarded another troop ship for a short voyage across the heavily guarded English Channel, arriving at Southampton, England, on 13 February 1918. Following his convoluted journey across the world, Edward O'Connor found himself in

intensive training at the Sutton Veny camp in Wiltshire, where he remained until 24 January 1919. Edward then crossed the English Channel once more, where he was taken on strength as part of the 14th Reinforcements in France. Edward, though, saw minimal action on the Western Front. From birth, Edward had had infantile paralysis, which caused significant atrophy of the muscles of his left thigh, an impairment that his commanding officers believed would expose him on the frontlines. Edward argued that he was fit to fight, but to no avail, and he was transferred to non-active duties in the Graves Registration Detachment, a deployment he held until the end of the war **(below)**.^{72 73}

Members of the Graves Registration Detachment, Australian section, of the Imperial War Graves unit loading bodies from a mass grave to be put in single graves.



The Marthaguy Shire Council decreed that each soldier returning from the war would be honoured with a gold medal. When Michael O'Connor came home, the Collie community gathered for a celebratory banquet, where local dignitaries paid tribute to his service. Amid warm applause, Mr M. J. Brophy awarded Michael with his medal on behalf of the shire council. In presenting the medal, Mr Brophy told the gathering:

*It was a source of great pleasure to be present to welcome Mick O'Connor home again. After being in France for some time the young soldier had the misfortune to be stricken down with the awful disease, meningitis. However, Private O'Connor had done his duty – a fact on which he might well feel proud!*⁷⁴

While overjoyed with Michael's return, Caroline O'Connor knew in her heart of hearts that George would not again touch the soil of *Balboora*. Just days after Edward's enlistment, Caroline received the devastating news confirming that Lance Corporal George William O'Connor **(next page)**, or simply *Geordie* as she called him, had been killed in action in Belgium on 7 June 1917 **(next page)**.^{75 76 77 78 79}

Lance Corporal George William O'Connor

CORPORAL GEO. KILLED

Many a heart will be broken when it becomes generally known that Corporal George O'Connor, who was previously reported killed in action early in the war, sad news was received by his family some few days since then the people of the district poured out their sympathies to the bereaved family. The people of this district who will long remember the memory of the deceased was one of the "white" and most honorable of the district has ever known amongst the most popular citizens, George O'Connor, was regarded for his genuine character. Hard-working, industrious, sober, and dependable, the reputation which he has now a cherished memory. O'Connor was one of the contingent who marched to Weenaah. As a soldier he distinguished himself in athletic sports popular with all his friends. George! You did your duty and has been given for the Empire, and your name will remain with us. To the family of the deceased we offer our deepest sympathies.

News has been received that Corp. George O'Connor, who was previously reported missing in action in France, was killed in action. He was one of four brothers in the district listed early in the war. In the north-west the O'Connors were known and honored, and the best known of all by reputation. It was a pity that there was no medical aid in the district which lacked the days of peace. In the district he was a recognized leader, a sound opinion, forceful, and a generous supporter. His death was a great loss to the district that appealed to him everything that was worth fighting for.

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1917.

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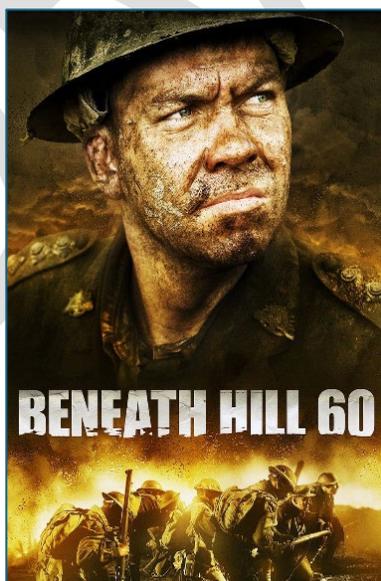
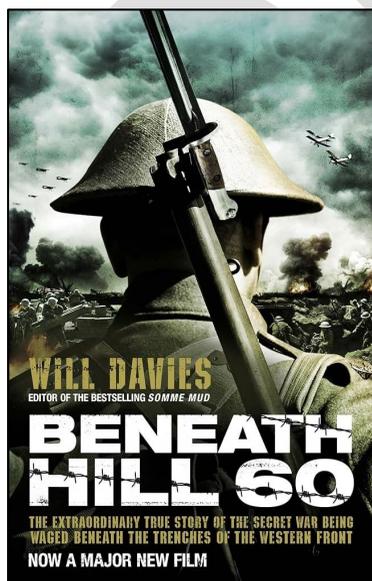
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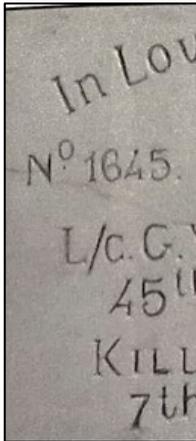
Messines Ridge, Belgium

By 20 January 1917, German forces had begun withdrawing to the fortified Hindenburg Line. The next objective for the 45th Battalion, including George O'Connor, was the capture of Messines Ridge in West Flanders, Belgium, a position of immense strategic importance. In preparation, the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company had secretly placed nearly one million pounds (450,000 kilograms) of explosives within 24 mines driven up to 30 metres beneath the ridge. The artillery bombardment commenced on 31 May 1917, and at 3:10 a.m. on 7 June, as the Allied barrage intensified, the mines were detonated. Nineteen colossal explosions destroyed the German front-line positions, killing an estimated 10,000 soldiers and creating what was then the largest manufactured explosion in history, reportedly heard as far away as London and Dublin. Lance Corporal George O'Connor witnessed the overwhelming force of the blasts, which shattered German defences and morale. Infantry of the 13th and 14th Battalions advanced swiftly to secure the ridge, while the 45th Battalion followed in support, clearing surviving resistance. Many German troops had taken refuge in ruined farmhouses and reinforced concrete shelters, from which they continued to fire upon advancing Australians, fire that would tragically claim the life of Lance Corporal George William O'Connor.^{80 81 82 83} The actions of Australian soldiers at the Battle of Messines were later documented by military historian Will Davies and helped inspire the Australian feature film *Beneath Hill 60* (**below**).⁸⁴



Beneath Hill 60 –
Messines Ridge,
Belgium, Western
Front, 7 June 1917.

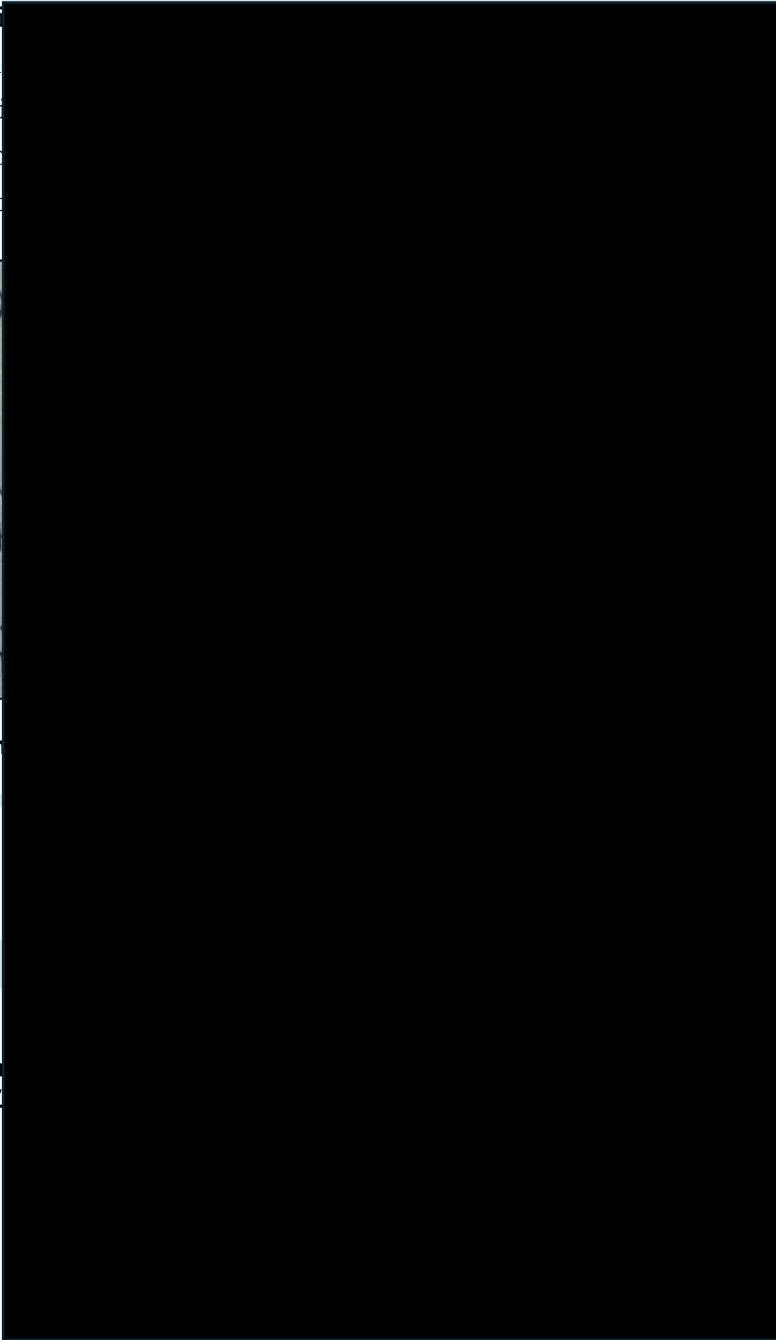
During the Great War, the Red Cross played a vital role in examining the circumstances leading to the injury and death of many soldiers, a task too time-consuming to be undertaken by the military leadership. A Red Cross investigation of George's death revealed that despite being felled by a shot to the head. The rubble of Mess Patrick, who, in the solemnity of the day, found he had fought so valiantly.



George O'Connor



Australian
and Missing
18: 1645 L
O'Connor,



O'Connor, Pte.G.W. 1645
(H. June 7/17)
O'Connor wounded in the arm
on. I was hit a few minutes
and was shortly after joined
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his thumb blown off and when
spital (58th Scottish General)
(No. not known) C.Co. 11.Fl.
A.I.F.
O'CONNOR. G.W. 1645.
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y where it came from. The book
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right hand, dark complexion,
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O'Connor.
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Hvt 21 we them.
9.4.18.
S.
P.I.

In a fitting memorial, a marble plaque in George's honour was made in Dubbo and sent with his brother Edward to place on his Western Front grave (**previous page**). Unfortunately, his Belgian resting place could not be located, and the stone was returned to Australia, where the family laid it at the entrance of the old Collie Catholic Church.⁸⁵ Rest in Eternal Peace, Lance Corporal George William O'Connor!⁸⁶

<p>COLLIE WAR CHEST</p> <p>— "WIND-UP" DAY —</p>	<p>boys at the front. This gives an idea of the general activity displayed, both by the lady workers themselves, and those who support them. The efforts of the League are generally appreciated, and by no one more than Mr F. Firth. On Saturday that gentleman, in moving a vote of thanks to the ladies for their continued good work, gave them a cheque for £14, representing the necessary monthly amount, on one condition—that they took a rest from their labors for that period. After this, if any of the districts can point to a more patriotic man than Mr Firth we would like his name mentioned. It may also be mentioned that quite a large number of Collie soldiers at the front have written home acknowledging receipt of the parcels from the Women's Workers League, and expressing their deep thanks and appreciation. Altogether Saturday was an additional important day in connection with the War Chest movement. Neither was it without a humorous side. The baby's dress, made and raffled by Mrs J. O'Connor, was—let it be whispered—won by Mr Fred O'Connor, who recently stood at the matrimonial altar. "Fred," with his usual modesty, "acknowledged the gift." The horse, presented by Mr S. E. Sadler in aid of the War Chest, was won by Mrs Kilfoyle, sen., of Dubbo, who generously donated it back. It will be disposed of at some future date.</p>
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In connection with its War Chest effort Collie has done marvellously well—better even, than was anticipated in the report of last week. The final balance is £752 8s 9d. Saturday last was a sort of "wind-up" day. There was an auction sale of goods of various descriptions, and the financial result was splendid, one of the big bidders being Mr Fred Firth, who, report says, in addition to his work and monetary help right through, spent about £20. One of the joint secretaries (Mr J. C. Brophy) read the balance-sheet to those assembled, and there were some congratulatory speeches on the wonderful success of the great united effort. The contest for the most popular woman resulted in a victory for Mrs W. Pearse, of Collie Station. That lady polled 19,072 votes, against Mrs O'Connor's 19,022, winning by the narrow margin of 50 votes. The contest right through was conducted with fine spirit. A picture presented by Mr Riby and Mr (late Private) J. McKeown, and raffled in aid of the Collie Women Workers' League, was won by Mr M. J. Brophy. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the grand, patriotic work carried on by this League. It is a credit to the ladies concerned. It may be mentioned, however, that it costs £14 a month to enable the League to send comforts to the Collie

Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 30
November 1917.

The Collie community, with many of their sons in the Great War, was obviously very keen to support the Australian war effort, raising £752 for their Community War Chest.⁸⁷ Caroline O'Connor's generosity, patriotism, and community-mindedness made her one of the most respected figures in the Collie district at this time, so much so that in the Great War fundraising competition for the district's most popular woman, she fell short by just 50 votes, receiving 19,022 to the winner's 19,072 votes (**above**).⁸⁸

The *Belgian Collie Girl*

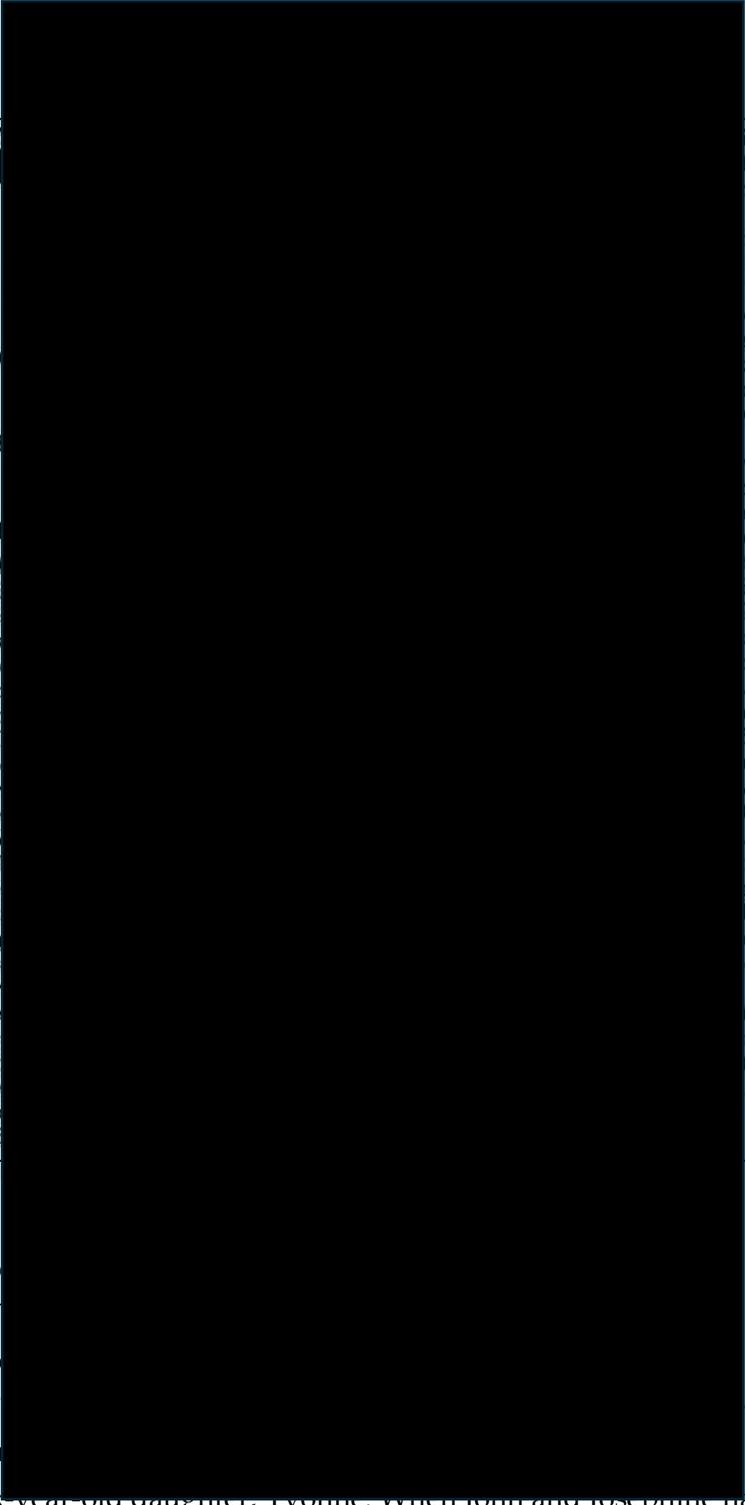
Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 2 February
1917.

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At the beginning of 1917, Caroline
champing at the bit to join them.
burden, Caroline's son John found
attracted national attention. In 19
from Belgium. While he had marr
1906, the couple already had a six-year-old daughter, Ivonne. When John and Josephine had

travelled to Belgium in 1910, their ten-year-old Yvonne remained there in the care of Josephine's sister.⁸⁹ In 1917, with Belgium under German occupation, a daring effort was undertaken by the O'Connors in Collie and Josephine's family in Antwerp to return Yvonne to her parents. News of the successful repatriation was well-received in the Collie district (**previous page**).⁹⁰ Alas, just four months later, Belgium would become the final resting place for Yvonne's uncle, George O'Connor.

Post War Blues

When the welcome-home celebrations faded and medals were quietly placed away in drawers, a subdued melancholy settled over Collie. Families mourned those who would never return, while the men who came home were no longer the carefree and cheerful lads who had marched away with the Cooees and the Kookaburras.⁹¹ For the O'Connor family, George's death left a wound that cut deeply; once a respected community leader and an inspiration to his brothers, his absence was profoundly felt. Patrick, Michael, and Edward returned bearing the unseen scars of war, and the lingering illnesses suffered by Patrick and Michael cast a long shadow over their remaining years.



**Patrick
O'Connor
and Olive
Paton,
1920.**



**Michael
O'Connor
and
Kathleen
Cridland,
1918.**

With the war an unspoken memory, Patrick, Michael, and Edward O'Connor all married and settled back into farming life. Patrick married Olive Pearl Paton in Gilgandra in 1920 (**previous page**),⁹² a match made six years earlier when Olive's sister Eva married Patrick's good mate Joe Mitchell in her hometown of Burrendong. As Joe's best man, Patrick presented both Eva and her bridesmaid, Olive, with gold brooches.⁹³ No doubt Olive held this gift close to her heart during the war years, praying for Patrick's safe return. Patrick and Olive had eight children: Owen, Elizabeth, Colleen, William, Clare, Thomas, Patricia, and Michael. Patrick farmed *Glenwood* until 1930, when his deteriorating health forced the family to move to the more favourable climate at Waitara, a northern suburb of Sydney. In 1934, Patrick wrote to the *Gilgandra Weekly* (**below**):

LIKES WAITARA. NEWS FROM MR. P. O'CONNOR

*We are in receipt of the following letter from Mr. "Paddy" O'Connor, a former well-known identity of the Collie district, who some short time ago took his departure for Waitara, in the Newcastle district, in the hope that the change of climate would prove beneficial to his health, which has been impaired as the result of war injuries. We note with pleasure that he is contented in his new surroundings, a view that will be shared by his legion of friends, especially at Collie. "We are settled down here now in our own home, and it makes a lot of difference, as when one is in a rented house it doesn't seem to be homely. I can do a bit of poking around to keep me out of mischief. This is a beautiful spot to live in—the climate is just it, only it rains a little too often, and when an old "cocky" growls about rain it's too bad. I took a run up to Newcastle last week and saw Ned. He is a real business-man now. I was quite surprised to find him so efficient at the job. He has a nice little business, in which he lives, and has another one that he rents. I have been getting the paper very regularly, and enjoy every line of it—it, is like a letter from home to me down here. I often run against some of the people from up there when in the city. I am thinking of taking a car run up that way very shortly. Remember me to all the old friends."*⁹⁴

Patrick passed away six years later, aged just 55, and he is buried in the Macquarie Park Cemetery with the inscription, *My Husband, Our Father*. Olive O'Connor passed away in 1957 and is buried with Patrick, bearing the inscription *His Wife, Our Mother* (**next page**).⁹⁵

Upon his return from the Western Front, Michael O'Connor wasted little time in marrying Kathleen Cridland at Dubbo in 1918 (**previous page**).⁹⁶ They made their home at Balladoran, where Michael selected a 609-acre (247-hectare) block, later adding two adjacent blocks, resulting in a 1,838-acre (744-hectare) farm he called *Frankland*, in a nod to his dearly departed brother, Frank O'Connor. Michael and Kathleen had six children: Francis, Mary, John, Leo, Joan, and Patrick. Kathleen O'Connor, who had a serious illness, sadly passed

away in 1941, aged 44.⁹⁷ Michael died in 1961, Dubbo.

The youngest of the O'Connors, Edward O'Connor, in the Parish of Coradgerie on the northern side married Claudia Walker in Narrabri and shortly Newcastle, where he took on a retail business and Claudia had two children, Patrick and Claudia while Claudia O'Connor died in 1993 at the Newcastle.

DEATH OF MR. PATRICK O'CONNOR

The death occurred at Randwick Military Hospital, Sydney, on the morning of 14th July, of Mr. Patrick O'Connor, at the age of 55 years. Deceased was a returned soldier, and during service with the A.I.F. was gassed. This subsequently told against him, and since 1933 he was a frequent visitor to hospital, and was an inmate for three months on the last occasion.

A son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William O'Connor, deceased was born at Eucha, Victoria, and came to this district with his parents in 1901, when the parents purchased "Balboora", Collie, in which district the family was widely known and highly respected. When the call came to our manhood during the Great War days of 1914-18, deceased was one of four brothers who answered that call. One brother, George, paid the supreme sacrifice. Returning from the war, the late Mr. O'Connor became the owner of "Glenwood," Collie, which he kept possession of until he passed away. About eight

years ago, due to indifferent health, he went to Sydney to reside and was located at Waitara. Deceased is survived by a widow and eight children, the youngest being three years, and to these the sympathy of a large circle of friends will be extended in their sad bereavement. The children are: Owen (Glenwood, Collie), William, Tom, Michael, Elizabeth, Colleen, Claire and Patricia, all of whom reside with their mother at Waitara. Deceased is also survived by the following brothers and sisters: Mr. John O'Connor (Collie), Mr. Frederick O'Connor (Balladown), Mr. Edward O'Connor (Newcastle), Mrs. Turner (Warren) and Mrs. Hennessy (Narrandera).

The body was removed from the hospital to the Catholic Church, Waitara, where Benediction was held Sunday night and a Requiem Mass on Monday morning by the Rev. Father Hall. The funeral left the church for the Catholic portion of the Northern Suburbs Cemetery, Father Hall also officiating at the graveside.

Funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. W. N. Bull, of Newcastle.

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday
25 July
1940.

Edward O'Connor and Claudia V

Balboora, Collie Listed for Sale

After the granting of probate on George's estate family control. At Christmas 1923, following with discussion, James and Patrick O'Connor, acting estates, elected to place the entire holdings under January 1924, advertisements were duly published *Advocate*, and the *Sydney Stock and Station Journal* February (next page).⁹⁹

The successful buyer was Frederick O'Connor!

<p>Important Clearing Sale</p> <p>Wednesday, February 6th.</p> <p>Commencing at 10 o'clock.</p> <p>A. TOWNSEND & SON and MILLER and JAMES,</p> <p>Auctioneers in conjunction,</p> <p>HAVE been instructed by the Executors of the Estates of the late G. W. and Wm. O'Connor to sell by auction at "BALBOORA," COLLIE, on the above date, the PROPERTY, STOCK, FARMING PLANT and MACHINERY.</p> <p>This desirable property comprises 2900 acres of Homestead Selection; boundary fenced and netted, and subdivided with netting into 10 paddocks. Watered by large tanks, giving permanent supply. 550 acres cleared for cultivation; all necessary ringbarking completed; country picked up and rabbits ploughed out; 2 Homesteads, Sheep Yards, Chaff Sheds and Machinery Sheds; connected by phone to Collie.</p>	<p>16 HEAD HORSES (Draught). 24 HEAD CATTLE. 673 Merino Ewes, 4, 6 and 8-tooth, with 50 per cent. lambs at foot and still lambing. 374 Merino Wethers, 4 and 6-tooth (cut 18/- worth of wool). 91 Merino Ewe Hoggets. 72 Merino Wether Hoggets. 153 Lambs, May and June drop. The whole of the wool from this clip averaged 21½d per lb.</p> <p>All Machinery, Waggon, Drays, Chaff-cutler, Harness, Blacksmith's Tools, 30 Tons Wheaten Hay, 20 Tons Prime New Season's Chaff, 20 Bags Good Clean Seed Wheat (Schneider), 180 Tons of Wheaten Ensilage in two pits.</p> <p>LUNCHEON PROVIDED.</p> <p>MILLER & JAMES, A. TOWNSEND & SON, Auctioneers, Gilgandra.</p>
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The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate, Tuesday 29 January 1924.

Conclusion

During their first two decades at Collie, the *Balboora O'Connors* achieved notable success in farming and actively contributed to local civic life, social events, and sporting pursuits, especially cricket and tennis. Yet it was during the Great War that their commitment was most deeply felt, with four sons serving, George making the ultimate sacrifice, and the family raising funds with remarkable dedication. The period was also marked by the tragic death of young Frank and the passing of the indomitable William, as well as the marriages of Patrick, Frederick and Michael. At the centre of it all, though, stood Caroline, whose quiet strength held the family strong.

By 1924, with the 2,900-acre (1,174-hectare) *Balboora* in the hands of Frederick O'Connor, he joined his cousins, Patrick O'Connor at Kyneton and Letitia Healy at Finley, to hold properties bearing the *Balboora* name. **Chapter 6 – Fred's Balboora 1925–1955** focuses on the life and time of Frederick O'Connor and his family at *Balboora*, Collie.

Notes

¹ New South Wales Land Register. (n.d.). Historical Land Records Viewer. Available at: <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>

² *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 9 February 1901

³ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Saturday 17 August 1901

⁴ The 1901 Federation drought, one of the most severe climatic crises to strike Australia, hit the Collie district hard, devastating its predominantly pastoral economy and stressing small farming families already grappling with marginal rainfall. Many selectors faced financial ruin as crops failed repeatedly, wells dried, and the cost of carting water from distant points soared. The drought also intensified rural depopulation pressures as families abandoned unviable holdings, while those who remained relied heavily on community cooperation, local relief efforts, and government assistance. Though rain eventually returned in 1902–03, the Federation drought left a lasting imprint on the Collie landscape and memory, reinforcing both the vulnerability and resilience of inland settlements on the semi-arid western plains.

⁵ One of the most devastating droughts in Australian history, the Federation Drought severely affected western NSW. Rainfall was well below average, stock losses were catastrophic, and rivers like the Castlereagh near Gilgandra ran dry.

⁶ *Castlereagh*, Friday 11 January 1907

⁷ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Saturday 25 August 1906

⁸ *Daily Advertiser Wagga Wagga*, Friday 5 May 1944

⁹ *Referee*, Wednesday 7 February 1923

¹⁰ A coachman was a driver employed to operate a horse-drawn coach, buggy, or wagon, responsible for transporting passengers, mail, or goods between towns and rural properties.

¹¹ *Dubbo Dispatch*, Monday 15 June 1942

¹² *Gilgandra and Castlereagh Weekly*, Thursday 9 March 1939

¹³ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. James O'Connor and Caroline O'Connor.

¹⁴ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. John and Josephine O'Connor.

¹⁵ In 1910, John and Josephine O'Connor registered the birth of another girl named Yvonne J O'Connor, in Sydney. Yvonne Josephine A Chowne (O'Connor) died in 1957, with her grave indicating her birthdate as unknown.

¹⁶ New South Wales Land Register, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ *Castlereagh*, Friday 3 March 1905

¹⁸ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Wednesday 6 July 1910

¹⁹ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 10 April 1914

²⁰ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 26 November 1915

²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 30 March 1917

²² *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 10 September 1912

²³ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 21 August 1914

²⁴ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 18 September 1914

²⁵ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 16 October 1914

²⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 10 December 1915

²⁷ A potato race is a novelty or folk-event race in which contestants, either on foot or horseback, must collect potatoes and deposit them in a basket as quickly as possible.

²⁸ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Wednesday 16 June 1906

²⁹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 7 June 1907

³⁰ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 6 August 1912

³¹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 3 March 1905

³² O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. William O'Connor.

³³ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 19 June 1913

³⁴ Balboora Farm 451 Maxwells Rd, Finley NSW Available at: <https://www.afr.com/property/ace-farming-brings-in-us-investor-for-new-deals-as-dairy-sector-consolidates-20170615-qws0wi>

³⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 14 January 1916

³⁶ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Collie Hall 1916 – Farewell dinner – Patrick and Michael O'Connor.

³⁷ The Kookaburra March departed Tooraweenah on 12 January 1916 with 25 volunteers and arrived at Bathurst on 3 February with 100 recruits with stops at Yarragrin, Mendooran, Boomley, Cobbora, Dunedoo, Birriwa, Tallawang, Gulgong, Mudgee, Havilah, Lue, Rylstone, Kandos, Ilford, Capertee, Cullen Bullen, Portland, and Wallerawang.

³⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 28 January 1916

³⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 11 February 1916

⁴⁰ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Collie Hotel – Send-off for Patrick and Michael O'Connor.

⁴¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 24 March 1916

⁴² Birtwistle Wiki. (n.d.). HMAT A40 Ceramic. Public domain. Available at: https://birtwistlewiki.com.au/wiki/HMAT_A40_Ceramic

⁴³ Davies, W (Ed). (2006). *Somme Mud. The war experiences of an Australian Infantryman in France 1916-1919*. Random House Australia, North Sydney.

⁴⁴ Davies, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ Public Domain. Available at: <https://collections.sea.museum/objects/23773/australian-army-soldiers-marching-along-macquarie-street-sy>

- ⁴⁶ Davies, op. cit.
- ⁴⁷ The Australian transport vessel HMAT Medic prepares to leave the wharf at Port Melbourne. (AWM PB0578)
- ⁴⁸ Davies, op. cit.
- ⁴⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 6 April 1917
- ⁵⁰ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, George William. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7993869>
- ⁵¹ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, Patrick. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8001062>
- ⁵² National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor Michael. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7993878>
- ⁵³ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. George O'Connor postcard to Eileen Chisholm.
- ⁵⁴ Gilgandra Diggers (n.d.). Available at: <https://gilgandraddiggers.org.au>
- ⁵⁵ *Taken on Strength* means that a soldier was officially added to the roster or establishment of a specific unit or formation.
- ⁵⁶ Promoted *in the field* means that a soldier received a promotion while serving at or near the front lines, rather than at a rear base, depot, or in Australia.
- ⁵⁷ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, George William, op. cit.
- ⁵⁸ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, Patrick, op. cit.
- ⁵⁹ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor Michael, op. cit.
- ⁶⁰ Pleurisy is inflammation of the pleura—the membrane surrounding the lungs—that causes sharp chest pain with breathing, while pleural effusion is the abnormal buildup of fluid in the pleural space, often resulting from infection, injury, or disease.
- ⁶¹ Gilgandra Diggers, op. cit.
- ⁶² National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). O'Connor, Patrick, op. cit.
- ⁶³ Meningitis is an inflammation of the protective membranes (meninges) surrounding the brain and spinal cord, typically caused by a bacterial or viral infection, and can lead to serious complications if not treated promptly.
- ⁶⁴ Gilgandra Diggers, op. cit.
- ⁶⁵ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor Michael, op. cit.
- ⁶⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 19 January 1917
- ⁶⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 9 March 1917
- ⁶⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 22 June 1917
- ⁶⁹ During World War I, Australians under the age of 21 required written parental or guardian consent to enlist.
- ⁷⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 10 August 1917
- ⁷¹ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Edward O'Connor.
- ⁷² National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, Edward Joseph. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7991698>
- ⁷³ Australian War Memorial. (n.d.). Image PO4541.001. Public domain. Available at: www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1078532?image=2
- ⁷⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 13 July 1917
- ⁷⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 17 August 1917
- ⁷⁶ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Tuesday 28 August 1917
- ⁷⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 24 August 1917
- ⁷⁸ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, George William, op. cit.
- ⁷⁹ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. George O'Connor.
- ⁸⁰ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, George William, op. cit.
- ⁸¹ Australian War Memorial. (n.d.). The Battle of Messines June 7th. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/messines>
- ⁸² Virtual War Memorial Australia. (n.d.). The Western Front – The War Underground. Available at: <https://vwma.org.au/collections/home-page-stories/the-underground-war---tunnellers-and-miners-in-the-great-war>
- ⁸³ Carlyon, L. (2006). *The Great War*. Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney
- ⁸⁴ Davies, W. (2010). *Beneath Hill 60*, Random House Australia (Vintage Books), North Sydney.
- ⁸⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1953
- ⁸⁶ Australian War Memorial. (n.d.). *Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau files, 1914–18 War: 1645 Lance Corporal George William O'Connor, 45th Battalion, AIF, 1DR/L0428*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
- ⁸⁷ £752 in 1917 is roughly equivalent to about AUD \$132,000 in 2026 adjusting for inflation and CPI.
- ⁸⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 30 November 1917
- ⁸⁹ In 1910, John and Josephine O'Connor registered the birth of another girl named Yvonne J O'Connor, in Sydney. Yvonne Josephine A Chowne (O'Connor) died in 1957, with her grave indicating her birthdate as unknown.
- ⁹⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 2 February 1917
- ⁹¹ The Cooees were the volunteers of the 1915 Gilgandra Cooees Recruitment March who walked nearly 500 kilometres to Sydney, calling "cooees" through towns to encourage enlistment and growing from 26 men to more than 260 by journey's end. The *Kookaburras* were a similar recruiting column that set out from Mendooran in 1915, using marches, rallies, and patriotic ceremony to draw local men into the AIF as communities across rural New South Wales rallied behind the war effort.
- ⁹² O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Wedding – Patrick O'Connor and Olive Paton.
- ⁹³ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday, 8 May 1914
- ⁹⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 19 April 1934

⁹⁵ Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 25 July 1940

⁹⁶ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Wedding – Michael O'Connor and Kathleen Cridland.

⁹⁷ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Saturday 5 Jul 1941

⁹⁸ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Wedding – Edward O'Connor and Claudia Walker.

⁹⁹ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 29 January 1924

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Chapter 6

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Fred and Eileen

Frederick O'Connor and Eileen Chisholm were well-known to each other, with Fred's brother George and Eileen's brother Donald the best of mates. They married on 24 October 1917 at Gilgandra (**below**).³ Eileen was the daughter of Donald and Ellen Chisholm. Donald managed *Pine Lodge* near Collie. Before moving to Collie, Donald, a Scotsman, managed sheep for the Scottish Chirnside family, who, through the 1800s, had assembled one of the largest sheep-grazing empires in southeastern Australia.

<p>WEDDING BELLS</p> <p>O'CONNOR—CHISHOLM</p>	<p>paillette silk, trimmed Maltese lace, white silk ruffled hat, saxe blue velvet roses and streamers. The bridegroom's present to the bride was a gold cable bracelet, together with a bouquet of snowdrops, lilies of the valley, and maiden hair fern; and to the bridesmaid a gold basket bangle, and bouquet of sweet and roses. The bride's present to the bridegroom was a pair of gold sleeve links. The bride's travelling frock was of navy crepe de chene, white sailor collar, hat en suite, white ostrich neck boa. The wedding breakfast was held at Mr J. Brophy's Collie Hotel. Great credit is due to Mr and Mrs Brophy for the excellent, and most elegant manner in which everything was carried out. During the afternoon the happy couple left, mid showers of confetti, by motor car for Gilgandra, where they caught the train for Sydney, where the honeymoon will be spent. Their future home is "Lisfarren," Collie. To the newly married couple we extend our hearty congratulations.</p>
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On Wednesday, October 24th, in the Roman Catholic Church, Collie, the marriage was celebrated by Rev. Father Parker (Gilgandra) of Mr Frederick O'Connor, son of Mrs W. O'Connor, "Balbora," with Miss Eileen Jean Chisholm, daughter of Mr and Mrs D. Chisholm, "Pine Lodge," Gilgandra. The bride entered the church, which was nicely decorated by lady friends of the bride, on the arm of her father, who gave her away. She was attended by her only sister, Miss Kathleen Chisholm, as bridesmaid. Mr Mick O'Connor, brother of the bridegroom, acted as best man. The bride was attired in a gown of ivory crepe de chene, trimmed shadow lace, with touches of silver. The orthodox wreath and veil being worn. The bridesmaid's frock was of white

Gilgandra Weekly, Friday
2 November 1917.

In the years before William's death in 1913, he and Caroline O'Connor were living in Brisbane Street, Dubbo. After his passing, Caroline returned to *Balboora*, where Fred and Eileen cared for her following their marriage. Photographs taken at *Balboora* show Caroline and her daughter-in-law Eileen seated in a sulky, and Caroline enjoying the sunshine while knitting (**next page**).⁴ Declining health in the late 1920s eventually forced her to leave *Balboora* and return to Dubbo, where her son Jack cared for her until her death on 4 September 1929. Caroline's passing was deeply felt by the O'Connor family and throughout the Collie district; the *Gilgandra Weekly* remembered her as one of its most generous and respected residents, whose life would remain *imprinted on the sands of time*.⁵ while an obituary published in *The Catholic Press* eloquently speaks to the love and admiration she inspired (**next page**).⁶

Farming *Balboora*

Shortly after taking the reins at *Balboora*, Fred, as well as Patrick McGrane, Charles Monk, Solomon Murray, Morton McDonald, William Barr, John Brophy, William Pearse, and William Fife, was interviewed in the Collie Hall by members of a NSW Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works charged with investigating the viability of a rail line between Warren and Quambone (**next page**).⁷ In his evidence to the standing committee, Fred noted that he lived at *Lisfarran*, via Collie, and he was a farmer and grazier with about 2,800 acres. He said that, in this district, a mixed farm of at least 1500 acres was required to sustain a family. He noted that the country around Collie was ideal for fattening cattle and sheep, and in favourable seasons, he could harvest up to 14 bags per acre. He also indicated that farming in the area was *somewhat slipshod*, with little attention paid to scientific farming methods, and he concluded his contribution by suggesting that successful farmers were those who conserved ensilage.⁸ Fred O'Connor had an enviable reputation as an expert farmer, and in 1930, Fred received widespread acknowledgement for his use of ensilage with the *Daily Express Wagga Wagga* noting:

*Mr. F. O'Connor of "Lisfaren" Gilgandra, has demonstrated the value of ensilage to stockowners in that district. All through the dry spell Mr O'Connor has fed 2,000 sheep and lost only 10 head in 12 months. He marked 80 per cent of lambs.*⁹

Fred and a handful of others interviewed by the standing committee were an influential part of Collie's commercial and social fabric. In the 1920s, the Collie Hotel was run by a handful of them with interlocking responsibilities. William Pearse owned the hotel, while John Brophy leased and operated it as the licensed publican. The property was financially supported by three mortgagees, Fred O'Connor, John Fenton, and Charles Monk, who jointly held security over the hotel and effectively underpinned its operation.¹⁰

The Great Depression

The 1930s proved an exceptionally difficult decade for the O'Connor household. The onset of the Great Depression, triggered by the collapse of global financial markets in late 1929, brought unprecedented hardship to farmers across western New South Wales.¹¹ Wheat prices fell from more than five shillings a bushel in the late 1920s to below two shillings by 1931, while wool values halved, leaving little profit once the costs of seed, machinery, and freight were met.¹² Severe drought conditions and the intensely hot summer of 1929–30

compounded the crisis, as crop failures and wind erosion coincided with collapsing markets, forcing many Collie farmers into overwhelming debt and, in some cases, abandonment of their holdings. The government's policy of sheep for tallow as overgrazing further weakened the economy. Government wheat and wool tariffs offered limited relief, exacerbating the financial strain on rural families.¹⁶

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During the hardship of the Depression, the O'Connell family including Jean (11), Don (10), Jack (8), and Mary (6) were months pregnant with Ken, not only had to cope with the economic downturn but were struck down at the same time with gallstones. Don was hospitalized at the State Hospital in Gilgandra for treatment!¹⁷ The family's vegetable garden was taken at about this time.

**F
J
in**



As if conditions weren't difficult enough, a double disaster in August 1932 placed further stress on the O'Connor household. Fred's harness shed was destroyed by fire, and just days later, he and Jean were travelling in the sulky when the horses shied, overturning the gig, significantly damaging both sulky and harness. Thankfully, neither Fred nor Jean was injured.¹⁹

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 4 July
1935.

<p>DISTRICT</p> <p>CONDITIONS</p> <p>REPORT FOR JUNE</p> <p>By Mr. B. M. Arthur</p>	<p>points may possibly do more harm than good in making a per centage of the grain.</p> <p>In the Narromine district conditions vary from fair to bad. In the southern portion around Tomingley and Wyanga, owing to the receipt of larger rainfalls during late April and early May, germination and subsequent growth has been from good to fair, but west and north it is again bad.</p> <p>Fallowed areas are in many cases no better than stubble ground.</p> <p>Generally speaking, the position of the areas sown to wheat throughout this district is deplorable and the outlook, to say the least, unsatisfactory. Crop growth, where apparent, is at a standstill due to frosts and cold weather and all are backward for this time of the year. Fallowing has commenced in many localities for next year, and although dry, the soil is mostly turning over in very fair order.</p> <p>Probably the area sown to wheat is a slight decrease compared with last year, owing to the prevailing conditions. It is known that some farmers have not yet sown, holding off until it does rain—if not too late.</p> <p>Pastures are generally very low and depleted, except in the eastern section, where there is still a green pick, but no bulk of feed. Many landowners, including large holding graziers, have had to resort to hand-feeding and scrub cutting in order to try and prevent stock mortality, especially amongst lambing ewes.</p> <p>Many are now starting to lose a per centage of their sheep, and the outlook for the balance of this winter is not at all promising.</p> <p>Generally speaking, it can be readily stated that we are now experiencing a drought, such as has not been felt since 1920, and prospects for either a satisfactory wheat harvest or suitable conditions for the stockowner, have almost gone beyond recovery for this season, unless adequate rains, accompanied by reasonably warm conditions, are experienced at an early date.</p> <p>(Since the above report was issued by Mr. Arthur the outlook has been completely changed by the beneficial general rain over the week end).</p>
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No rain of any consequence, or of any great value, has been received during the month of June, and this following the long dry spell since early in May, has not been conducive to the development of suitable conditions, either for crop germination and growth, or for the pastures, adds Mr. B. M. Arthur, the Chief Agricultural Instructor for this district, in his report for the month of June, on the condition of crops, etc.

In addition, the report adds, some of the severest winter conditions in the form of continuous heavy frosts and cold windy days, have been experienced during the past week or so, and this has not tended to improve the situation.

In my last report I stated that germination of crops in the Eastern section of the district, which had been sown during late April or early May, had germinated fairly satisfactorily. Owing to the absence of further rains and the occurrence of severe frosts these crops are now feeling the lack of soil moisture, are not growing healthily, and in many cases are wilting, and burning off.

Some farmers have turned stock into them, in order to try and check this deterioration. All late sown areas have either germinated very patchy, or the seed still remains dry, awaiting moisture.

To the north, in the Eumungerie, Gilgandra, Curban, Tooraweenah, and Armatree districts, the condition of crops is really bad. Almost without exception germination has been extremely patchy or in most cases none has taken place so far. Recent small falls of from 10 to 20

Just as markets began to recover, another drought from 1934 to 1936 struck with devastating force. Failed rains brought withered crops, dust storms stripped away precious topsoil, and millions of sheep either perished or were boiled down by farmers for tallow.²⁰ A report in the *Gilgandra Weekly* (above) captured the scale of the crisis confronting farmers across the

district.²¹ Grinding poverty forced many families onto relief rations, young men left in search of work, and countless farmers abandoned their holdings. In the long term, many small selections were absorbed into larger pastoral properties, making the Depression and drought years a defining period of hardship that permanently reshaped farming and community life across the western districts.

As the hardships of the 1930–36 years mounted, many western graziers and wheat-growers began turning their attention southward to the irrigated plains of the Riverina and northern Victoria, where government-backed schemes such as the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) promised reliable water, fertile alluvial soils, and more secure returns. With growing towns, diversified farming opportunities, and renewed optimism emerging after the worst of the Depression, the region offered hope to families seeking recovery after years of drought, dust storms, and debt. In February 1936, Fred and Eileen, accompanied by Jean, Don, and Jack, embarked on an extended motor tour through the Riverina and Victoria to visit relatives and old acquaintances. They may also have cast an eye on whether a southern move might offer better prospects. As a frequent contributor to the *Gilgandra Weekly*, Eileen submitted a detailed report describing the places they visited, praising the gardens, farms, and especially the MIA, where she marvelled at the fruit canneries and butter factories at Leeton. She finished her contribution by saying:

*...that after returning home to find Collie refreshed by widespread rain, the good green acres of home compares favourably with the land in any of our pleasant and enlightening motor tour.*²²

Four undated photos capture farming life at *Balboora* **(next page)**.^{23 24} How Fred and Eileen O'Connor managed to keep their large young family and farm afloat during these harsh years is difficult to imagine, especially given that Eileen delivered their eighth child, Colin, at Gilgandra in 1931.²⁵ Fred and Eileen would not have any more children until Terry in 1937 and Ian in 1939 **(below)**.²⁶

Eileen and Ian O'Connor





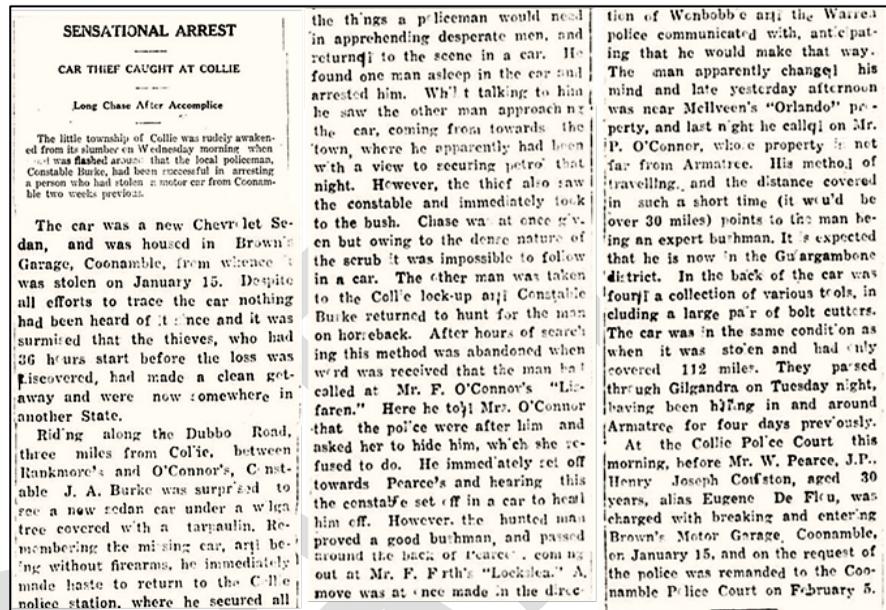
Daily life at *Balboora* through
and what remains of this

bottom right of the panel,



Even in those tough years, some excitement found its way to *Balboora*. In January 1931, a car thief on the run from police tried to force his way into the O'Connor home, only to be met and firmly repelled by the formidable Eileen. The *Gilgandra Weekly* carried the story (below).²⁷

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 29
January 1931.



Despite the long and demanding days on the farm, Fred and Eileen never stopped contributing to community life in Collie. Throughout the 1930s, 40s and 50s, they and their children played active roles in the church, local leadership, fundraising efforts, the school, music, and sports.

Collie Catholic Church

For almost a century, ever since Patrick and Margaret O'Connor arrived from Ireland, the O'Connors maintained a strong Catholic identity and supported their local church. Fred continued this legacy, leading a pious life and giving considerable time and effort to the ministry and maintenance of the Collie Catholic Church. As a young man, he, along with his brothers Michael and George, had cut and carted the timber for the building of the church in 1911.²⁸

Fred ensured that his children were diligent in their religious instruction, particularly through the study of Catechism.²⁹ Jean, Fred and Eileen's eldest child was a frequent pen pal with Erica from *The Catholic Press* in Sydney.³⁰ In one of her letters, she described Collie (below).³¹ During a 19... Heart (MSC), represented by the R... Ryan, MSC, conducted events in Dubbo, inc... of this visit to the area, Father Ryan conduc... tended by the O'Connors, with Jean

*Last month we... ed Heart Missionary, conducted it: he... able to attend every morning and night.*³³

“Balboora,” Collie, via
Dear Erica,—It seems
since I wrote to you, I
like to write again. I am
about Collie, Erica. It
town, with one hotel. The
two halls, a baker and b
a few houses, and there
garage. Have you ever
lington Caves, Erica? I
through them, but have
dear Erica, I shall now
best wishes to the Page
friend,

J.E.

(I am glad to hear from
Your description of your
interesting. What do the p
rather, round about C
farmers? No, I have n
Wellington Caves. In fa
them, so that you are be
in that respect. I expect
at school now. You do
there are any churches
you go to hear Holy Ma
school is. Perhaps you w
another letter later on.)

For the O'Connors a... e served as the weekly anchor—a time of de... red Fred an opportunity to reaffirm his faith... sense of religious belonging and tradit... has held particular significance, drawing the extended family together in celebrations that deepened both their spiritual lives and family bonds.

Fred and Eileen undoubtedly took great pride in their daughter Jean, who was among the eight debutantes chosen from over 200 young women at the 1934 Gilgandra Catholic Ball, to be presented to Monsignor O'Donnell of the Bathurst Diocese (**below**).³⁴

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 14 June
1934.

THE DEBUTANTES	
<p>The young ladies presented to Monsignor O'Donnell were.—</p> <p>Miss Noelyn Raglan, white flat crepe, white velvet coat.</p> <p>Miss Audrey Lewis, white velvet rhinestone trimmings, white velvet coat.</p> <p>Miss Joy McGrane (Collie), wind-wrept satin, silver lame trimmings.</p> <p>Miss Sheila Kelly, white French</p>	<p>crinkle crepe, white velvet cape and silver halo.</p> <p>Miss Jean Meers (Collie), white morocain, pink coat, bouquet of white and silver.</p> <p>Miss Jean Donnelly, white organ die, white velvet coat and trimmings.</p> <p>Miss Jean West, white French crepe, satin coat, sequin trimmings</p> <p>Miss Jean O'Connor (Collie), white angel skin, lace pink velvet coatee.</p>

Fundraising for the Church was a constant feature of community life, most notably during the decade-long campaign, spearheaded by Fred O'Connor, to build a new church at Collie. Throughout this period, the O'Connor family played a leading role, organising and supporting events such as gymkhanas and clay-pigeon shoots to raise the necessary funds. In recognition of these efforts, and his long devotion to the Collie Catholic community, Fred O'Connor stood alongside Father Joseph Emelhainz, parish priest of Gilgandra, to welcome Bishop John Francis Norton, the Irish-born Bishop of Bathurst, for the official opening and blessing of the new *Church of the Holy Cross* at Collie.³⁵

Catholic Weekly,
Thursday 3
September 1953.

BATHURST	
<p>New Collie Church Blessed, Opened</p> <p>The new Church of Holy Cross, Collie, was blessed on Sunday of last week by His Lordship Bishop Norton. Solemn High Mass was then celebrated by the Rev. Father H. Brown (Rockley), with the Rev. Fathers J. M. Ring, P.P. (Coonamble), as deacon, and O. Emelhainz, D.D. (Gilgandra), master of ceremonies. The Most Rev. Dr. W. Brennan (Bishop-elect of Toowoomba), the Rev. Fathers L. Goodacre (Kandos) and M. McNamee (Wellington) were also present. The music of the Mass was sung by the Convent School Choir from Gilgandra.</p> <p>At midday more than 200 people, many of them former residents of Collie, attended a banquet in the local hall, which had been prepared by</p>	<p>the Gilgandra Ladies' Auxiliary. Bishop Norton was welcomed by Father Emelhainz, Mr. F. O'Connor and Mr. F. David Pye, all of whom expressed their appreciation of the interest His Lordship had taken in the erection of the church.</p> <p>The Bishop in his reply congratulated Father Emelhainz and the people of Collie on the enthusiasm and energy they had shown once they came to the conclusion a more worthy church was needed. He showed how appropriate it was to name the new church Holy Cross, as every Catholic church was in a sense a "Holy Cross" church, in which the sacrifice of Mount Calvary is perpetuated in the Mass. This is the first church building for which Father Emelhainz has been responsible, and Bishop Norton expressed his hope that it would be the first of a long line erected to the glory of God.</p>

Community

Beyond the farm and the church, Fred and Eileen poured a great deal of their energy into community and civic life. Fred was a strong advocate for the rights of the man on the land, playing an active role in the Collie Farmers and Settlers Association and campaigning tirelessly for a railway through Collie. In 1947, as Vice-President of the Collie Railway League, he pressed the government to construct the proposed Eumungerie–Collie–Quambone line without delay. The League urged all district residents to join the movement, arguing that *the railway will serve one of the best farming and grazing areas in the state, and it behoves all to get behind the movement and speed it up*.³⁶ Despite years of determined lobbying, a line never transpired, and Collie remains without a railway.

In 1944, Eileen, whose poetry was widely celebrated, compiled, for publication and sale, a selection of her work, entitled *My Garden of Verse* (**below**), to raise much-needed funds to establish a Gilgandra District Ambulance Service.³⁷ In a second edition of her work published in 1984, the introduction, written by family friend Marion Dormer, noted that:

*Many of her poems were written during Mrs O'Connor's busy years as a housewife and mother. Others were composed when three of her sons were serving in the Armed Forces. Her courage and maternal love shine through those written during those anxious years.*³⁸

THE NEED IS DESPERATE
 SAYS AN AMBULANCE
 SUBSCRIBER
 APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

"An ambulance is something Gilgandra lacks and is desperately in need of," says an anonymous subscriber of 410.

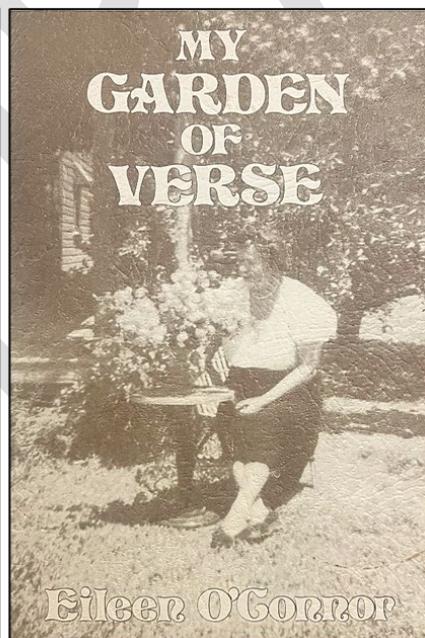
The Committee of the service again appeals to all to contribute to this worthy appeal according to their means.

Many appeals have been made in the name of charity and responded to most generously by the people of Gilgandra, but in this appeal the people are asked to relieve pain and suffering—for that is the primary function of an ambulance—and for this reason those who have not already subscribed should do so immediately.

Send in your cheque today.

SUPPORT FROM COLLIE

To indicate the interest displayed in all parts of the district it is only necessary to mention the effort to help the fund that is being made by a resident of the Collie district. Mrs. Fred O'Connor, of "Lisfaren," whose ability as a writer of verse is known all over the State, has having published at her own expense a book of her poems and these will be sold and the entire proceeds donated towards the Gilgandra District Ambulance Service. A very generous donation on the part of Mrs. O'Connor.

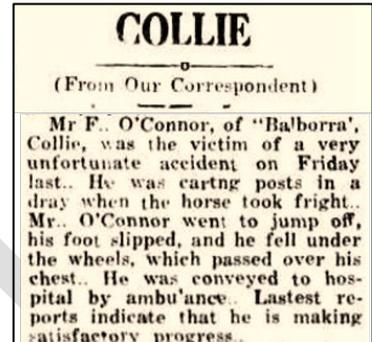


Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 20 April
1944.

O'Connor, Eileen.
(1984). *My Garden*
***of Verse*. Second**
Edition.

In a poignant twist of fate, just four years after Eileen raised funds to help establish the district's ambulance service, it would be that very service that rushed to Fred's aid following an accident that almost proved fatal (**below**).³⁹

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 12 August
1948.



The first poem in *My Garden of Verse* is called Jonquils:

JONQUILS

*I SMELT the first sweet scent of Spring,
Upon the frosty air,
And searching in my garden found,
Pale jonquils blooming there.*

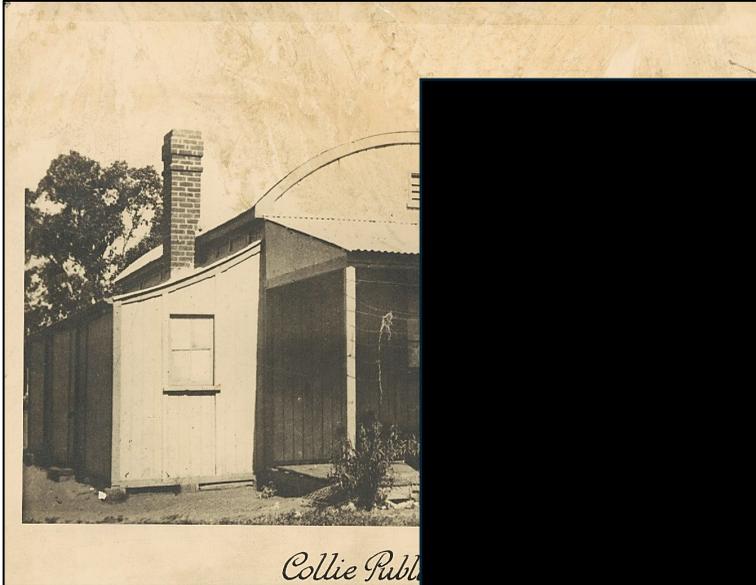
*I saw them in the morning mist,
With sunbeams peeping thru',
In cream and yellow loveliness,
All dripping with the dew.*

*Not long ago their first green shoots,
Had bared the wintry cold,
And now the fairy flowers are there,
All nodding white and gold.*

*I knelt and clasped the first frail buds,
And drank their fragrance sweet,
Brave tender buds that dare to bloom,
Amid the wintry sleet.*

*I'll treasure long these scented buds,
Where Winter snow lies deep,
The Spring may bring a thousand blooms,
When jonquils are asleep.*

School



1927.

The Collie Public School became a focal point for the community, as they actively supported the school and its sporting development (above).⁴⁰ Fred's priorities, and, with Fred serving as a parent, he worked determinedly to ensure the school thrived in the district.⁴¹

It was no surprise, then, that all the children in their classes, with Keith, Brian, and Eileen, participated in *W Health and Temperance Examinations*.⁴² ⁴³ Eileen, well-educated, Eileen employed a tutor for her children. The eight children of Fred's brother, Keith, performed admirably.

A particular highlight of the school year was the 1931 event featuring fancy dress and costume contests.

, as they and family's interests in the

the top of *W Health* tuition.⁴⁹ too,

1931 event and!⁵⁰

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 11 June
1931.

<p style="text-align: center;">A Great Success</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Many Fancy and Original Costumes</p> <hr/> <p>The annual juvenile ball under the control of the Parents and Citizens' Association, was held at Collie on Wednesday, 3rd. June, when in spite of adverse weather, a great crowd was in attendance, and nearly 70 fancy costumes were paraded.</p> <p>The judges, Mrs. Rose and Mr. W. Hunt, had an unenviable task, and in some cases were unable to separate the contestants, the prizes being divided.</p> <p>A sumptuous supper was served by the ladies, and dancing and fun lasted till the early hours of Thursday, when the kiddies, both young and old, voted the evening the "best ever."</p> <p>Mr. V. Moore made an efficient M.C., and Mr. Brophy acted as Parade Steward. The music was supplied by Miss F. O'Connor, Messrs. E. Meers, J. O'Connor and F. Grimes.</p> <p>The committee wish to thank all ladies and gentlemen who gave their help for the children's entertainment.</p> <p>Prize winners were as follows:— Best costume in hall: Lolo Greentree, "Spring".</p>	<p>Best pair, under 10 years: Don McNabb and Valerie Ostler, "Bride and Bridegroom," and Ken McNabb and Jessie McNabb, "Ginger and Min" divided.</p> <p>Best pair over 10 years: Doreen Meers and Marie Brophy, "Nigger Minstrel."</p> <p>Most original costume, under 8 years: Ray McGrane, "Jockey."</p> <p>Most original girl, over 8 years: Dorothy Tink, "Japanese."</p> <p>Most original boy, over 8 years: John Rankmore, "Dole Rations."</p> <p>Best poster costumes, over 10 years: Ruby Wheatley and Beulah Coleman "All Gold Products".</p> <p>Best poster costumes, under 10 years: Fay Welsh, "Arnott's Biscuits".</p> <p>Best comic costume, boy: Len Ostler, "Jack-in-a-Box."</p> <p>Best comic costume, girl: Joyce McGrane, "Things of the Past."</p> <p>Most humorous costume, gentleman, Mr. C. Ostler, "Monkey."</p> <p>Most humorous costume, lady, Miss Elsie More, "Gussy," and Miss Edna Welsh, "Tilly" divided.</p> <p>Other costumes noted were:— Eileen Brophy and Jean Meers, Plum Benzine. Julia Brophy, Bushell's Tea. Frances Rankmore, Irish Moss Jubes Gertie Rankmore, Aunt Mary's Baking Powder. Joan Meers, Rex Pie. Joyce Stewart, Arnott's Biscuits. Zena Welsh, Arnott's Biscuits. Mary McGrane, Buy Australian made Goods. Margaret McGrane, Peter's Ice Cream Jean O'Connor, Powder Puff</p>	<p>Betty Wardrop, Yale Blues. Jean Mealey, Gipsy Jean McMaster, Columbine Norma Rankmore, Bluebell Vera Rankmore, Playing Cards. Joyce Rankmore, Clock Lorna McGrane, C. lie football cup. Betty O'Connor, Fairy Dora Hartnett, Butterfly Evelyn Tink, Welsh Girl Pat Brophy and Kathleen Moore Red Riding Hood, Mervyn Ostler, Depression Ted Welsh, King Billy. Duval Meers, Peanut Butter Peter McMaster, Shell Benzine Mick Brophy, Felix Don O'Connor and Cedric Wardrop Scotch Laddies Jack O'Connor, Clown. Val Meers, Union Benzine Kevin Brophy, Sunbeams George Hartnett, Red Indian Malcolm Tink, Gondolier Arthur Mealey, Clown. Adults, Costumes:— Miss H. Miller, Superstitious Misses Elsie Moore and E. Welsh, Tilly and Gussy. Misses Evie Moore and Molly Brophy, Gollywogs J. Spence, Barber J. Mulhall, Depression C. Greentree, Half and Half W. Hartnett, Lady J. Selby, Bulldog C. Ostler, Monkey</p>
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It was the sporting field, though, where the O'Connors left their mark, especially when it came to athletics, cricket, tennis, and horse sports. School picnics and inter-school sporting events were significant occasions on the O'Connor calendar. Whenever possible, Eileen and Fred participated by providing lunches, serving as officials or judges, and even hosting inter-school tennis matches on the *Balboora* court.⁵¹

They were especially pleased when, in 1933, Collie Public School reformed its tennis club, with the 13-year-old Don elected president (**next page**).⁵² The results from the Collie Public School Picnic Days in 1932, 1933, 1943, and 1948 illustrate just how much the children enjoyed competing in the events (**next pages**).^{53 54 55 56}

SCHOOL TENNIS

The Collie Public School has reformed its tennis club for 1933, with the following officials:—

President: Don O'Connor.
 Vice-Presidents: Betty Wardrop and Mick Brophy.
 Secretary: Fay Welsh.
 Treasurer: Lola Greentree.
 It is hoped to play matches with surrounding schools during the season.

**Gilgandra Weekly,
 Thursday 6 April 1933.**

**Gilgandra Weekly,
 Thursday 15 September 1932.**

ANNUAL SCHOOL PICNIC

The annual school picnic was held on Saturday last in fine weather, when a large attendance of parents and children thoroughly enjoyed the various athletic events and games. Refreshments were laid on in abundance and every child present shared in the prize winning. The picnic was followed by a dance at night, when the hall was uncomfortably crowded with dancers, who enjoyed every minute of the evening's entertainment.

Principal prize winners at the picnic were:—

GIRLS' EVENTS (Collie School Children)

First Class: Joyce Wheatley 1, Ida Rankmore 2, Paty Bogie 3.
 Second and Third Classes: First Heat, Valerie Ostler 1, Hilda Bogie 2, Betty O'Connor 3; Second Heat, Zena Welsh 1, Betty Bogie 2, Jessie McNabb 3.

Fifth and Sixth Classes: Frances Rankmore 1, Lola Greentree 2, Jean Mealey 3.

Beaten Girls' Race: Joan Meers 1, Norma Rankmore 2, Joyce Rankmore 3.

ALL COMERS GIRLS' EVENTS
 Three and four year olds: Diana Tink 1, Kathleen Moore 2, Isabelle Burton 3.

Five year olds: Patsy Brophy 1, Colleen O'Connor 2, Merleen Wilson 3.

Six year olds: Isabelle Ostler 1, Decima Sinclair 2, Isabelle Wheatley 3.

Eight year olds: Nell Wheatley 1, Margaret Hughes 2, Lola Monk 3.

Nine year olds: Margaret McGrane 1, Elva Hannan 2.

Ten year old: Enid Monk 1, Vanice Wheatley 2, Tessie McGrane 3.

Twelve years and over: Alma Monk 1, Fay Welsh 2, Betty Wardrop 3.

Three legged race: First heat, Lola Monk and Neil Wheatley 1, Elva Hannan and Hilda Bogie 2, Zena Welsh and Joan Meers 3; Second heat, Betty Wardrop and Jean Mealey 1, Mary McGrane and Alma Monk 2, Lola Greentree and Valerie Ostler 3.

Skipping even: First heat, Betty Wardrop 1, Frances Rankmore 2; Second heat, Norma Rankmore 1, Jessie McNabb 2, Joan Meers 2.

BOYS' EVENTS (School Children)

First Class: Brian O'Connor 1, Ken Bogie 2, Wally Rankmore and Bill O'Connor dead-heat 3.

Third Class: Kevin Brophy 1,

Charlie Rankmore 2, Don McNabb 3.

Fourth Class: Val Meers 1, Len Ostler 2, Max O'Connor 3.

Fifth Class: Ken McNabb 1, Jack O'Connor 2.

Sixth Class: Darval Meers 1, Don O'Connor 2, Mick Brophy 3.

Beaten boy's race: Mervyn Ostler 1, Owen O'Connor 2, Neville Hannan 3.

BOYS' RACE (All Comers)

Five and six year olds: First heat, Malcolm Tink 1, Keith O'Connor 2, Max Ostler 3; Second heat, Ray McGrane 1, Jack Monk 2, Arthur Mealey 3.

Three legged race: First heat, Ken McNabb and Wally Rankmore 1, Max O'Connor and Paddy O'Connor 2, Don McNabb and Kevin Brophy 3; Second heat, Mervyn Ostler and Don O'Connor 1, Val Meers and Len Ostler 2, George and Jack O'Connor 3.

High jump: Under 10 years, Kevin Brophy 1, Denis McIlveen 2, Brian O'Connor and D. McNabb divided 3; under 13 years: Jack O'Connor 1, Val Meers, Ken McNabb and L. Ostler divided 2; over 13 years: Ted Welsh 1, Don O'Connor 2, Neville Hannan 3.

COLLIE NEWS

School Picnic Big Success

(From Our Correspondent)

WEDDING

A quiet wedding was celebrated in Collie on Wednesday last, at the home of the bride's parents, when Miss Josephine O'Connor, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. O'Connor, was united in matrimony to Mr. Harvey O'Hara, of Collie. Father Evison, of Gilgandra, officiated. The many friends of the happy couple unite in wishing them a long and happy married life. The honeymoon is being spent at Alberta.

PERSONAL

We regret to announce that Mr. T. Snowball, who is an inmate of the Gilgandra District Hospital, suffering from eye trouble, is showing little signs of improvement. All join in wishing him a speedy cure.

SCHOOL PICNIC

The annual school picnic took place on Saturday last in fine weather, and proved a great success—both socially and financially. A large crowd of children and parents enjoyed themselves thoroughly and all voted the day's gathering a great one. A dance was held at night and such a large number attended that the hall was overcrowded. Several competitions were drawn, and the winners were: Box of sweets, Mr. E. Rowcliff; pair of lacquer boxes, Mrs. C. Kilby. A box of chocolates, disposed of on behalf of the Catholic Church funds, was also drawn, and resulted in a win for Mr. Arthur Bernard Moore.

Following are the results of the athletic events decided at the picnic:—

SCHOOL GIRLS

Fifth and Sixth Classes: Joan Kilby 1, Francis Rankmore 2, Fay Welsh 3.

Fourth Class: Lola Greentree 1, Jean Mealey 2, Betty Wardrop 3.

Second Class: Valerie Ostler 1, Joyce Rankmore 2, Zena Welsh 3.

First Class: Heather Everson 1, Margaret Roberts 2, Jessie McNabb 3.

Consolation Race: Jean McMaster 1, Joan Meers 2, Norma Rankmore 3.

DISTRICT GIRLS

Under 9 years: Margaret McGrane 1, Betty O'Connor 2, Nell Wheatley 3.

Under 12 years: Enid Monk 1, Alma Monk 2, Vanice Wheatley 3.

Over 12 years: Mary McGrane 1, Jean O'Connor 2, Joyce Stewart and Norma McIlveen dead-heat 3.

TINY TOTS

Heat 1: Patsy Brophy 1, Isabelle Wheatley 2, Ida Rankmore 3.

Heat 2: Lola Monk 1, Teresa McGrane 2, Colleen O'Connor 3.

Consolation Race: Hilda Bogie 1, Betty Bogie 2, Elva Hannan 3.

Three-Legged Race: Heat 1: Mary McGrane and Fay Welsh 1, Joan Kilby and Frances Rankmore 2.

Heat 2: Jean Mealey and Betty Wardrop 1, Lola Greentree and Alma Monk 2.

SCHOOL BOYS

Sixth and Seventh Classes: Ted Welsh 1, John Rankmore 2, Cedric Wardrop 3.

Fifth Class: Mick Brophy 1, Darval Meers 2, Dan O'Connor 3.

Fourth Class: Alan Kilby 1, Peter McMaster 2, Ken McNabb 3.

Third Class: Max O'Connor 1, Lin Ostler 2, Val Meers 3.

Second Class: Don McNabb 1.

First Class: Brian O'Connor 1, Kevin Brophy 2, Norma Wild 3.

Consolation Race: Jack O'Connor 1, Mervyn Ostler 2, Reg McMaster 3.

District Boys: Frank O'Connor 1, Owen O'Connor 2, Pat Colless 3.

TINY TOTS

Heat 1: Bill O'Connor 1, Ron O'Connor 2, Arthur Mealey 3.

Heat 2: Malcolm Tink 1, Keith McIlveen 2, Jack Monk 3.

Sack Race: Jack O'Connor 1, Cedric Wardrop 2, Val Meers 3.

Three-Legged Race: Division 1: Don O'Connor and T. Wheatley 1, C. Wardrop and J. Rankmore 2.

Division 2: Val Meers and Brian O'Connor 1, Len Ostler and Ken McNabb 2.

ADULT EVENTS

Married Ladies' Race: Mrs. C. A. Mealey (4 yds) 1, Mrs. P. Moore, (scr.) 2.

Single Ladies' Race, 75 yards: Miss Edna Rowcliff (1yd.) 1, Miss E. Wheatley (5yds) 2, Miss E. Moore (scr.) 3.

Ladies' Three-Legged Race: Misses R. and S. Wheatley 1, Misses E. Moore and D. Meers 2.

Sweethearts' Race: Jack Mealey and Miss E. Rowcliff 1, Jack Wheatley and Miss E. Moore 2.

Married Men's Race: N. McIlveen (2yds.) 1, G. W. Buttriss (scr.) 2.

Single Men's Race, 100 yards: A. Stewart (scr.) 1, J. Wheatley (2 yds.) 2, Lance Moore (5yds) 3.

Broad Jump: A. Stewart.

High Jump: E. Rowcliff.

Three-Legged Race (men): B. Murray and J. Wheatley 1, J. Mealey and L. Moore 2.

**Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday
 14 September 1933.**

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 2 June 1942

**SCHOOLS'
PICNIC AND**

Lorraine Marks (Chippendale) 1; Una Irvine (Eringamin) 2; Mary Howard (Biddon) 3.
Boys under 11 years, 75 yards: Ross (Collie) 1; Ron (Collie) 2.
Boys under 11 years, 50 yards: Ross (Collie) 1.
Boys under 12 years, 75 yards: Ross (Collie) 1.
Boys under 12 years, 50 yards: Ross (Collie) 1; Joyce (Biddon) 2; June Palmer (Chippendale) 3.
Boys under 13 years, 100 yards: Ross (Curban) 1; Ross (Chippendale) 2; Colin (Collie) 3.
Boys under 13 years, 75 yards: Ross (Collie) 1; Mary (Chippendale) 2; Del (Tooraweenah) 3.
Boys under 14 years, 100 yards: Ross (Tooraweenah) 1; Ross (Tooraweenah) 2.
Boys under 14 years, 75 yards: Ross (Tooraweenah) 1.
Hopping Race, under 11 yards: Lorraine Marks (Chippendale) 1.
Hopping Race, under 14 yards: Peggy Moore (Chippendale) 1; Dorothy Pegler (Tooraweenah) 2; Joyce Howard (Chippendale) 3.
High Jump: Ross (Curban) 1; Ross (Chippendale) 2; Colin (Collie) 3.
Broad Jump: Ross (Chippendale) 1; R. McAlane (Chippendale) 2; C. O'Connor (Chippendale) 3.

During last week school children had a picnic. On Tuesday afternoon their school work operation and the school picnic by about 20 people. On Friday the District School were held at Gilgandra School once again we were in winning both the St. Pennant and the West Cup. This is the third succession that Collie and five occasions overall. On Friday the picnic to the Watren school while not winning any trophies, were successful following events: Boys: Mick Hensley

Gilgandra Weekly

Fred and Eileen Bathurst, for the families in the area brother, Michael Molly, Marie, Eileen

During the 1930s Stanislaus' College academic and sports well academically

Certificate.⁶⁴ Jean excelled in geography placing first in her year at St. Mary's, while Keith,

ing school at for other boys of Fred's along with Mary's and St. splendid y performed mediate

in his first year at St. Stanislaus topped the form in business principles while placing second in mathematics and history.⁶⁶ Still, it was on the sports field that Don truly excelled. In December 1936 Don and Jack were named as the school's top achievements in tennis and cricket:

*Treasure trophies, in the possession of the O'Connor family, Collie, when they returned home this week from the tennis and cricket Cups. Don won one cup for the senior tennis and another for the senior College cricket team, whilst Jack won his cup for the tennis. They have only been attending the College for about a month and we extend hearty congratulations.*⁶⁷

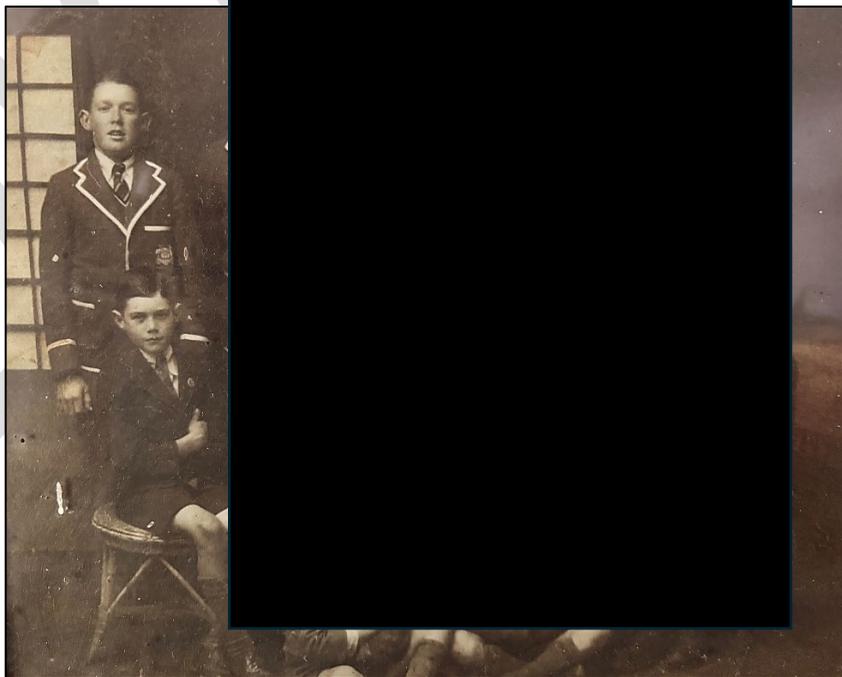
Some of the O'Connor boys' sporting highlights from 1936 – Jack O'Connor (junior tennis champion and senior batting award).⁶⁸ 1937 – Jack O'Connor (special prize for athletics, juvenile tennis award) and Don O'Connor (senior cricket award).⁶⁹ In 1938 O'Connor (junior handball champion).⁷¹ The following year, Don, and Jack proudly wearing their St. Stanislaus uniforms, and Fred and Eileen made a trip to Bathurst

The family of Fred & Eileen O'Connor in 1937.

Back (L-R): Max, Don, Jean, and Jack.

Middle (L-R): Keith, Terry, Eileen, Fred, and Brian.

Front (L-R): Colin and Ken.



Gymkhanas

Gymkhanas became increasingly popular in the Collie district from the mid-1900s onward. The O'Connors, long devoted to horses for both work, transport, and sport, were naturally enthusiastic participants. Beyond the competition, gymkhanas served as key fundraising events for community and patriotic causes, such as the September 1946 Collie Gymkhana, which supported the building of a new Collie Catholic Church. The O'Connors played a significant role, with Keith, Ken and Colin competing, Fred officiating events, Eileen donating raffle prizes, and Don assisting with organisation. Keith was the outstanding rider of the day, showcasing his superior horsemanship and hand-eye coordination as he picked up and placed flags in the open flag race, then surged his horse with great speed and skill between the slalom poles to win the open bending race. Colin, not to be outdone by his older brother, won the apple-and-bucket race and placed in the pony race and the potato race.⁷⁴

<p>COLLIE SPORTS</p> <p>NEW CHURCH FOR COLLIE</p> <p>—XOX—</p> <p>GYMKHANA RAISES £300</p> <p>For the purpose of raising funds for the erection of a Catholic Church building at Collie, a Gymkhana was held there on Saturday last and it is anticipated that nearly £300 will be cleared.</p> <p>The function took the place of efforts held in September during the war for patriotic purposes—recognised by district people as the one big day of the year—and despite the fact that it was a Catholic Church affair all denominations participated.</p> <p>Returning thanks during the afternoon, Father Emelhamez said he was deeply grateful to see so many non-Catholic workers. He did appreciate it and it was grand to see it. He hoped a similar function would be held again—they did not want to run it—but if it was for any other section they could be assured that his people would work just as hard for it. He made special mention of the President (Mr. F. D. Pye) the secretaries (Messrs Don O'Connor and Harold Freeth) the treasurer (Mr Mick Brophy) and Mrs O'Hara</p>	<p>Mick Brophy) and Mrs O'Hara and Mrs. Hensley, the latter being in charge of the luncheon and afternoon tea.</p> <p>No doubt weather conditions prevented many from attending, but there was a very representative crowd present, coming from all parts of the district and outside centres, even as far afield as Narramine.</p> <p>The horse events were the main feature of the day and these were up to the usual Collie standard, one of the main competitors being Miss Shirley Pye, who again came all the way from Sydney and brought with her three of her best horses. The results will indicate the success she met with.</p> <p>The co-operation and hard work so readily forthcoming from most of the town and district residents indicated the wonderful public spirit that prevails in Collie. In the past it was natural to expect all to throw their weight into these events when they were held in the thick of the war, but to see that spirit continued for a church from other than members of the church for which the event was held.</p> <p>Without doubt a great deal of this enthusiasm was engendered by the driving force and personality of the man who has done so much for these functions at Collie—Mr. F. D. Pye. When it was known that he was at the helm, its success was assured.</p> <p>But a good leader always needs able lieutenants and in Messrs Don O'Connor and Harold Freeth as secretaries and Mr Mick Bro-</p>	<p>phy (treasurer) he had very able supporters. They worked exceptionally well for many weeks, and during the last week were continually at their posts. The success of the day has been their reward.</p> <p>"In general," said Mr. O'Connor "I would say that it was the spirit of the people, irrespective of religion, which made the day such a successful one and on behalf of the Catholic community of the district, and our committee, I thank the public in general and look to the future for a chance to reciprocate."</p> <p>Results:—</p> <p>Open Flag Race: Keith O'Connor 1, Miss S. Pye 2.</p> <p>Ladies Flag Race: Miss S. Pye 1, Mrs. Dempsey 2.</p> <p>Flag Race, under 15 yrs: Janet McAlary 1, Noel Mealey 2.</p> <p>Maiden Hack Race: L. Wheatley 1, Riley 2.</p> <p>Open Bending Race: Keith O'Connor 1, H. Wrigley 2.</p> <p>Ladies Bending Race: Mrs. Dempsey 1, Miss A. Perry 2.</p> <p>Bending Race, under 15 yrs: Noel Mealey 1, Ian McKay 2.</p> <p>Hack Race: W. E. Barwick 1, L. Wheatley 2.</p> <p>Egg and Spoon Race: P. Gall 1, Shirley Pye 2.</p> <p>Wheelbarrow Race: Miss J. Perry 1, Joan Bell 2.</p> <p>Gentleman Rider: Mr. T. Cahill 1, L. Wheatley 2.</p> <p>Lady Rider: Miss S. Pye 1, J. Bell 2.</p>	<p>Girl Rider, under 15 yrs: Miss Janet McAlary 1, Miss C. Mealey 2.</p> <p>Boy Rider, under 15: Noel Mealey 1, P. O'Shannessy 2.</p> <p>Beaten Bending Race: Ken O'Connor, T. Cahill, dead-heat 1.</p> <p>Beaten Flag Race: Ron Jones 1, K. Bass 2.</p> <p>Welter Race: Mr. J. Scott 1, S. Cameron 2.</p> <p>Apple and Bucket Race: Colin O'Connor 1, Miss S. Pye 2.</p> <p>Walk Trot and Gallop: M. Bass 1, J. Scott 2.</p> <p>Pony Race: J. Scott 1, Colin O'Connor 2.</p> <p>Hack Race: Mr. J. Scott 1, W. E. Barwick 2.</p> <p>Potato Race: M. Bass 1, Colin O'Connor 2.</p> <p>Relay Race: Mr. R. Jones' team 1, J. Scott's team 2.</p> <p>Beaten Stakes: F. Morgan.</p> <p>Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 5 September 1946.</p>
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Tennis

During the early 1900s, tennis emerged as one of the most popular and accessible sports across rural New South Wales, becoming an important social and recreational outlet for country communities. Requiring little equipment and with clay courts easily established on farms and in small towns, local tennis clubs flourished, hosting weekend matches, dances, fundraising events, and inter-town competitions. These gatherings helped ease social isolation, strengthened district identity, and provided young people with opportunities for friendship, courtship, and friendly rivalry.

Once the *Balboora* court (**next page**) was levelled, clayed, bagged, rolled, and marked, tennis quickly became a staple of O'Connor family life, with *Lisfarran* even fielding its own team in local competitions.⁷⁵ For example, the results from 1934 (**below**) show the series of games between *Lisfarran* and Collie.⁷⁶ The *Lisfarran* team, comprising the O'Connor, Wheatley, Chisholm, and Meers families, won the day 10 sets (80 games) to 7 sets (72 games). A fortnight later, the *Lisfarran* team tangled with *Lynthorpe* again at *Lisfarran*, walking away with another win.⁷⁷ As soon as they could walk, the O'Connor children had a racquet in their hands. After proper instruction in the rules and tennis etiquette, they began playing with the adults and soon represented Collie in district tennis, starting with the 16-year-old Jean in 1934. The tennis games of Fred and Eileen O'Connor really hit their straps in 1935, as they won the coveted Collie American Tournament and a cup donated by Mr Brophy.^{78 79}

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 7 June
1934.

<p>COLLIE NEWS</p> <p>—xox—</p> <p>(From Our Correspondent)</p>	
<p>TENNIS—</p> <p>Teams of four pairs, representing "Lisfarran" and Collie, met at Collie on Sunday last, when a keen and most enjoyable day's tennis resulted in a win for "Lisfarran" by three sets. Scores are as follows (Collie players being mentioned first).—</p> <p>Mens Doubles: A. Stewart and R. Nimmo v F. O'Connor and L. Wheatley, 6/1; J. Murray and T. McIlveen v K. Chisholm and B. Chisholm, 6/5; J. Murray and A. Stewart v L. Wheatley and B. Chisholm, 6/2; T. McIlveen and R. Nimmo v K. Chisholm and F. O'Connor, 6/4; A. Stewart and T. McIlveen v K. Chisholm and L. Wheatley, 4/6.</p> <p>Ladies Doubles: Misses J. Stewart and J. McGrane v Mesdames Wheat-</p>	<p>ley and O'Connor, 4/6; Mrs. Greentree and Miss R. Moore v Misses J. O'Connor and D. Meers, 4/6; Miss J. Stewart and Mrs. Greentree v Mrs. O'Connor and Miss O'Connor, 4/6; Misses J. McGrane and R. Moore v Mrs. Wheatley and Miss D. Meers 3/6</p> <p>Mixed Doubles: A. Stewart and Mrs. Greentree v L. Wheatley and Mrs. Wheatley, 2/6; R. Nimmo and Miss R. Moore v F. O'Connor and Mrs. O'Connor, 0/6; T. Murray and Miss J. Stewart v B. Chisholm and Miss D. Meers, 6/4; T. McIlveen and Miss J. McGrane v K. Chisholm and Miss J. O'Connor, 0/0; A. Stewart and Miss J. McGrane v L. Wheatley and Miss J. O'Connor, 6/2; R. Nimmo and Miss J. Stewart v B. Chisholm and Mrs. O'Connor, 2/6; T. Murray and Miss R. Moore v K. Chisholm and Mrs. Wheatley, 3/6; T. McIlveen and Mrs. Greentree v F. O'Connor and Miss Meers, 6/2</p> <p>"Lisfarran": 10 sets, 80 games. Collie: 7 sets, 72 games.</p>

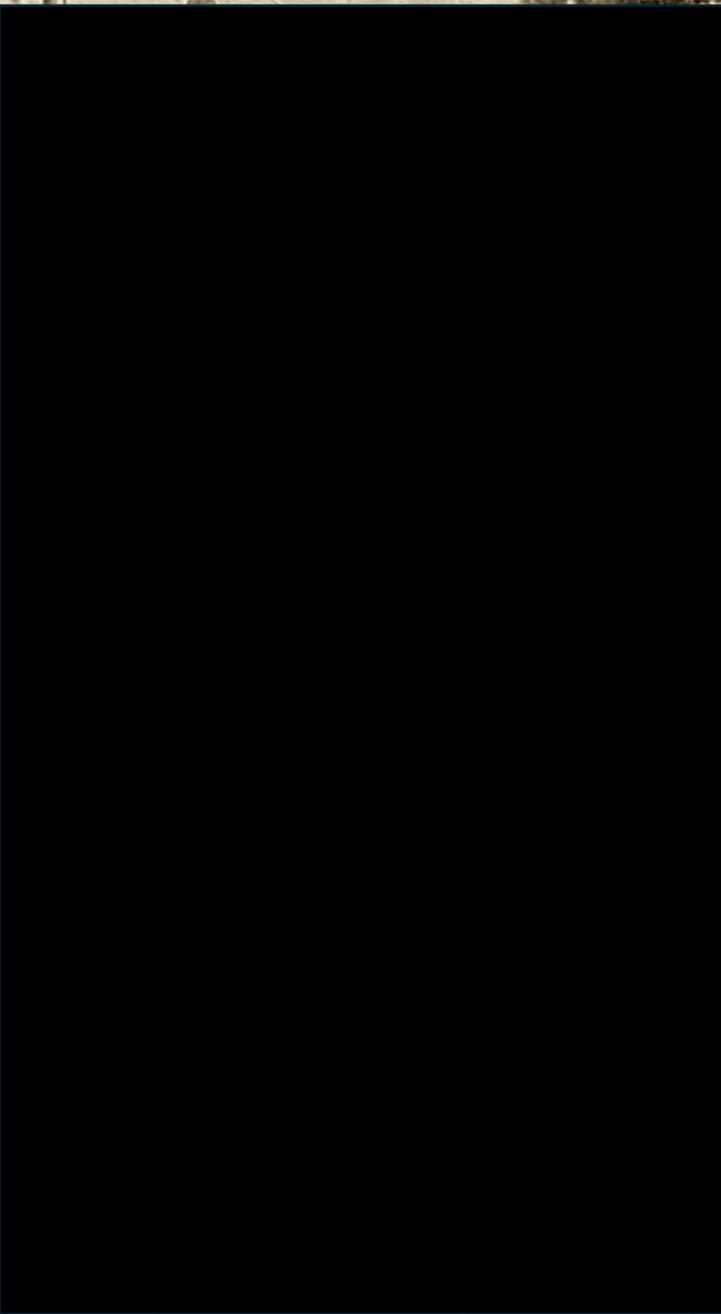


The photograph above, taken in July 1905, shows the families of Fred O'Connor and Eileen O'Connor with Eileen and Fred O'Connor to the right. The children of Fred and Eileen's children are a group of five children. Five of Fred and Eileen's children are a group of five children. Caroline O'Connor is to the left of Fred and Eileen's children; Max is to Caroline's left.

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Cricket

Of all the sports pursued by the O'Connors, cricket was Australia's national sport. From the early days of settlement, generations of O'Connors became involved in the sport's administration. Cricket in the O'Connor country was played in villages such as Mendooran, Goolburra, Breealong, Pine View, Eumungee and in a challenge cup format where the teams met on a weekend. Fielding a regular team was a challenge to the O'Connors. In 1907, the O'Connors wrote to *The Castlereagh* newspaper in 1907 to publicly chide the local men:



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I don't know whether to attribute it to the climate or mere indifference, but the young fellows around here seem too slow 'to catch grubs,' as the saying goes. Years ago Collie could boast a good cricket club, but latterly no club has existed, although at times spasmodic efforts have been made to liven it up. None of these efforts have received the encouragement they warranted. Now that another season has begun there seems to be the same exhibition of 'slows' or indifference. This seems a pity, for with a little enenergy and practice a good club could be got together, which would certainly add to the social life of the toen and district. Now then boys, wake up, and see if you can do something before the cricket season is too far spent.⁸⁰

CRICKET.

The Collie and Gilgandra cricket teams met on the latter's wicket on Saturday last when the home team scored a decisive victory. Scores:—

Collie (1st innings).—C. Munro, c Mudie, b Ryan, 12; M. O'Connor, b Gibson, 1; M. Frudenstein, c Anlezark, b Gibson, 3; S. J. Murray, b Gibson, 1; E. Buckland, b Kerr, 2; W. Curran, not out, 10; S. K. Murray, b Gibson, 0; P. O'Connor, c Burke, b Gibson, 0; H. Murray, b Gibson, 0; S. Murray, b Burke, 8; Alick, b Kerr, 2; sundries, 24; total, 63.

Second Innings.—C. Munro, not out, 7; Alick, b Mudie, 13; E. Buckland, b Anlezark, 2; S. Murray, not out, 0; sundries, 5; total, two wickets for 27.

Gilgandra (1st innings).—Anlezark, c Buckland, b S. Murray, 31; W. Tibbits, b Murray, 21; B. Gibson, b S. Murray, 1; I. Bonnington, b H. Murray, 3; F. Kerr, b Frudenstein, 21; J. Mudie, b Frudenstein, 1; E. Tibbits, run out, 6; B. Fletcher, c Murray, b Frudenstein, 3; J. Burke, not out, 15; C. Ryan, c and b H. Murray, 13; C. Maguire, c Curran, b H. Murray, 0; sundries, 7; total, 122.

Cobocco.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

ON Saturday last the Collie cricketers met our local players at Pine View. The Collie lads fell easy victims to the bowling of A. Samuels and H. Meeth, the former taking four wickets for twenty-six, and the latter five for eight. Collie batted with ten men only. Pine View put together 156; J. Hope, H. Meeth, T. Connell, L. Tink, and H. Samuels being the principal scorers. F. Samuels had the misfortune to be struck under the knee with the ball, disabling him for the day. Following are the scores:—

Collie.—S. D. Murray, 2; S. J. Murray, 0; S. Saddler, 0; M. F. Frindenstien, 8; A. Solomons, 12; M. O'Connor, 6; H. Murray, 3; P. O'Connor, 0; S. K. Murray, 0; E. H. Craze, not out, 0; byes, 6; total, 37.

Pine View.—A. Samuels, 6; J. Hope, 18; H. Meeth, 62, retired; T. Connell, 25; F. Bullock, 5; McFetridge, 0; L. Tink, not out, 15; H. Samuels, 19; A. McMillan, 0; Luke, 0; T. Howard, 0; byes, 7; total, 157.

A selection of scores from 1909 and 1910.

Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative, Thursday, 10 February 1910.

Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, Saturday 13 March 1909.

Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, Sat, 27 March 1909.

CRICKET.

A match was played on Saturday, 2nd instant, between teams representing Collie village and Collie station shearers. After a good game the villagers were defeated by 81 runs. Collie in their first essay made 46, of which Fred O'Connor made 11. The bowling was done by Noonan and Wardrop, the former getting 5 for 12 and the latter 5 for 28. The shearers made 57, Brown 19, being the only double figure scorer. H. Hodge captured 5 wickets for 17 runs, J. Donnelly 3 for 17, and Sam Sadler 2 for 6. Collie in their second attempt only made 30 (J. Mitchell 11). Noonan and Wardrop again wrought havoc amongst the batsmen, the latter securing the splendid average of 8 for 13, whilst Noonan got 1 for 16. The shearers made 110 in their second innings (Brown 18, Noonan 26, J. Wardrop 19, and W. Wardrop 11 not out). For Collie Donnelly got 3 for 10, M. O'Connor 2 for 12, J. Mitchell 2 for 20, S. Saddler 2 for 23, H. Hodge, 1 for 21. The shearers were entertained at dinner at Humphreys' Hotel by the local club.

CRICKET.

Since my last Collie has played two cricket matches with Pine View and they stand one about. Collie won the first by eight wickets, and lost the second by 107 runs. In the former H. Meeth 18, J. Hope 22, and G. Spriggins 25, reached double figures for Pine View, and B. Sharpe took 9 wickets for 20 runs, while for Collie G. Mills 40 and 17 not out, and F. O'Connor 13 did best with the bat, and H. Murray captured 10 wickets for 53, G. Mills 5 for 38 and J. Mitchell 2 for 6. In the second match G. Mills 13, H. Murray 16, M. O'Connor 20, E. Meers 10 and W. Wardrop 12 reached two figures, the bowling of A. Samuels and E. and F. Body being too good for the others. For Pine View F. Bullock 30, F. Body 28, E. Body 20 and D. McInnes 29 not out stood out from the others who failed to reach double figures. For Collie every man bowled and nine of them captured a wicket. F. Body and F. Bullock captured the Collie bowling, and gave a fine display of patience tempered with hard hitting.

The rebuke produced swift results. After a fundraising ball on 20 December 1907, a club was formed, and 15 players, including Patrick and Michael O'Connor, attended the opening training session.^{81 82} Cricket quickly became central to the sporting and social life in Collie. Alongside matches against neighbouring villages, the locals held spirited in-house contests such as married men against single men, smokers against non-smokers, and shearers against the town **(previous page)**.^{83 84 85 86}

One of the highlights of Collie cricket at the time, though, came in 1914 when the pint-sized Mick O'Connor, playing for West Collie, decimated the East Collie batting line-up, claiming a remarkable eight wickets for three runs.⁸⁷ No doubt Mick's bowling got more fearsome after each beer as the team celebrated in the Collie Hotel after the match! By this point, Collie was looking west toward Warren for further competition, and in December 1915, the Collie side recorded a convincing victory against them. It proved to be the final match most of them would play for some time, as in January 1916, the Collie community farewelled seven young men, many of them core members of the team, who enlisted at Mendooran and marched with the *Kookaburras* to Bathurst. Understandably, the Great War disrupted cricket locally and across Australia. Nevertheless, in March 1916, the Warren Cricket Club astonishingly challenged Collie to another match, despite knowing that most of Collie's players were heading to the Western Front. The suggestion provoked indignation in Collie, prompting one resident to make his thoughts known in the *Gilgandra Weekly*:

*A correspondent from Collie writes the recruiting campaign has practically "skinned" that district, as far as young men are concerned. The writer says there are scarcely any young fellows "about the ranch," and right on top of this state of affairs Warren writes across for a cricket match! The innings against the German hordes is not yet through, so the Collie boys can't oblige just yet. Anyhow, what's Warren doing with a cricket team at this time o' day!*⁸⁸

And oblige they did! With the Great War concluded, the Collie team, comprising almost entirely of returned soldiers, including Mick O'Connor, Theo Murray, Lawrie McIlveen, Mac Meers, Gundy Mills, Vic Fenton, Tom Brophy, and Jack McNabb, soundly defeated Gilgandra on their home turf in October 1919. They then travelled to Warren in November 1919, beating them easily, no doubt pleasing the *Collie correspondent* in the process **(next page)**.^{89 90}

The revival of cricket marked a critical phase in the recovery of rural communities following the Great War, yet the emotional impact of the conflict endured. Many grounds remained

touched by grief for seasons to come, honouring players such as Collie's Horace Murray, who had fallen and would never again take the crease.

CRICKET	
COLLIE v GILGANDRA	
A match between teams representing the above clubs took place Sunday last on the Gilgandra ground and resulted in a win for the home side by 23 runs. In the first innings Gilgandra scored 54 and 95 runs respectively, while Collie put 77 and 109 wickets for 46 in their two innings when time was called. Teams played twelve men and following are the details:—	
Gilgandra First Innings	
T. Marchant, b Meers	...
F. Hickmott, b Meers	...
P. Rose, c McNabb, b Meers	...
C. Marchant, run out	...
E. Marchant, c and b O'Connor	...
A. Noonan, c Mitchell, b McNabb	...
C. Horan, b O'Connor	...
A. Hannam, b O'Connor	...
A. G. Ross, b O'Connor	...
C. Holland, b McNabb	...
E. Horan, b O'Connor	...
L. Trudgett, not out	...
Sundries	...
Total	...
Second Innings—Seven wickets for 95 (A. Noonan 48, P. Rose 24, 15 runs closed.)	
Collie First Innings	
L. Ryan, c T., b C. Marchant	...
M. Meers, b C. Marchant	...
J. Mitchell, b Noonan	...
M. O'Connor, c Horan, b C. Marchant	...
O. Chapman, st Rose, b Noonan	...
V. Fenton, c Hannam, b Fenton	...
A. Mills, b C. Marchant	...
F. Brophy, c Horan, b Marchant	...
J. McNabb, b Rose	...
Jas. Mitchell, c Marchant, b Fenton	...
Sundries	...
L. Mollveu, not out	...
Total	...
Second Innings—Nine wickets for 46 (J. Mitchell 13, M. Meers 10)	

Weekly,
November

Weekly,

1919.

Paddy, Mick, and ... during the 1920s and ... though, fostered a ... on.

port took a back seat ... farms. The brothers, ... and their sons, and so

The O'Connor name ... diminutive school ... O'Connor, was selected to play for Collie against Bundamba. The 17-year-old Don had just

er 1937 when the ... of Fred and Eileen

arrived home with his younger brothers, Jack and Max, for the summer holidays from St Stanislaus' College, Bathurst. A week earlier, Don had scored 96 for St Stanislaus' in the Bathurst and district first-grade competition and was quickly establishing himself as a batsman with exceptional talent. Don had no hesitation when asked to open the batting and peeled off an impressive 25 runs.⁹¹ In the remaining two games during his summer break, Don scored 67 against Hillside⁹² and 74 against Balladoran.⁹³ Below is an undated picture of the Collie cricket team warming up for a match.⁹⁴

Collie warming up before a game of cricket.



The 1937/38 season was a difficult one for Collie, who finished near the bottom of the table, even forfeiting a late-season match.⁹⁵ For their second last game of the season, Jack and Max O'Connor, aged 16 and 14, respectively, were selected in the Collie team to play the Catholic Club. They travelled to Gilgandra in Mr Moore's truck, accompanied by Mervyn Ostler, another team player. Jack and Max were extremely fortunate that this was not their first and last senior match, as the truck rolled on the way home, pinning Mr Ostler underneath and throwing the boys clear!⁹⁶ Jack, a quality bowler, backed up for their final match and was one of the first picked for Collie in the 1938/39 season. The 1937/38 season also saw the 19-year-old Frank O'Connor, eldest son of Michael O'Connor, emerge as the dominant bowler in the Balladoran team, taking 6/61 in the penultimate round of the season.⁹⁷

Now 17 years old, Jack was showing his skill with the ball, taking the first four wickets to fall in Collie's early-season match against Springfield in 1938. Through the 1938/39 season, Collie

tried to field teams in both the Gilgandra district competition and the Lewis Cup, a challenge competition. Young Jack O'Connor was a fast bowler, while his cousin Frank O'Connor was a batsman. Both played in the district competition. Frank O'Connor was a batsman in the district competition. Both Jack and Frank were joined by their brother Fred, the 20-year-old son of Fred's brother Jack O'Connor. Fred played much of the season for Collie. While Collie focused on the Lewis Cup, Fred and with Don O'Connor were the mainstay of the Armatree boys to all parts of the ground.

Don played three seasons for the district, where he was a prolific run scorer at the top of the order. He was a representative team, v



ional Advocate
urst, Friday 3
ember 1939.

Don joined his brother... r-old Brian O'Connor also played... us. The Collie team concentrated on Lewis... onnor boys dominating most mat... Warren all over the park to retire on 103.¹⁰ t Warren, where he was well supported by... ten century, this time against Kickabil, heralded Don O'Connor as the best batsman in the district.¹⁰⁵

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 1 February
1940.

CRICKET	
HIGH SCORING AT COLLIE	
DRAWN GAME WITH WARREN	
D. O'CONNOR 205 NOT OUT	WARREN
Although neither team fielded its full strength on Sunday week last, Warren and Collie batmen piled up runs in record style, each side scoring over 300 in less than three hours.	R. Waters, b Murray 14
Warren trounced the weak bowling of the visiting team and knocked up 358—Lex Saunders 102, N. Tolhurst 73 (retired), M. Stubbs 40 and L. Stamm 43 being the chief contributors.	N. Stubbs, run out 46
A big proportion of the runs came from boundaries—sixes and fours—and up to 30 runs were scored in one over.	I. Saunders, b B. O'Connor 102
Collie responded with 329 for the loss of six wickets, and the match ended in a draw. D. O'Connor's quota was 204 not out, and although he gave chances his batting was a very fine effort. This player, who is holidaying with his parents, has been a student of St. Stanislaus' College, Bathurst, and a few weeks ago he retired at Warren after knocking up 103 against the Warren Graziers. In his last effort he was well supported by his brother who was also unconquered with 42 runs to his credit.	N. Tolhurst, retired 73
Scores were—	I. Stamm, c Chisholm, b Ostler 43
	A. Cleasby, b Murray 13
	H. Francisco, b Chisholm 1
	A. Green, stp. O'Connor, b B. Chisholm 1
	B. Corfield, not out 25
	J. Pitman, sp. O'Connor, b Brophy 31
	K. Cusack, c Ostler, b Brophy 10
	Sundries 9
	Total 358
	Bowling: J. Flynn 0/70; L. Murray 2/85; J. O'Connor 0/14; R. Jordan 0/48; B. O'Connor 1/51; B. Chisholm 2/59; J. Ostler 1/15; J. Brophy 2/16.
	COLLIE
	J. Brophy, c Saunders, b Stamm 3
	J. O'Connor, b Stamm 5
	D. O'Connor, not out 204
	L. Ostler, b Waters 19
	L. Murray, c Green, b Waters 6
	N. Ostler, c Stamm, b Tolhurst 17
	B. Chisholm, stp. Saunders, b Tolhurst 26
	M. O'Connor, not out 42
	Sundries 7
	Total, Six wickets for 329

Cricket drew tremendous interest across the district, with matches often attracting large crowds to cheer on local champions or cast their eye over rising talent. No doubt Don's arrival in the Collie team piqued the interest of many. The summers at *Balboora* were again filled with cricket, with Sundays involving Mass, and then the boys were bundled into the car and off to the ground where Collie were playing. While their older brothers played, Keith, Ken, and Colin had their own game going on the boundary, occasionally glancing at the play and dreaming of the day when they too would be inside the boundary. Also of interest to them was Mr Carroll, their teacher, who had arrived a few years earlier from Mudgee with a reputation as a class batsman. The popular Owen Carroll did not disappoint, scoring numerous centuries for Collie before he was promoted and left for Cowra during the war years.^{106 107} He and Don were involved in some remarkable partnerships.

HONORS EASY		RIVAL CENTURIES		COLLIE		EUMUNGERIE		
A drawn game was played between Collie and Macquarie Rovers. Scores:		W. Stoneman, of Macquarie Rovers, scored 108 of his team's total of five for 328 against Collie. The latter made 366. D. O'Connor scoring 104. Details:		Collie		before the team was all out for 189. B. Chisholm played a very nice innings for 56 not out.		
MACQUARIE ROVERS						Scores:—		
H. Sullivan, c Barwick, b O'Connor	10	B. Chisholm, c O. Stoneman, b Sullivan	21	<p>COLLIE</p> <p>(From Our Correspondent)</p> <p>The weather has been very hot and sultry. On Monday afternoon it came up stormy and during the night a few points of rain fell and cooled things down. Many people of the district</p>		A. Rossiter, lbw, b J. O'Connor		1
K. Starr, c Brophy, b O'Connor	12	J. O'Connor, b Sullivan	30			W. McMillan, c and b J. O'Connor		11
D. Foreman, c and b O'Connor	23	D. O'Connor, st. Harvey, b Sullivan	104			A. Dulant, retired		103
W. Stoneman, c Meers, b O'Connor	104	W. Warwick, c O. Stoneman, b Starr	35			B. Richardson, lbw, b Mathers		16
T. Harvey, c Flynn, b O'Connor	4	I. Meers, lbw, b D. Sullivan	15			T. Nangle, b Mathers		12
D. Sullivan, c Flynn, b O'Connor	50	B. O'Connor, run out	7			L. Keitz, c and b Brophy		6
O. Stoneman, c Flynn, b O'Connor	0	L. Wilson, retired	34					2
K. Harvey, b Brophy	10							10
J. Quigley, c O'Connor, b Meers								8
K. Starr, not out								4
L. Rams, lbw b Meers						10		
Sundries						1		
Total						187		
Bowling: J. O'Connor 7/50, V 0/30, J. Flynn 0/37, M. Brophy 0/30, B. Chisholm 0/27, T. Meers 2/40.								
COLLIE								
J. O'Connor, b H. Sullivan	12							
B. Chisholm, b Harvey	25							
D. O'Connor, not out	12							
B. Wilson, c and b W. Stoneman	4							
L. Oster, c Starr, b W. Stoneman	54							
M. Brophy, lbw b O. Stoneman	7							
J. Meers, b Burns	3							
J. Flynn, not out	7							
Sundries	29							
Six wickets for	13							
Bowling: K. Starr 0/42, J. Q 0/35, H. Sullivan 1/37, D. S 0/50, T. Harvey 1/32, W. St 2/32, O. Stoneman 1/10, D. F 0/17, E. Burns 1/10.						21		
						189		

Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Rovers
12 November 1940.

Don, Jack, Max, and Brian played their first match against Macquarie Rovers in bowling while Don played for Collie against Macquarie Rovers. Don scored 30 (above left).¹⁰⁸ He took four wickets, finishing with a lusty hitting at the tail end. He must have thought all over the last for some time as he had Gilgandra again on two half-century.^{111 112} Woollam enlisted in the RAAF, and was in hibernation until the war was over.

Cricket resumed in Collie on 9 February 1946 (above right) when they faced Eumungerie, with Brian, Jack and the 18-year-old Keith all making contributions in a narrow win.¹¹³ The

following week, Fred and Eileen O'Connor, after a lengthy stay in Victoria visiting their daughter Jean, now Mrs Sullivan, were on hand to see Jack, Max, Brian, Keith, and Ken play for Collie against a team of *Challengers*. All made handy contributions, especially Jack, who scored 61 runs and took three wickets. It was also the 16-year-old Ken's debut for Collie. Over the next few weeks, Jack and Brian dominated Gulargambone in successive matches, with Brian scoring 78 not out and 103 retired and Jack taking four and three wickets, respectively, as well as scoring 49 not out in the second match.^{114 115}

<p>COLLIE BOWLERS ACCURATE</p> <p>—XOX—</p> <p>IN MATCH AT BALLADORAN</p> <p>—XOX—</p> <p>And Win Second Grade Competition</p> <p>Due mainly to the splendid performance of the bowlers Collie second grade cricketers registered an eight point win in the match at Balladoran on Sunday and thus won the Gilgandra District Second Grade Cricket Competition for the current season.</p> <p>P. Meers was outstanding, bagging two wickets for three runs in the first innings, and five wickets for seven runs in the second. Balladoran could only muster 69 and 37, whereas Collie compiled 210 for the loss of only four wickets, the innings being declared closed. Opening bat L. Murray struck form with the willow, accounting for 95.</p> <p>Scores:—</p> <p>BALLADORAN, First Innings</p> <p>D. Wilson, c L. O'Connor, b Mealey 6 L. O'Connor, lbw, b Mealey 11 T. Bellenger, lbw, b Mealey 0 V. Wilson b D. O'Brien 1 R. McLeod, c Murray, b D. O'Brien 31 P. Holswich, b Meers 11 P. Wilson, run out 4 W. Hazelton, c Murray, b P. Meers 0 R. Furness, c K. O'Connor, b Murray 3</p>	<p>1. Hazelton, c Meers, b Murray 0 G. Alchin, not out 0 Sundries 2</p> <p>Total 69</p> <p>Bowling: A. Mealey 3/24, D. O'Brien 2/32, L. Murray 2/9, P. Meers 2/3.</p> <p>COLLIE</p> <p>L. Murray, c and b McLeod 95 M. McGrane, c and b Wilson 7 K. O'Connor, lbw, b Wilson 13 R. McGrane, c Wilson, b McLeod 4 A. Mealey, not out 37 D. O'Brien, not out 39 Sundries 15</p> <p>Four wickets for 210</p> <p>Innings declared closed.</p> <p>Bowling: G. Bellenger 0/19, L. O'Connor 0/34, P. Holswich 0/45, N. Wilson 0/14, R. McLeod 2/44.</p> <p>BALLADORAN, Second Innings</p> <p>D. Wilson, c McGrane, b P. Meers 8 M. Wilson, b Meers 4 R. McLeod, c Mealey, b Meers 3 P. Holswich, c O'Connor, b Murray 0 G. Bellenger, lbw, b Meers 0 L. O'Connor, lbw, b Murray 0 I. Hazelton, b Murray 4 P. Wilson, lbw, b Meers 4 R. Furness, run out 5 G. Alchin not out 5 W. Hazelton, c McGrane, b Brophy 7 Sundries 2</p> <p>Total 37</p> <p>Bowling: A. Mealey 0/4, D. O'Brien 0/6, L. Murray 5/9, P. Meers 5/7, M. Brophy 1/7, J. Mealey 0/1.</p>	<p>COLLIE COMPETITION WINNERS</p> <p>—XOX—</p> <p>EXCITING FINISH WITH BALLADORAN</p> <p>The Gilgandra and District Cricket Competition was brought to a close on Sunday last, when chief interest centred in the meeting of Collie and Balladoran, who were even at the head of the points score. In an exciting finish Collie won in the last few minutes of play, and thus completed a meritorious double, as the seconds previously won their division.</p> <p>In other matches on Sunday, Lodge defeated Armatree on the first innings and Gilgandra had a similar win at the expense of Tooraweenah.</p> <p>Final points in the competition are:—</p> <p>COLLIE 66 BALLADORAN 62 LODGE 52 ARMATREE 48 GILGANDRA 48 BIDDON-BEARBONG 36 TOORAWEEAH 24</p> <p>It is interesting to note that Collie did not suffer one defeat throughout the competition. They secured one outright win, against Lodge; seven wins on the first innings, v. Tooraweenah (twice), Gilgandra (twice), Bidbon-Bearbong, Armatree and Balladoran; and four draws, v. Balladoran, Lodge, Armatree and Bidbon-Bearbong (rain prevented play).</p>	<p>GOOD SCORING AT COLLIE</p> <p>—XOX—</p> <p>Gallant Bid By Balladoran</p> <p>At Collie on Sunday the home team and Balladoran met in a match that decided the result of the Gilgandra and District Cricket Competition and it proved a fitting final. It was voted a great match, with the Collie eleven a little too good on the day, clinching victory in the last few minutes of play.</p> <p>Balladoran batted first and compiled the respectable total of 197. P. Wheaton and W. Holswich were the chief contributors and they figured in a partnership that added 132 runs. Wheaton's score was 57.</p> <p>K. Meers and K. O'Connor gave the home-side a good kick off with an opening partnership of 70, but it was not until the last five minutes that the required runs were scored:</p> <p>BALLADORAN</p> <p>W. Daves, b J. Cudden 2 W. Holswich, b K. Meers 46 W. Lindsay, c B. O'Connor, b K. Meers 5 P. Wheaton, bow, b K. Meers 87 F. Wheaton, b J. O'Connor 1 E. Daves, lbw, b J. O'Connor 2 N. Daves, b C. Mathes 7 A. Lindsay, c Warrick, b L. Murray 0 G. Anderson, c K. O'Connor, b Mathes 28 K. Richardson, run out 0 F. Alchin, not out 3 Sundries 16</p> <p>Total 197</p> <p>Bowling: K. Meers 3/37, J. Cudden 1/14, A. Mealey 0/17, J. O'Connor 2/42, C. Mathes 2/31, L. Murray 1/28, K. Warrick 0/9.</p> <p>COLLIE</p> <p>K. Meers, lbw, b Holswich 54 K. O'Connor, c F. Alchin, b P. Wheaton 42 B. O'Connor, c Richardson, b Lindsay 30 D. O'Connor, c Anderson, b Lindsay 26 J. Cudden, run out 7 M. O'Connor, not out 8 J. O'Connor, not out 24 Sundries 14</p> <p>Five wickets for 205</p> <p>Bowling: W. Lindsay 2/71, F. Wheaton 0/17, W. Holswich 1/53, P. Wheaton 1/15, W. Daves 0/9, K. Richardson 0/19.</p>
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Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 6 March 1947.

Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 20 March 1947.

As the district's cricketers geared up for the 1946/47 season, a meeting of delegates from all teams was held in Gilgandra on 22 October 1946 to reform the Gilgandra and District Cricket Association. Donald O'Connor represented Collie, and it was resolved that each club would

field first-grade and second-grade teams in the reformed competition.¹¹⁶ The Collie Cricket Club met the following week to elect officer bearers and organise a Cricketers Ball to raise funds for cricket equipment. Fred O'Connor was elected Club Patron with Messers H. O'Hara, J. Cudden, M. Brophy, and D. O'Connor elected as president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer respectively.¹¹⁷

The extent and quality of cricket across the district during this time were exceptional, with over 250 men fighting tooth and nail every Sunday to secure victories for their respective teams. The 1946/47 season was arguably Collie's best, as they won both the first and second-grade titles (**previous page**).^{118 119} Don, Jack, Brian, and Keith O'Connor were the backbone of the first-grade team, while Max and the 17-year-old Ken O'Connor ensured the second-grade team conquered all. Max had a tremendous season with the bat, so much so that with the second-grade title in the bag, he was drafted into the first-grade team for their final, and season-defining match against Balladoran. All the Collie score cards from the season, published in the *Gilgandra Weekly*, appear in **Appendix Two**.

The following season, Colin O'Connor made his debut in the Collie second-grade team. By the 1948/49 season, with Jack and Brian now living at Bourke and Brewarrina, Don, Max, Keith, Ken, and Colin O'Connor formed the core of the Collie first-grade team. During this season, Don topped the batting averages with a high score of 105 and an average of 83. Brian also scored a ton, averaging 32 per dig. In the bowling department, Keith topped the averages, taking 13 wickets at an average of six, while Ken claimed seven wickets at an average of 14.¹²⁰ Over the next few seasons, Colin emerged as one of Collie's best bowlers, while the two youngest boys, Terry and Ian, were hitting their straps in school cricket (**next page**), and by 1952, they too were playing senior cricket for Collie.^{121 122 123}

The O'Connors dominated cricket at Collie for the best part of a century, with all of Fred's nine boys excelling at the game, primarily Don, who was a prolific run scorer and accomplished wicketkeeper. His skills were elite, and if not for World War II, which took four of his prime cricketing years, he may well have played first-class cricket and even reached the highest levels. Fred O'Connor was the backbone of Collie cricket. Not only was he a player from its earliest years, but he also served as the Collie club patron and president. For many years, he donated a cricket bat as the annual prize for the club's best sport.¹²⁴

SCHOOL CRICKET

Last Saturday afternoon a cricket match took place at the Railway Ground between a cricket team from the Collie Public School and a team from the Gilgandra Intermediate High School. Scores were:

GILGANDRA SCHOOL	
L. Mallison, c B. Stafford, b D. Murray	45
J. Burge, b T. O'Connor	0
R. Hiatt, b T. O'Connor	0
T. Hodges, b T. O'Connor	3
D. Brown, b T. O'Connor	0
R. Foran, b D. Murray	22
P. Childs, c N. Mealey, b P. Murray	5
A. Holland, b P. Murray	2
W. Prout, c and b D. Murray	8
D. Weston, not out	2
D. Burge, run out	0
Total	87
Bowling: T. O'Connor 4/17, K. Rowcliff 0/9, P. Murray 2/26, I. O'Connor 0/10, N. Mealey 0/5, D. Murray 3/7.	
COLLIE PUBLIC SCHOOL	
T. O'Connor, c A. Holland, b R. Foran	1
B. Hensley, b A. Holland	24
I. O'Connor, c A. Holland, b W. Prout	4
Phillip Murray, run out	3
N. Mealey, h.o.w., b G. Burge	1
B. Stafford, c D. Brown, b G. Burge	6
D. Murray, c and b G. Burge	1
K. Rowcliff, b W. Prout	1
G. Lewis, run out	3
D. Mealey, b W. Prout	6
R. Rowcliff, not out	0
Total	50
Bowling: T. Hodge 0/10, A. Holland 1/9, W. Prout 3/9, R. Hiatt 0/5, R. Foran 1/7, G. Burge 3/4, D. Weston 0/3.	

CRICKET

BREELONG DEFEAT COLLIE

In the second grade match played at Breelong on Sunday, the home team defeated Collie by 149 runs to 82. Scores:—

Breelong: B. McEwen, b P. Murray 6; E. McKechnie, b R. Sherring 10; B. Davey, stp. E. Rowcliffe, b T. Martin 56; B. Dupree b T. Martin 22; R. Hillyer c E. Rowcliffe, b N. Mealey 17; R. Irwin, c I. O'Connor, b J. Mealey 9; B. Thompson, b T. Martin 5; B. Long, b I. O'Connor 8, I. Markey, c E. Rowcliffe, b I. O'Connor 6; L. Roach stp. E. Rowcliffe, b R. Sherring 0; A. Irwin, not out 8. Sundries 7. Total 149. Bowling: R. Sherring 2/33; P. Murray 1/24; T. Martin 3/34; J. Mealey 1/13; I. O'Connor 2/12; N. Mealey 1/2.

Collie: R. Sherring, b B. Dupree 20; P. Murray lbw, b B. McEwen 4; T. O'Connor, c R. Hillyer, b B. Dupree 20; E. Rowcliffe, c B. Long, b R. Hillyer 0; J. Mealey, c B. Thompson, b R. Hillyer 2, N. Mealey, c B. Long, b B. Dupree 15, T. Martin b B. Dupree 1; I. O'Connor, not out 14; R. Rowcliffe, b R. Irwin 3; D. Mealey, c B. Davey, b R. Irwin 0; K. Rowcliffe, b R. Irwin 0.

Sundries 4, Total 82.

Bowling: B. Long 0/17; B. McEwen 1/5; B. Dupree 4/26; R. Hillyer 2/24; R. Irwin 3/1.

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 14
December 1950.

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 6
November 1952.

World War II

As in the Great War a generation earlier, the outbreak of global conflict in 1939 again drew the young men of Collie into military service, particularly following Japan's entry into the war. Eight members of the extended O'Connor families enlisted. Patrick, the youngest son of James and Eliza O'Connor, joined the AIF in 1944 and served on Bougainville, later dying in 1946 at just twenty-three from nephritis attributed to his wartime service. Owen, eldest son of

Patrick and Olive O'Connor, enlisted in 1941 and served as a gunner in the defence of Darwin between 1943 and 1945. His younger brother William enlisted at eighteen in 1944

and served at [REDACTED] Michael and Kathleen's eldest son [REDACTED] served on active duty in [REDACTED] brother John enlisted in New Guinea and Borneo until [REDACTED]

In February 1945 [REDACTED] O'Connor, qualified for [REDACTED] reserve list.^{125 126} However, as [REDACTED] as vital to the farm's operation [REDACTED] accompanying Donald's appointment [REDACTED]

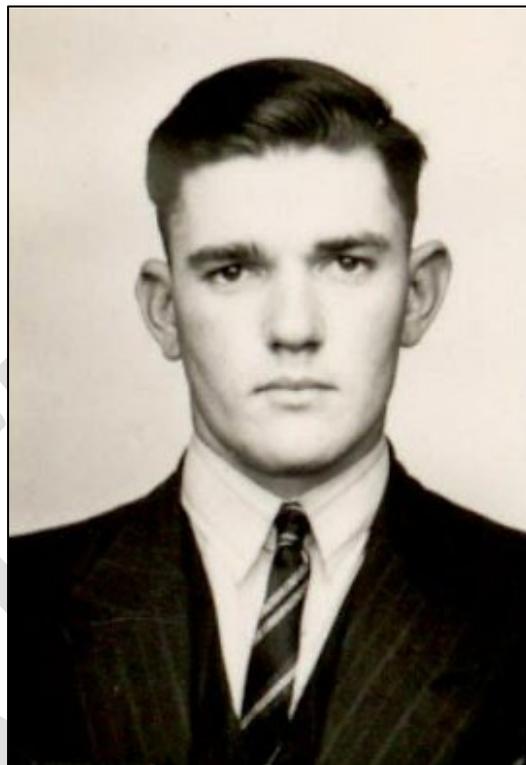
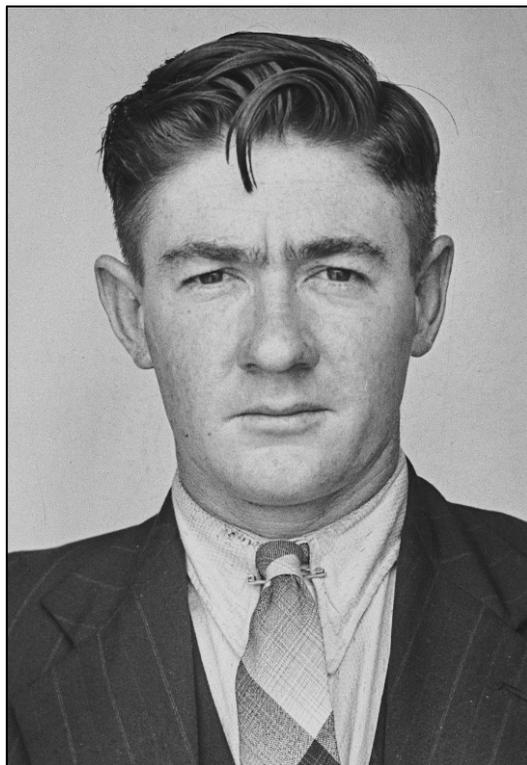
*Balboora
Collie
21/1/45
I hereby
He can
Of course
which
Signed
F. O'Connor*

*Force.
y-Aug & harvest*

Don (next page) [REDACTED] respectable citizen, served with the [REDACTED] AAF in Richmond, as [REDACTED]

Jack O'Connor [REDACTED] listed as a reserve at 18 [REDACTED] in the AIF until the end [REDACTED] Motor Regiment, and [REDACTED] Officer

described Jack as a *keen student. Mechanically minded – capable. Has ability to improve with further experience. Driving, map reading good. Maintenance very good. Note-book fair. March discipline good.* He saw active service, fighting the Japanese in the islands of Morotai, Indonesia, and Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.¹³⁰

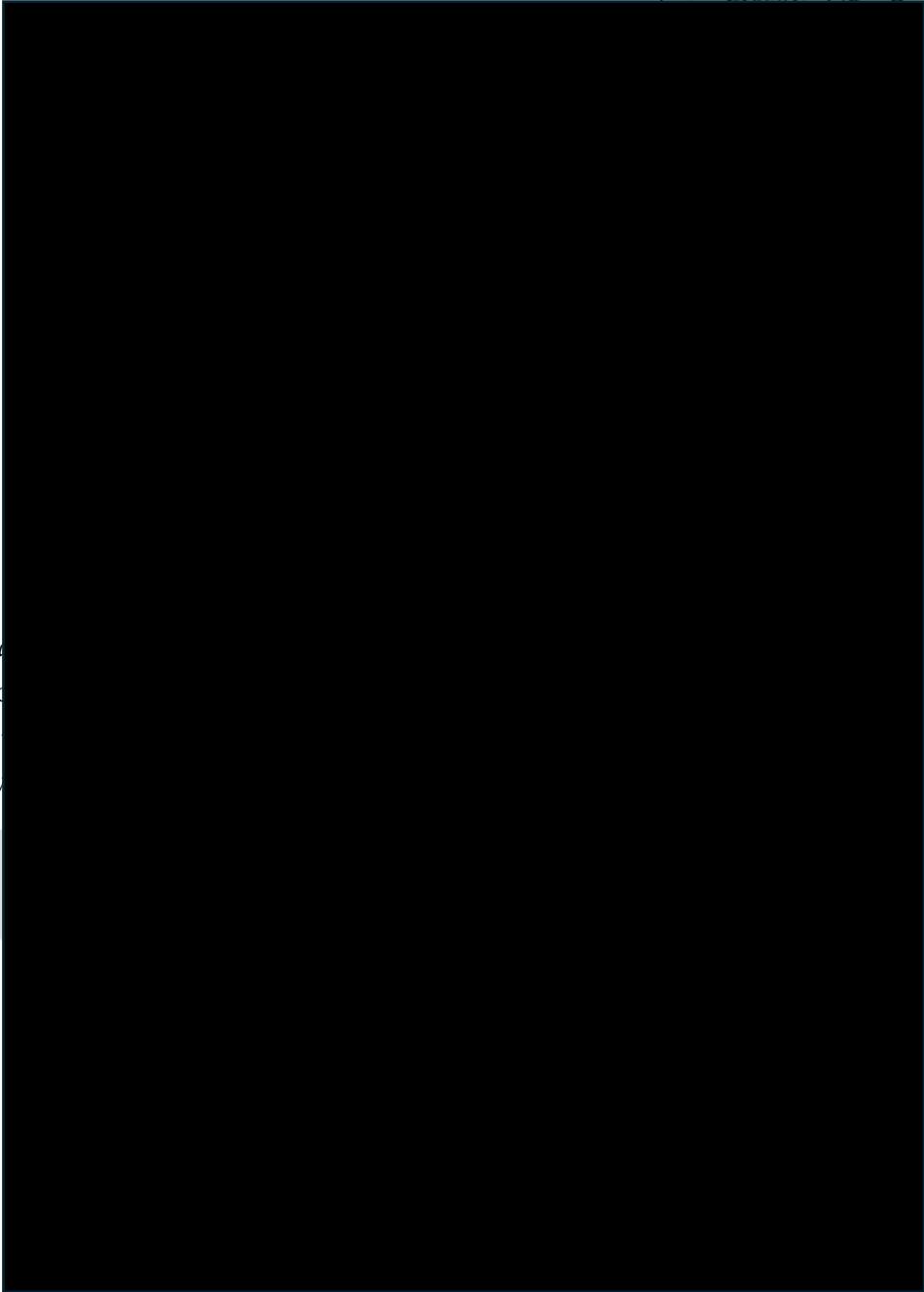


Enlistment photographs, taken from their RAAF records, for Donald O'Connor (left) and Brian O'Connor (right).

Like his elder brother, Don, Brian enlisted in the RAAF in November 1943 (**above**). He, too, was enthusiastic about becoming a pilot and passed his elementary Flying Training in June 1944, transferring from his Leading Aircraftman (LAC) duties to the Acting Air Crew. Described by his commanding Officer as *keen, alert and confident*. Brian completed his service at the RAAF Base in Toowoomba, Queensland, in August 1945.¹³¹

In June 1945, as a gesture of gratitude for the bravery of service members in World War II, farmers across the Collie district billeted 34 British sailors for a week, giving them a taste of Australian bush life. The O'Connors were delighted to participate, welcoming two sailors into their home. Young Ian (6), Terry (8), and Colin (14) would no doubt have been thrilled to share their house with such distinguished visitors.¹³² By mid-1946, most of the young men and women of Collie who had served in the war had returned and were formally welcomed home at a gathering in the Collie Hall, with each presented with a fountain pen and wallet (**next page**).¹³³

Presentations were made to:
 ACW. Jean McMaster; Pte.
 J. Bishop; Pte. H. Bogio, Gnr
 Colless, WO
 G. Har-
 y, Flt. Lt.
 M. Irving,
 A. O. Mc-
 McIveen,
 Dvr. M.
 J. Mealey.
 Dvr V. E.
 Meers, Dvr.
 nk, Dvr H.
 nor, LAC
 O'Connor
 LAC G.
 Pte. B.
 orcule, Pte.
 Wilson.
 unable to
 McCutcheon,
 y, L. K.
 J. Meers,
 P. Moore



Life at Balboora
 the responsi-
 support
 and harvest
 Mother's

in service,
 tirelessly to
 ploughing,
 them A
 years: 134

*I give to her my best, my all,
 This is a mother's creed.*

*And I must give my gallant sons,
So young and tall and brave,
To guard this jewel of the South,
By land and air and wave.*

*I must be strong, if they should fall,
And mingle with the slain,
For desolate my home shall be,
If they come not again.
But I must carry in my heart,
A fervent, silent prayer,
That God will bless my soldier boys,
And keep them safely there.*

*I must be strong with helping hands,
And an understanding heart,
To smile, to cheer, to work to give,
To play a women's part.
May God, in this our darkest hour
His people kindly lead,
And bless the tasks imposed on me,
In this, a mother's creed.*

In *The Fighting Front*, Eileen's thoughts are with her boys, Jack with the 6th Light Horse in Bougainville and Don and Brian with the RAAF and their mates as she penned, in part: ¹³⁵

*Honour the men of the fighting front,
Who routed the cunning Jap,
From the far New Guinea jungles,
Through the Owen Stanly gap.
Braving the fevers of jungle swamps,
In the heat and rain they stand,
A bulwark of young and gallant lives,
Guarding our own fair land.*

*Honour the men of the fighting front,
The men with the silver wings.
Who pilot their planes through the silent clouds,
Carrying a cargo of lead, that brings
Death and destruction to enemy lines,
Tho' death stalks their gallant fight.*

*The foe shall know as they blast and burn,
The strength of their deadly might.*

*Honour the men of the fighting front,
Where ever the battle leads.
Mid the thunder of guns they carry on,
A pageant of noble deeds...
Heroes that do, and dare, and die,
In ghastly enterprise.
Fighting for a victorious peace,
That a better world may rise.*

Fred and Eileen's Legacy

Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 13 September
1951.

THE CALL OF THE LAND
Mr. and Mrs. Fred O'Connor, of "Balborah," Collie, have been taking things easy in the city of Dubbo for several months, where they have a very fine home. However, the call of the bush has been hard to resist and they have returned to the old home, where Mr O'Connor feels that his assistance is badly needed. Rabbits have been breeding up in droves in that area, and our friend recently showed the young 'uns how to prepare a proper driving wing and netted 1100 of the pest. Too many of our local residents are forsaking the land for the city and we are sure the O'Connors will be doubly welcome to Collie district functions.

In March 1951, Fred and Eileen O'Connor retired to their comfortable Dubbo residence, where the Collie News section of the *Gilgandra Weekly* reported that *they had been residents in the district for a great many years and will be greatly missed by their many friends. The best wishes of the community are extended to them in their new home.*¹³⁶ Their retirement, though, was short-lived as *Balboora*, like all its nearby properties, became overrun with rabbits, which formed

moving carpets at night and devastated paddocks, stripping pastures bare, destroying young crops, and leaving sheep without feed. Despite extensive trapping, poisoning, warren-ripping and fumigation, the sheer scale of the plague overwhelmed local efforts, forcing the Shire Council and Land Board to launch coordinated destruction campaigns. Fred and Eileen, in their typically stoic fashion, abruptly ended their retirement and returned to

OBITUARY

MRS. EILEEN O'CONNOR

The death took place at the Dubbo Base Hospital recently of Mrs. Eileen Jean O'Connor, at the age of 63, of "Balboora," Collie. The late Mrs. O'Connor was born at Conraine, (Victoria) and was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Chisolm, of Bowden.

She was married at Collie, at the age of 21, to Mr. Frederick O'Connor, who survives her, together with ten children.

They are : Jean (Mrs. D. O'Sullivan, Dubbo); Donald (Gilgandra); John (Bourke); Frederick (Collie); Anthony (Brewarrina); Keith (Coonamble); Kenneth (Combara); Terrence (Collie); Colin (Coonamble) and Patrick (Collie).

The funeral moved from St. Joseph's Church, Gilgandra, after a Requiem Mass and funeral service, for the Catholic portion of the Gilgandra cemetery.

*Western Herald, Bourke,
Friday 2 October 1959.*

Balboora in September 1951 to join the fight.¹³⁷

Eileen died at Dubbo Base Hospital on 18 September 1959, aged 63 (**above**).¹³⁸ Frederick's life ended tragically five years later when he was involved in a car accident while travelling from *Balboora* to Dubbo on Christmas Eve 1964, aged 78. Since settling in the Collie district, Fred, with Eileen by his side, had earned a reputation as a skilled and dependable farmer, guiding

both family and property through some of the most difficult decades in rural history.^{139 140} Despite collapsing wheat and wool prices during the Great Depression and the devastating droughts of 1930–31 and 1934–36, Fred's ingenuity distinguished him from many of his contemporaries. His early adoption of ensilage saved thousands of sheep at a time when graziers elsewhere were losing stock in large numbers. Careful paddock rotation, attentive soil management, and his insistence on maintaining strong pasture cover enabled *Balboora* to endure while neighbouring farms failed. During the labour-scarce war years of the 1940s, he

Fred & Eileen O'Connor.



and Eileen sustained the farm through resolve and hard work, and by the 1950s, *Balboora* was widely regarded as a benchmark wheat and sheep enterprise.

Following the example set by his father, William, and grandfather, Patrick, Fred was determined that his children would acquire the discipline and practical skills necessary for a successful life on the land. This intergenerational legacy was strengthened by Eileen's quiet determination, whose steadfast commitment to a loving, nurturing, and principled home life proved indispensable. Together, their emphasis on hard work, faith, education, and participation in sporting, musical, and community pursuits fostered an environment in which their ten children grew into confident, respected, and accomplished members of their communities. Frederick and Eileen O'Connor (**previous page**)¹⁴¹ left an enduring legacy through their children with Jean O'Sullivan, Don at *Clairedon*, Gilgandra, Jack at *Shannon*, Bourke, Max at *Oaklea*, Collie, Brian at *Wongalea*, Brewarrina, Keith at *Warrington*,



Coonamble, Ken at *Glenrowan*, Combara, Colin at *Avonmea*, Coonamble, Terry at *Aramara*, Collie, and Ian at *Balboora*, Collie. This legacy is captured perfectly as their adult children gathered, in song, at the 1961 wedding of their youngest, Ian, to Betty Foran (**below**).¹⁴²

Notes

¹ Throughout this chapter, the names *Balboora* and *Lisfarran* are used interchangeably to describe the land Fred farmed. The names of the original blocks and their respective homesteads probably remained in use, with Fred and his family living at *Lisfarran* for many years. In later years, the name *Lisfarran* fell out of use, with *Balboora* becoming the name of the entire property.

² O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Frederick O'Connor.

³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 2 November 1917

⁴ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Caroline O'Connor and Eileen O'Connor in the sulky a Balboora.

⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 12 September 1929

- ⁶ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 19 September 1929
- ⁷ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Frederick O'Connor and John Brophy - Standing Committee on Public Works.
- ⁸ Ensilage is the process of preserving green fodder, such as grasses or crops, by fermenting and storing it in airtight conditions to produce nutrient-rich silage for livestock feed.
- ⁹ *Daily Express*. *Wagga Wagga*, Saturday 1 February 1930
- ¹⁰ Museums of History NSW. (n.d.). *Card Index to publicans' licences. Hotel - Collie, Collie, Wammerawa*. Available at: https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=ADLIB_RNSW114981530&context=L&vid=61SRA&lang=en_US&search_scope=Everything&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=default_tab&query=any,contains,collie&offset=50
- ¹¹ The Great Depression was caused by a worldwide collapse in financial confidence following the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash, which triggered a chain reaction of bank failures, reduced international trade, and a sharp contraction in global economic activity.
- ¹² A bushel of wheat is a traditional unit of volume used in grain measurement, equal to 60 pounds (27.2 kg) of wheat in standard commercial practice.
- ¹³ Boiling down sheep for tallow refers to the process of slaughtering sheep and rendering their carcasses to extract fat, which was processed into tallow when livestock prices collapsed so badly that selling the animals for wool or meat was no longer worthwhile.
- ¹⁴ Woodley, P.A. (2021). *Community, Class and Place in Dubbo's Farmlands, 1870–1950*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. ANU Open Research Repository. Available at: <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstreams/e412e5e6-3d11-4a02-a449-37af6a2400f2/download>
- ¹⁵ Cannon, M. (1996). *The Human Face of the Great Depression*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- ¹⁶ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 9 January 1931
- ¹⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 23 January 1930
- ¹⁸ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Fred O'Connor and children.
- ¹⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 11 August 1932
- ²⁰ Boiling down sheep for tallow refers to the process of rendering the carcasses of low-value or starving sheep in large vats to extract their fat, which was then processed into tallow for use in candles, soap, lubricants, and industrial products.
- ²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 4 July 1935
- ²² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 26 March 1936
- ²³ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Balboora.
- ²⁴ O'Connor, E. (n.d.). Photograph of old plough, Balboora.
- ²⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 May 1931
- ²⁶ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Eileen and Ian.
- ²⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 29 January 1931
- ²⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1953
- ²⁹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a comprehensive summary of Catholic doctrine that outlines the Church's teachings on faith, morals, sacraments, and prayer.
- ³⁰ *Erica* was the pen name of Constance Mary Le Plastrier, an Australian schoolteacher, botanist, and writer who contributed to *The Catholic Press* in Sydney during the 1930s. Under this pseudonym, she managed the *Children's Page*, particularly the popular *Erica's Letter Bag*, where she corresponded with young readers, offering guidance, encouragement, and fostering a sense of community among Catholic children across Australia.
- ³¹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 12 February 1931
- ³² *Catholic Press*, Thursday 27 June 1929
- ³³ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 12 December 1929
- ³⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 June 1934
- ³⁵ *Catholic Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1953
- ³⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 8 May 1947
- ³⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 April 1944
- ³⁸ O'Connor, Eileen. (1984). *My Garden of Verse*. Second Edition. Printorana, Dubbo. [Reprinted from the original 1944 Edition]
- ³⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 12 August 1948
- ⁴⁰ Museums of History New South Wales. (n.d.). NRS-15051-1-8-[453]-2, Collie Public School 1927. Available at: <https://records-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/>
- ⁴¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 4 April 1946
- ⁴² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 March 1937
- ⁴³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 4 April 1946
- ⁴⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 December 1933
- ⁴⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 September 1933
- ⁴⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 December 1936
- ⁴⁷ These exams were part of broader moral, social, and hygiene education initiatives, influenced by religious and social reform movements, including the temperance movement focused on warning children about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and other "vices," promoting sobriety and self-control.
- ⁴⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 17 December 1936
- ⁴⁹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 6 February 1930
- ⁵⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 11 June 1931
- ⁵¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 15 September 1932
- ⁵² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 April 1933
- ⁵³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 15 September 1932

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- ⁵⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 September 1933
- ⁵⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 June 1943
- ⁵⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 29 April 1948
- ⁵⁷ St Stanislaus' College is a Jesuit school in Bathurst founded by the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers (Patron Saint, St Vincent de Paul) that arrived from Ireland to administer the college in 1889.
- ⁵⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 9 December 1937
- ⁵⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 10 December 1936
- ⁶⁰ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Saturday 24 June 1933
- ⁶¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 September 1933
- ⁶² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 January 1934
- ⁶³ Unfortunately, the Annual Presentations from St Stanislaus' Catholic College Bathurst were not widely published after World War II.
- ⁶⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 8 February 1940
- ⁶⁵ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 14 December 1933
- ⁶⁶ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 11 December 1941
- ⁶⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 10 December 1936
- ⁶⁸ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 31 December 1936
- ⁶⁹ *National Advocate Bathurst*, Monday 6 December 1937
- ⁷⁰ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 22 December 1938
- ⁷¹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 30 November 1939
- ⁷² **Need reference**
- ⁷³ *National Advocate Bathurst*, Saturday 17 April 1937
- ⁷⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 5 September 1946
- ⁷⁵ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Tennis court Balboora, O'Connor and Wheatley families.
- ⁷⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 7 June 1934
- ⁷⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 June 1934
- ⁷⁸ An American tournament is a round-robin style tennis competition designed to maximize participation and social interaction.
- ⁷⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 29 August 1935
- ⁸⁰ *Castlereagh*, Friday 18 October 1907
- ⁸¹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 22 February 1907
- ⁸² *Castlereagh*, Friday 20 December 1907
- ⁸³ *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative*, Thursday, 10 February 1910
- ⁸⁴ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Saturday 13 March 1909
- ⁸⁵ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Sat, 27 March 1909
- ⁸⁶ *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative*, Thursday 14 October 1909
- ⁸⁷ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 24 February 1914
- ⁸⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 3 March 1916
- ⁸⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 7 November 1919
- ⁹⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 28 November 1919
- ⁹¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 16 December 1937
- ⁹² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 January 1938
- ⁹³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 27 January 1938
- ⁹⁴ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Collie cricket.
- ⁹⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 17 February 1938
- ⁹⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 March 1938
- ⁹⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 10 March 1938
- ⁹⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 22 December 1938
- ⁹⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 26 November 1938
- ¹⁰⁰ *National Advocate (Bathurst)*, Friday 4 November 1938
- ¹⁰¹ *National Advocate (Bathurst)*, Friday 3 November 1939.
- ¹⁰² New South Wales Country Week was an annual cricket carnival held in Sydney that brought together representative teams from rural and regional districts to compete in a week-long tournament against one another—and often against Sydney grade sides. It was the most important showcase for country cricketers in NSW, run by the NSW Cricket Association as a pathway for talented players outside the metropolitan competition to be seen by state selectors.
- ¹⁰³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 December 1939
- ¹⁰⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 1 February 1940
- ¹⁰⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 March 1940
- ¹⁰⁶ *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative*, Monday 8 February 1937
- ¹⁰⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 27 January 1944
- ¹⁰⁸ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 12 November 1940
- ¹⁰⁹ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 19 November 1940
- ¹¹⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thu 28 Nov 1940
- ¹¹¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 13 February 1941

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- ¹¹² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 March 1941
- ¹¹³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 February 1946
- ¹¹⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 28 February 1946
- ¹¹⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 March 1946
- ¹¹⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 24 October 1946
- ¹¹⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 31 October 1946
- ¹¹⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 March 1947
- ¹¹⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 March 1947
- ¹²⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 5 May 1949
- ¹²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 December 1950
- ¹²² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 November 1952
- ¹²³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Wednesday 9 February 1955
- ¹²⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 16 April 1936
- ¹²⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 27 March 1941
- ¹²⁶ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Service Record, O'Connor, Donald Ross. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=4596197>
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Service Record, O'Connor, Donald Ross. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=4596197>
- ¹²⁹ A Leading Aircraftman (LAC) in the RAAF during World War II was responsible for technical, mechanical, and ground support duties such as aircraft maintenance, signals, and logistics. Although not aircrew, LACs played a crucial role in keeping aircraft operational and supporting air operations both in Australia and overseas.
- ¹³⁰ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, John Thomas. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=5630998>
- ¹³¹ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Service Record, O'Connor, Anthony Brian. Available at: <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=5378074>
- ¹³² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 June 1945
- ¹³³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 June 1946
- ¹³⁴ O'Connor, Eileen, op. cit.,
- ¹³⁵ Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 15 March 1951
- ¹³⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 13 September 1951
- ¹³⁸ *Western Herald, Bourke*, Friday 2 October 1959
- ¹³⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 January 1940
- ¹⁴⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 19 August 1943
- ¹⁴¹ O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. Fred and Eileen O'Connor.
- ¹⁴² O'Connor, I. (n.d.). Private Photograph Collection. The wedding of Ian O'Connor and Betty Foran 1961.

Chapter 7

Carrigafoyle Castle 600 – 1584

[to be completed]

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Appendix 1

<i>The Balboora O'Connors</i>			
<p>William O'Connor (c1788 - c1847) <i>married</i> Ellen Hogan (c1788 - c1847)</p> <p><i>Known children:</i></p> <p>Patrick (1811 - 1902) Bridget (1816) James (1818) Mary (1821) Johana (1823) Margaret (1823) Elizabeth (1824) Ellen [Nora] (1826)</p> <p><i>William and Ellen likely had more children before 1816. The Catholic parish records before 1815 are unavailable for Newcastle West.</i></p>	<p>Patrick O'Connor (1811 - 1902) <i>married</i> Margaret Kennedy (1815 - 1895)</p> <p><i>Known children:</i></p> <p>Michael (1837 - 1910) Mary (1840) Ellen (1843 - 1895) William (1847 - 1913) James (1850) Margaret (1853 - 1930) Catherine (1857 - 1931)</p>	<p>William O'Connor (1847 - 1913) <i>married</i> Caroline Mary Royal (1853 - 1929)</p> <p><i>Known children:</i></p> <p>Bridget (1876 - 1944) Mary Caroline (1877 - 1942) James (1878 - 1939) John Joseph (1880 - 1946) George William (1882 - 1917) Patrick (1884 - 1940) Frederick (1886 - 1964) Michael (1888 - 1961) Margaret Mary (1892 - 1894) Catherine Ellen (1894 - 1894) Thomas Francis (1896 - 1911) Edward Joseph (1899 - 1970)</p>	<p>Frederick O'Connor (1886 - 1964) <i>married</i> Eileen Jean Chisholm (1890 - 1959)</p> <p><i>Known children:</i></p> <p>Jean Eileen (1918 - 2005) Donald Ross (1919 - 1974) John Thomas (1921 - 1991) Frederick Maxwell (1923 - 1997) Anthony Brian (1925 - 2002) Keith Joseph (1927 - 1980) Kenneth Francis (1929 - 1981) Colin Chisholm (1931 - 2002) Terence Michael (1937 - 2009) Patrick Ian (1939 - 2024)</p>

Appendix 2

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Acknowledgements

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