

GEORGE WILLIAM and ELIZA CONNOR

PREFACE

This is one of seven biographies of my paternal ancestors in Australia, whose family tree is shown on the following page. George and Eliza Connor are my great grandparents. They were both born in Australia, and their story covers country life in Tasmania, post gold-rush Melbourne, farming ventures in Gippsland, Victoria, and in southern New South Wales.

The biographies in this series are;

Thomas James Connor (1813-1880) and Anne Peake (1811-1894)

Edward Thomas Newton (1813-1882) and Eliza Martin (1817-1903)

Sprott Boyd (1814-1902) and Catherine Cutler (1819-1894)

George William Connor (1842-1873) and Eliza Newton (1843-1912)

Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912) and Eliza Agnes Brown (1855-1884)

George Stanley Newton Connor (1871-1951) and Isabella Sprott Boyd (1882-1957)

George Boyd Connor (1919-2014) and Sybil Kane Whiting (1922-1995).

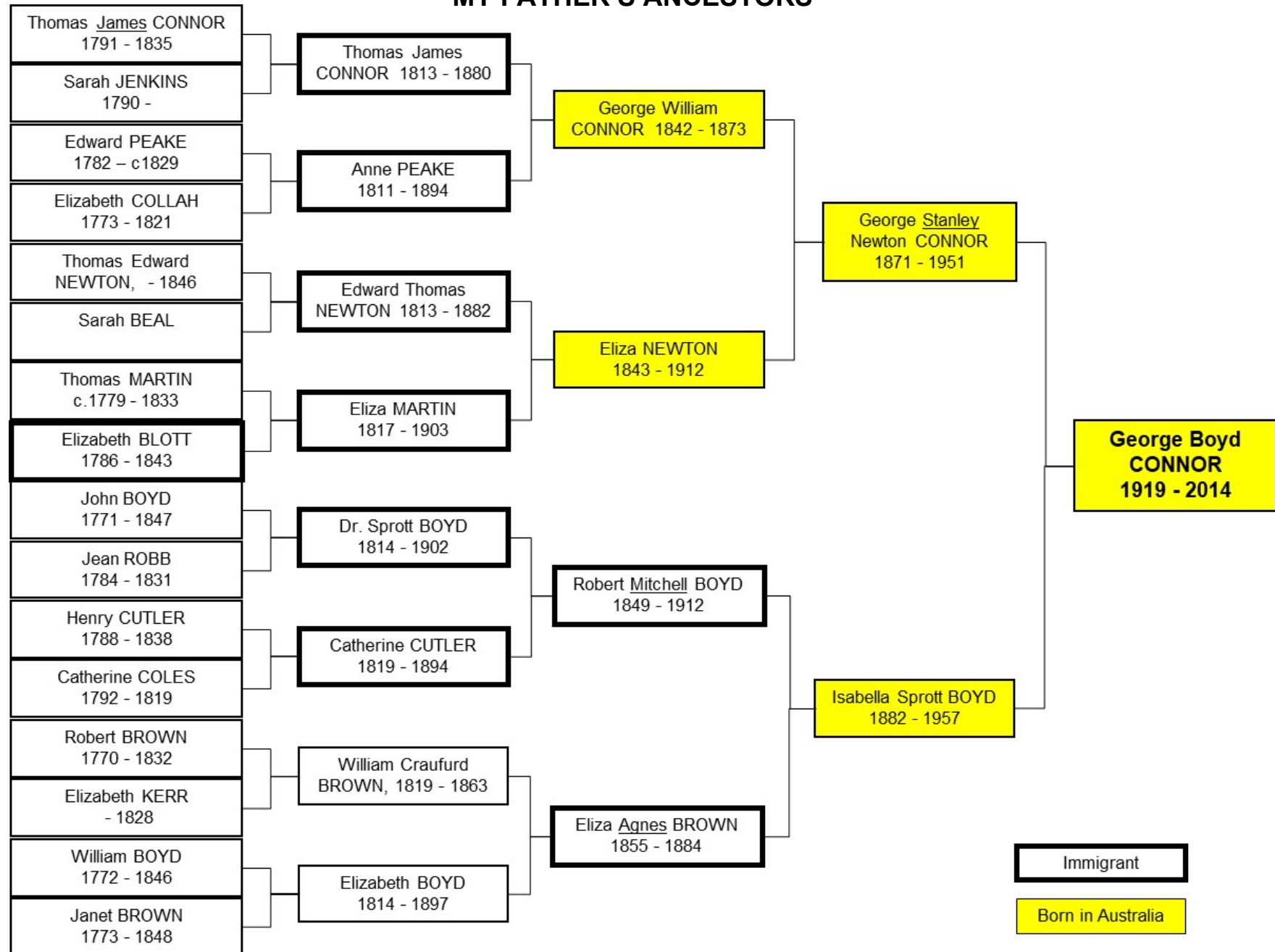
Each of the stories can be read in isolation. Inevitably, there is overlap between them, so some repetition is unavoidable but I have tried to keep this to a minimum. For easy reference, family trees are included at the end of each story.

Several organizations have provided research material for this story. In particular, the National Library of Australia 'TROVE' database was an invaluable resource. The Public Records Office of Victoria provided access to Birth, Death and Marriage certificates, and Wills. The Yarram Historical Society provided access to the shire's rate books. The NSW State Archives provided health records and Wills. The Land and Environment Office of Victoria conducted title searches and provided copies of original title deeds. Ancestry.com.au provided transcripts of many important records of the Connor family. My thanks go to them all.

Andrew George Connor
Perth, 2018

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MY FATHER'S ANCESTORS



GEORGE WILLIAM and ELIZA CONNOR

George Connor's early life

Tasmania (1842-1859)

George William Connor was the first member of the Connor family to be born in Australia. His father and mother, Thomas James and Anne Connor, were school teachers who emigrated to Van Diemen's Land in response to a call for trained teachers from the Governor of the penal colony. On arrival in October 1841, Thomas and Anne with their two sons Edward Peake and Thomas James junior were posted to a small government school at Launceston. George William was born in Launceston on 6 October 1842 almost exactly one year after the family arrived.

George probably spent the first two years of his life at the back of the school room, where his mother taught the infants, and the girls in needlework and homecraft, while his father instructed the boys in reading, writing, arithmetic and other subjects. It was a single school room next to the teacher's cottage on Cameron Street. The school room had been declared unfit for years - the plaster was broken, and there were boards and tin in place of glass in many of the windows. The teacher's cottage was only marginally better, so it must have been difficult for Thomas and Anne to provide a healthy environment in which to raise their young family. In mid 1843, the Holy Trinity Church evicted the students from the Cameron Street school room. The school moved to a newly built school room and teacher's residence at 1 Elizabeth Street behind St. John's (Anglican) Church, so the family's standard of living improved substantially.

In January 1844, vacancies for a head teacher and matron arose at the Liverpool Street (Central) school in Hobart Town, the principal government school in the colony. The Board of Education promoted Thomas and Anne Connor to fill these positions and the family moved to Hobart, taking up residence in Bathurst Street in a house which backed on to the school house. George was not yet two years old when his eldest brother, Edward Peake Connor, died of apoplexy (cause unknown) and his sister, Sarah Frances (Fanny) was born at Bathurst Street.

George began to attend his father's school on a formal basis in 1846 at age three. The school employed the system of the British and Foreign School Society, which was based on infant pupils being taught by older pupils (monitors) with the aid of large wall charts. There were 200 students at the school, quite large for that time, and it is doubtful that the small teaching staff could educate so many children effectively without employing the monitor system. George's brother Thomas junior was two years older and may have tutored George in some subjects. His father and mother probably tutored him at home after school.

The primary school curriculum had a strong emphasis on religious as well as secular teaching. George was taught the scriptures and the ten commandments, and the Lord's Prayer was recited at assembly each morning. Secular instruction of the junior classes was based on the large Lesson Sheets of the British and Foreign School Society. As George progressed through school, instruction was based on a series of four books of the same Society, progressive in their character, ranging from the basic elements of reading, up to the outlines of general and English History, Physics, Arithmetic and Natural History. The school had a large map of the world to assist in teaching Geography. For students with aptitude, additional subjects were available including the higher branches of Arithmetic, Book-keeping, English Grammar, General History, Elementary Geometry, Drawing, the rudiments of Vocal Music and, in a few schools, Latin and French – all at primary school age. During the year, the school held several public examinations in which notable Hobart Town people

(clergymen, military officers, bureaucrats, businessmen etc) and parents were invited to ask questions of the children to test their knowledge. It is clear that George received a well-rounded primary school education, although being the son of the head teacher and mistress no doubt created some difficulties for him with the other children.

In 1850 when George was eight years old, the Connor family moved to the newly constructed Hobart Town High School, where Thomas had accepted a post as the English Master and Master of the boarding house. The family now consisted of three boys (Thomas junior, George and Charles) and two girls (Fanny and Cornelia) and Anne was pregnant again. As well as a better job, the High School posting offered the growing family spacious new accommodation.



Hobart High School (now Domain House)

George graduated to high school at the end of 1852 and joined his brother. He was there for a year before Thomas resigned from his High School position and sold a large amount of their household furniture: the family, which now had the additions of Arthur (2) and Florence (1), was on the move again. The intention was to try farming at Southport (south of Hobart) but within six months, Thomas had opened up a private school back in Launceston. Thomas junior and George probably attended a high school there. The last member of the family, Narcissa (Cissie), was born in Launceston in September 1854. Three months later, the family (minus Thomas junior who stayed on at boarding school) sailed from Hobart on the barque *Eliza Frances* for Sydney, where Thomas had been accepted as head teacher at the non-government Redfern Congregational School in James Street, Redfern.

The Connor family did not stay in New South Wales for long. Barely one year later on 18 January 1856, an advance party of Thomas senior and George (aged 13) returned to Launceston aboard the steamer *Black Swan* and were re-united with Thomas junior. Anne and the other six children returned three weeks later aboard the *Royal Shepherd*. Thomas re-opened the Launceston Academy for young gentlemen and young ladies at the St. John's chapel school room. George completed his schooling in Launceston in 1858.

Melbourne (1859-1866)

Following the discovery of gold in 1851, Victoria began a period of rapid growth. Many were attracted from Tasmania and elsewhere by the promise of new wealth and the Connor family was no exception, although they were late-comers and had no intention of trying their luck on the goldfields. Instead, after a couple of reconnaissance trips to investigate the employment possibilities, the family moved to Melbourne in October 1859. Thomas, Anne and Thomas junior found employment as teachers almost immediately in suburban public schools at Carlton and North Melbourne.

Initially, the family lived at 33 Rathdowne Street, Carlton, opposite Carlton Gardens. From here, it was an easy walk to either the city proper, or to the schools in Carlton. George however, did not follow the family tradition of teaching. He appears to have gone into small business in the city. In 1865, he listed himself in the Sands and McDougall directory as a confectioner, with a shop at 285 Elizabeth Street. Little is known about this period of George's working life.

In 1860, Thomas junior (20) and George (17), were young men. They joined the Carlton Cricket Club, which first formed in the 1860-61 season - Thomas became the honorary secretary until it amalgamated with the Royal Park Club in October 1861. In November 1861, the first Melbourne Cup was run and won by the favourite 'Archer'. Then in January 1862, the first international cricket match between an All England XI and the XVIII of Victoria was played at the Melbourne Metropolitan Cricket Ground, rounding out a portentous summer sporting season in Melbourne. Given their love of cricket, no doubt Thomas senior, junior and George attended the cricket match, which the All-England team won easily despite being out-numbered.

Soon after arriving in Melbourne, Thomas senior, Thomas junior and George joined the Carlton Volunteer Rifle Corps. The volunteer rifle brigades had been sanctioned by the Victorian Government in 1854 in response to perceived vulnerability of the colony while its small military garrison was being used to quell unrest on the gold diggings, at Ballarat and the Eureka stockade. The gold discoveries also made Victoria an attractive target for international powers such as Russia and France, which at that time were engaged in the Crimean War. In 1857, the Government decided to place greater reliance on its volunteers and, by late 1860, the volunteer force had almost reached its planned full complement of 5000 men.

The volunteer brigades held parades at least once a week, participated in an annual range practice and attended field camps during Easter. Thomas senior was a company sergeant¹. They all competed in rifle matches conducted by the Victorian Rifle Association, using Government supplied rifles and ammunition. George was a good shot and occasionally won matches at 600 yards, in a field of 300 riflemen, winning £20². He qualified as a marksman several years running and wore a Marksman's Badge on his left sleeve, similar to the one shown.



In mid 1862, the family moved house to the northern end of Cardigan Street, Carlton, which was closer to Thomas and Anne's new posting at the Grattan Street school, and to the Carlton Rifles' meeting room. In early 1863, Thomas junior was transferred to become head teacher at a school in South Yarra and in May, he married a fellow school teacher, Emily

¹ The Argus 2 Jan 1861

² The Argus 3 Jun 1861

Gibbons. Thomas junior moved away from the family home, left the Carlton Rifles, and the two brothers began to drift apart.

In May 1864, Thomas senior was promoted to Lieutenant and, at about the same time, George was promoted to Sergeant in the Carlton Rifles. George decided to take courses in military engineering with the Victorian Engineers, a predecessor of the Royal Australian Engineers. The course was quite comprehensive, covering all aspects of planning, constructing and demolishing various types of fortifications; building rafts, bridges and pontoons; establishing field telegraph, and learning the principles of military mining. Theory lessons were held in the training depot on Lygon Street, Carlton while practical engineering training was held at the Barracks on St Kilda Road and at the annual encampments. George was awarded the Badge for Proficiency in Military Engineering, like the one shown at right, but was not present at the award ceremony in July 1866³. George obviously enjoyed being in the military forces and learning about engineering. He sat the First Examination for the Military Badge in late 1866 and came 5th (of twelve), obtaining credits (>75%) in two subjects⁴. Perhaps this interest in engineering was passed down to his descendants. Is there something genetic in brain development that predisposes people to enjoy and excel at engineering?



In the meantime (May 1863), Thomas senior, Anne and younger members of the Connor family moved to the Immigrants' Home on the south bank of the Yarra River at Princes Bridge, where Thomas was appointed Head Teacher and Anne the Work Mistress. It is not known if George went with them, or moved out on his own. Over the next two years, this institution became the Princes Bridge Industrial School and a repository for any homeless, unwanted, destitute, delinquent and unmanageable children in Melbourne. Conditions were atrocious and the school was regularly the focus of media and political criticism. Thomas became the *de facto* Superintendent of the institution as well as Head Teacher, which brought additional duties and stress.

Thomas was eventually promoted to Superintendent but soon afterwards, in March 1866, Thomas senior was accused of having indecent relations with some of the girls in the Princes Bridge Industrial School. The details were leaked to the media and, although the subsequent investigation exonerated Thomas of all the serious charges, he was found to have acted with indiscretion and was dismissed from his post and from the public service. His livelihood and reputation in Melbourne were ruined, and the community standing of the other family members was also affected. Thomas and Anne escaped from Melbourne to visit relatives in South Australia for a few months, while the younger children stayed with Thomas Junior (who by that time was married with one child) and George. Cornelia and Charles became teachers and gained some independence. Thomas and Anne returned to Melbourne in mid August 1866 to consider their options.

During 1865-66, the Alberton State School had been advertising in the Melbourne newspapers for a married teacher, and Thomas senior applied for the position, sending his application and testimonials to Mr. E.T. Newton in Alberton⁵. He was not successful, but he had clearly decided that he needed to leave Melbourne.

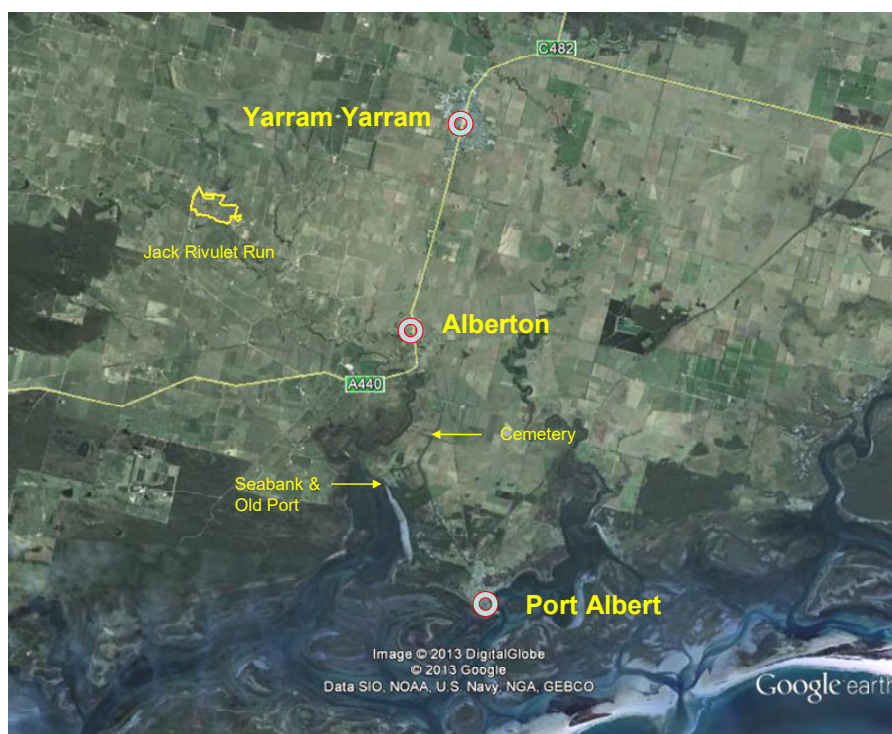
³ The Argus 23 Jul 1866

⁴ The Argus 26 Nov 1866

⁵ The Argus 3 March 1856

Gippsland (1867-1873)

George was also looking for a change of career and perhaps his engineering training and experience led him to believe a life on the land was a good option. At that time, advertisements for Crown Land leases appeared regularly in the Melbourne newspapers, including for land around Alberton⁶. One of the benefits of joining the Victorian Volunteer Rifles was that, following an Amendment to the Land Act in 1865, any volunteer who had served and had been classed effective for not less than five years became entitled to receive from the Board of Land and Works a certificate equivalent to £50 towards the purchase money or rent of any Crown Land⁷. Both George and his father had already qualified for the grant, giving them an extra incentive to move to the country.



In July 1866, a selection called *Jack Rivulet Run* near Alberton became available. The original lessee, John Amey, had struggled to pay the rates on this lease for several years and had tried to sell it in 1864 to pay debts. He had been threatened with forfeiture of the lease on several occasions, but upon his death in June 1866 the property reverted to the Crown. Edward T. Newton who, as well as being on the Alberton School Committee, was the official Government auctioneer for Crown Land at Alberton and John Amey's neighbour, probably introduced George and his father to the property. In September 1866, George and Thomas decided that they would pool their Volunteer grants and lease *Jack Rivulet Run*, so beginning a new life on the land in South Gippsland.

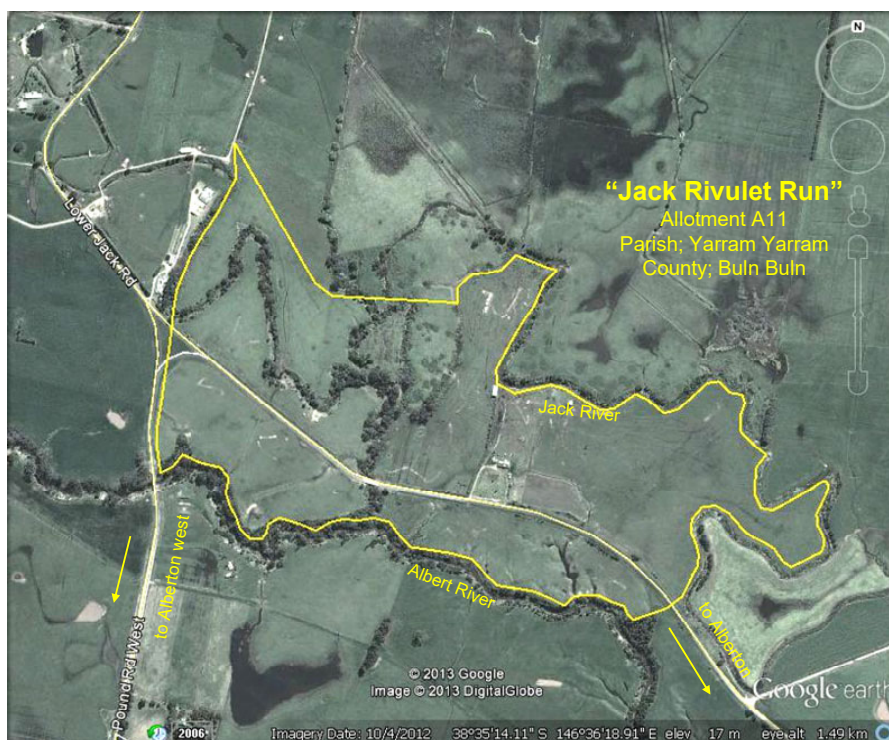
According to Thomas' obituary, the Connor family moved to Alberton on 29 May 1867⁸, but George probably made some earlier reconnaissance trips to check out the conditions at the run and plan for the family's arrival. Alberton was a small town in the lush dairying country of South Gippsland, about 170 kilometres east of Melbourne. The Alberton Shire, which included the towns of Alberton, Port Albert, Yarram Yarram, and Tarraville had about 2700

⁶ Gippsland Guardian 29 Mar 1867

⁷ McNicoll, R.R. 1977. History of the Royal Australian Engineers. Volume 1. The Colonial Engineers. *Royal Australian Engineers Corps Committee*

⁸ Gippsland Standard 3 Jun 1880

people, and the Alberton School had about 50 children. Access to Alberton at that time was a day's sail by ship from Melbourne (Hobson's Bay) to Port Albert, and then by road northward for nine kilometres. At one stage in Victoria's history, Port Albert was vying with Port Phillip to be Victoria's major port, but the opening up of grazing and agricultural land in central Victoria and then the gold rush assured Port Phillip's future. Port Albert became a small trading and fishing port, serving the agricultural activities in the local Gippsland hinterland.



Jack Rivulet Run of 115 acres, 1 rood, 16 perches (Allotment A11 Parish of Yarram Yarram) was located about six kilometres north west of Alberton between the Albert and the Jack Rivers. The land was and is quite flat, swampy in places and subject to flooding. It had some fencing and was partly cleared, but after severe floods in 1863 and neglect by the previous lessee, the improvements were in bad shape. There was a four-room timber house and outbuildings which the family occupied. In July 1867, the Alberton school master tendered his resignation. By that time, Thomas and Anne were well known and respected members of the local community, and the School Committee had no hesitation in selecting them to fill the vacant teaching positions. Thomas, Anne and the other children moved to the Alberton teacher's residence and took up their posts from 1 August 1867. Initially the Board of Education refused to sanction their appointment but E.T. Newton and the committee strongly defended their decision and ultimately prevailed. George and his brother Arthur (then aged 17) stayed at *Jack Rivulet Run* to manage the property.

George and Arthur ran a herd of dairy cows, some pigs, and kept horses for work around the farm and for transport to and from Alberton. In September 1867, their first year on the farm, the farm was flooded again and the Jack River looked "*more like a lake for some miles of its course*"⁹. Regular flooding meant that the soils were excellent, but the land was only useful for grazing and not for large scale cultivation.

⁹ Gippsland Guardian 28 September 1867



Grazing flats along the Jack River



George William Connor¹⁰
(courtesy Jennie Russell)

¹⁰ This photograph from Jennie Russell's Connor family album is not annotated. Identity is probable, but not certain.

Eliza Newton

After the initial contact with E.T. Newton concerning the teaching position and the purchase of *Jack Rivulet Run*, the Connor family would have met the Newton family socially soon after arriving at Alberton. Edward Thomas Newton was an important figure in Alberton's small community. He was born in England and was approximately the same age as Thomas Connor senior. He emigrated to Tasmania in about 1833 aged 20 and in 1835 set up the firm of Sinclair & Newton, Custom House Agents and General Dealers at the Launceston wharf. He moved to Melbourne in 1837 where he was a station overseer and continued to work as a commission agent. He married Eliza Martin in November 1840 and their second child, Eliza Newton, was born in Melbourne on 4 May 1843. Later that year, the Newton family moved to Tarraville where Edward had a store, but he soon moved to nearby Alberton and set up an auction room. Eliza was very much a local girl.

We know nothing about Eliza's early life in Alberton. By the time the Connors arrived in 1867, Edward and Eliza Newton had a family of eleven children, ranging from 25 to 5 years old. Eliza was 24, of marriageable age. Edward was (or had been) the Government Auctioneer; auctioneer for sale of the area known as Orr's Special Survey which adjoined Alberton township; Auditor and Board Member of the Alberton District Road Board; inaugural Chairman of the South Gippsland Horticultural Society; shipping agent; postmaster; brewery owner; Trustee of the Alberton General Cemetery representing the Church of England; Committee member for establishment of St Luke's Anglican Church; Hon. Secretary of the Alberton School Committee; Returning Officer for the Shire of Alberton and wine grower. He went on to become a Shire Councillor and then President of Alberton Shire from 1869 to 1873.

Married life

Thomas and Edward had many interests in common, as did their children. George Connor and Eliza Newton must have developed an attraction for each other soon after George's arrival. After two years of courting, they were married at St Luke's Anglican Church, Alberton on 13 July 1870 (both aged 27) by Rev William Clarke Hose, witnessed by George's sister Cornelia and his future brother-in-law Henry Denham. As the local Registrar, Thomas Connor senior had the pleasure of registering the marriage.

Eliza moved from Alberton out to *Jack Rivulet Run*, and the couple soon started a family. Their first son, George Stanley Newton Connor (called Stan) was born at Jack Rivulet Run on 25 Mar 1871, barely nine months after their marriage, and was christened at Alberton on 26 July. William Edward Ernest Connor (called Ernie) was born a year later on 7 May 1872, and Georgia Alice Connor was born on 16 August 1873. Three children in three years! George added another room to the house.

The house at *Jack Rivulet Run* was filling fast and Arthur had to strike out on his own. In 1872 Arthur applied for and won the Alberton mail delivery contract, beginning the job in January 1873. He also selected his own properties, allotments A1 and 14H Parish of Yarram Yarram, downstream from *Jack Rivulet Run*. Meanwhile, George was intent upon expanding his business as well as his family. He pegged and applied for allotments of 120 acres in the Parish of Devon and 115 acres in the Parish of West Alberton, to the north and south respectively of *Jack Rivulet Run*. Under the Land Act 1869 Part II, a selector could peg out vacant (or forfeited) unsurveyed Crown land, fill out an application form at the local Land District Office, pay six month's rent and wait for approval. If the application was successful, the land could be held by licence for three years. At the end of this period, if conditions regarding improvement to the land had been met, the land could be purchased.

As an alternative to immediate purchase, the balance of the cost of the land could be paid over a seven-year lease. On being passed, this Act encouraged a land rush in 1869-70 and the Lands Department was swamped with applications – there were many controversial claims and complaints. The 1869 Act also withdrew entitlements to assistance towards the purchase or rent of Crown Land for all future and serving volunteers, generating widespread protests. A second land rush occurred in 1872-73 when the first round of land grants reached their third anniversaries. George and Arthur were part of the second rush.



Eliza and George Connor¹¹
(courtesy Jennie Russell)

¹¹ This photograph from Jennie Russell's Connor family album is not annotated. Identity is probable, but not certain.

George Connor pegged his selections and applied for them at Palmerston (Port Albert) on 16 May 1873. Both of George's applications for land were recommended for approval by the Palmerston Local Land Board on 15 August 1873, but not without controversy. The allotment in West Alberton was contested by Andrew Gellion on the grounds that George had pegged the area before the allotment had been officially notified as forfeited, due to non-compliance with licence obligations. It was George who had advised the board of the non-compliance. In deciding to recommend George's application over Gellion's, the Board was accused of "corrupt favouritism"¹² – Edward T. Newton the Shire President and George's father-in-law was a member of the Palmerston Local Land Board. Of course, this charge was denied. The matter was raised in the Victorian parliament, but the decision stood and the Connors made an enemy of the Gellions.

At about the time that Georgia was born and his land applications were being recommended for approval, George suffered a severe heart attack which incapacitated him and must have scared him greatly. On 28 August 1873, he wrote his Will, leaving half of his property and land to Eliza and half to his father (and silent partner) Thomas. He also made provisions for his children (Georgia was yet to be named) from the proceeds of a life insurance policy. The Will was witnessed by his sisters Cornelia Denham, Fanny Connor and his brother-in-law Edward T. Newton junior. Arthur Connor and his brother-in-law Alfred J. Newton were named executors.

George went to his parents' place, *Seabank* at Port Albert, to convalesce, but he did not recover and died there on 7 September 1873, aged only 30¹³. Cause of death was given as valvular disease of the heart and Bright's disease of the kidneys¹⁴. He is buried in the Alberton cemetery.

Eliza's widowhood

George's death left Eliza with three children under three years of age, a half share in the *Jack Rivulet Run* and the other pieces of land that George had selected during 1873, half the stock on the farm (15 cows, 15 yearlings, 10 calves, 5 horses and 4 pigs), and the benefit from a £500 life insurance policy, some of which was to be held in trust for his children until they turned 21. George's estate was valued at £725 for probate, which was granted to Eliza on 5 February 1874.

Fortunately for Eliza, she had a large extended family to help her through the crisis. Eliza's parents, Edward and Eliza Newton and parents-in-law, Thomas and Anne Connor were living close by; she had four brothers, two sisters, one brother-in-law and four sisters-in-law all living in the district. Her brother-in-law Arthur Connor and brother Alfred Newton were co-executors of George's estate and helped Eliza to manage the properties, and her extended family helped her to bring up her three children. Even so, it must have been stressful for Eliza, forced to become more independent and self-reliant.

Following grant of probate of George's estate, his executors took their time about transferring the property titles to Eliza and, in September 1874, J. Gellion applied to the Palmerston Local Land Board for all of them to be forfeited, on the basis that the licensee was dead¹⁵. The Land Board admonished Arthur Connor for not having the property licenses transferred to Eliza and advised him to do so quickly. After this, the Gellions seemed to give up trying to obtain the Connors' lands through the courts.

¹² Gippsland Times 23 Aug 1873

¹³ The Argus 11 Sep 1873

¹⁴ Register of Deaths in the District of Alberton, Colony of Victoria, 1873, No 5919

¹⁵ Gippsland Times 15 & 29 Sep 1874

Eliza settled down to a life of educating and raising her children, and running the farm. Upon reaching three years old, the children went into Alberton each day to school, where they were taught by their grandfather Thomas, grandmother Anne and aunt Florence Connor. The children were quite bright and learned quickly. Eliza made sure that the family regularly attended the local St Luke's Church of England at Alberton. Music was of great importance in the Connor family. All of Eliza's siblings-in-law played some sort of musical instrument or sang and performed at local concerts and benefit events. For many years until she married, Florence played the harmonium at the church. Ernie learned to play the flute and all the children sang in the church choir.

In 1877, probably on the advice and with the help of her father, Eliza selected a 48 acre property close to Alberton, on the Alberton to Yarram Yarram road. It must have been quite close (walking distance) to her father's property and vineyard, *Ebon Ebon*. Eliza called the property *Homeleigh*. As required under the license, Eliza improved the property by having a new two room cottage built¹⁶. She also leased eight acres to another party.

On 30 May 1880, Eliza's father-in-law Thomas Connor died at his home *Seabank* at Port Albert. In his will, he left his half share of George's properties to Eliza. Eliza was now the sole licensee of *Jack Rivulet Run*. In early 1882, having met all the obligations under the license, Eliza decided to convert *Jack Rivulet Run* to freehold by paying the required fee of £116. Eliza renamed the property *Lightwood Grove* and put it on the market¹⁷. Eliza's father Edward T. Newton was acting as agent for the sale but before any sale could be concluded, Edward died at his home *Ebon Ebon*, Alberton on 17 June 1882.

Jack Rivulet Run was transferred for an unknown price on 7 December 1882 to William Moore the younger, who already held several allotments close by. Eliza and the children moved to *Homeleigh*, closer to her mother and sisters at *Ebon Ebon*. By this time, Eliza's eldest child Stan was eleven years old and doing very well at school. With the help of her growing sons, Eliza continued to run livestock on her 40 acres at *Homeleigh* to provide some income, and grew fruit and vegetables. She would also have had income from investing the proceeds from her land sales. *Homeleigh* was a more manageable size for her and was not subject to regular flooding. She added two rooms and a detached kitchen and servant's room.

By 1885, Eliza's children were completing their education and were heavily involved in sporting activities, mainly cricket, around the district. Ernie had done so well at school that he was awarded a scholarship to complete school, which would have eased the financial burden on Eliza. After completing their schooling, the boys began to fend for themselves, taking work around the district, often on their uncles' farms. Ernie had a serious horse-riding accident in 1890 that left him with a permanent limp, but did not stop him playing cricket. Gradually, Stan and Ernie moved further away to find work – Stan went prospecting and mining for gold, while Ernie (the horseman) went cattle and sheep droving in the Monaro district with his Newton uncles and cousins, although they both returned to Alberton to see Eliza and their relatives at Christmas. By 1892, Eliza (49) and Georgia (19) had *Homeleigh* to themselves.

¹⁶ Rate Books Yarram Yarram 1878-1880

¹⁷ Gippsland Standard 9 Mar 1882



Eliza Connor, Mr. Reed and Georgia Connor at *Homeleigh*, Alberton

In January 1892, the Great Southern Railway reached Alberton. In anticipation of this, the town had gone through a period of rapid growth – new houses, the Victoria Hotel, civic buildings, and the butter factory were built. Graziers around the district were now able to send their produce quickly and more cheaply to the Melbourne markets. Land prices rose accordingly.

George's brother Arthur Connor, now married and starting a family of his own, gave up grazing to become stock and station agent. During the 1890s, he went on to become a partner in a series of local agencies – Connor & Bodman; Sweeney Bros & Connor - cashing in on the local economic growth and increased sales. He became a member of many local Committees and Associations in Alberton and Yarram Yarram. On reaching the age of 21, George's children became entitled to inherit their shares of their father's estate, and Arthur's job as executor was over.

Little is known about Eliza and Georgia during this decade of growth in Alberton. We know that they took advantage of the easier rail access to Melbourne, because the only portrait we have of Georgia, looking rather frail, was taken in that city. At one stage, Eliza offered to let *Homeleigh* by tender¹⁸. We can only guess her motivation for this, and we don't know if she found a tenant, or concluded a lease.

¹⁸ Gippsland Standard 17 Aug 1889



Georgia Alice Connor, aged about 21

In 1897 Yarram Yarram became the new shire headquarters. Although Alberton remained the local railhead until 1921, businesses began to move to Yarram Yarram and gradually, Alberton's fortunes declined again.

Meanwhile, Stan and Ernie Connor with support from their uncles Bill and Wally Newton, were earning a living in the grazing industry on the N.S.W. side of the border between Delegate and Eden. By 1902, Stan Connor had moved to a Newton landholding at Narrabarba, just south of Eden, and began to scout the region for a likely property to buy. In April 1903, Stan and Ernie bought the *Broadwater* Estate near Pambula from the A.J.S. Bank for a little over £500, funded with a large mortgage.

The *Broadwater* Estate was a little over 393 acres of land on either side of the present-day Prince's Highway, with frontage on to the tidal Broadwater or Pambula Lake as it is called today. It was originally owned by Isaac Shaw who, in 1860, built and operated the Vulcan Repose Inn to cater to passing travelers. The Estate had been on the market for at least two years when the Connors bought it. We don't know if the inn survived until bought by the Connors, but there are no records of them ever having operated an inn on the *Broadwater* Estate. Perhaps the inn became their home. By August 1903, they were making "vast improvements to the property, in the way of clearing, fencing, ploughing etc."¹⁹

In July 1903, Eliza's mother Eliza Newton died at *Ebon Ebon*, Alberton. Eliza's brother Edward T. Newton junior inherited the property but sister Emma remained living at *Ebon Ebon*.

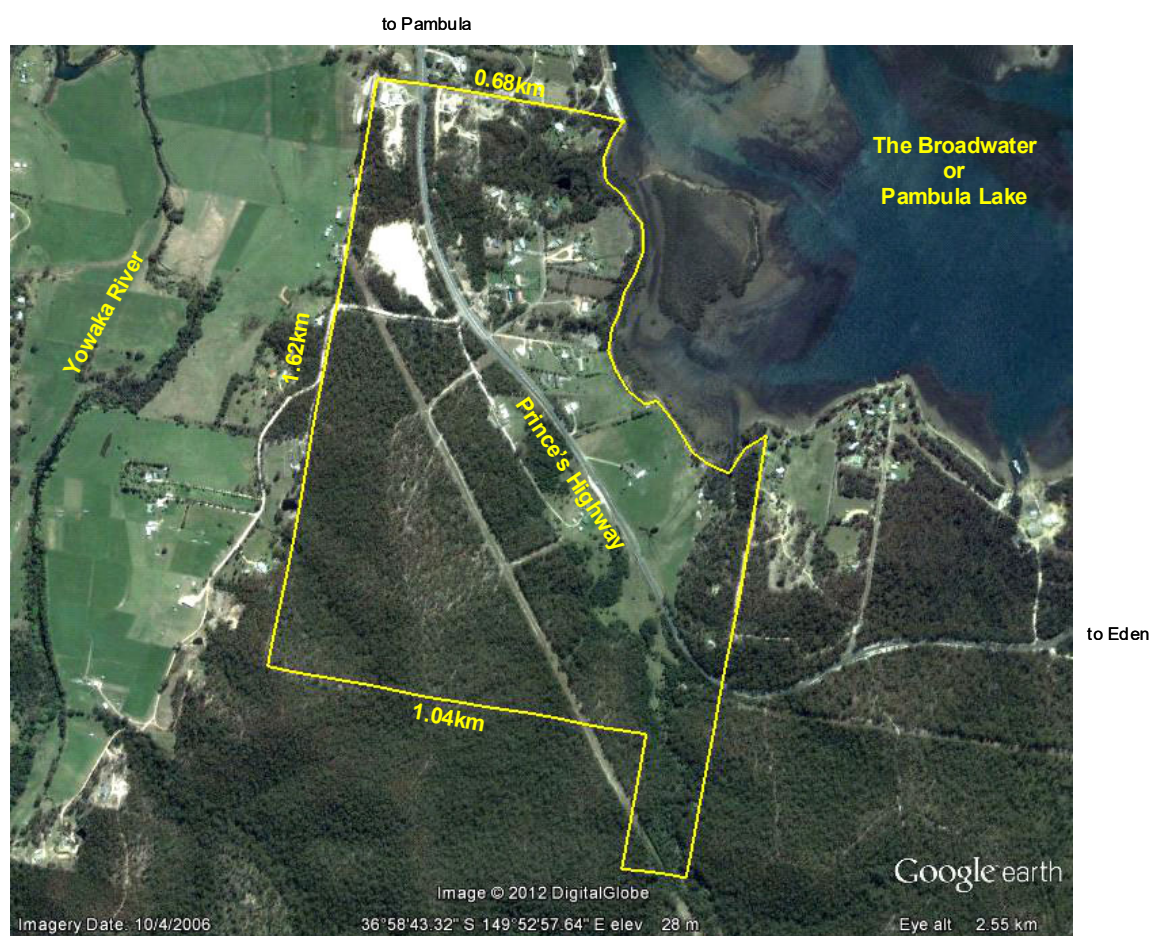
Georgia Connor must have been ill for some time with a thyroid condition called Grave's Disease. The visible signs are an enlarged thyroid, bulging eyes, weight loss and fine hair, but a sufferer may also display nervousness, anxiety, irritability, hypertension and, in extreme cases, psychosis and mania. By early 1904, Georgia must have been an extreme

¹⁹ Pambula Voice Friday 28 August, 1903

case because over a period of six weeks she became unmanageable and Eliza had to commit her to the Kew Asylum in Melbourne. Six weeks later on 6 March 1904 aged 30, Georgia died of heart failure and was buried in the Melbourne Cemetery.

Pambula

Eliza, now aged 62, had little to keep her in Alberton. Her surviving brothers had large families of their own, or had moved to New South Wales. Only Emma and Alice, her unmarried sisters, remained in the family home. Eliza decided to move away from her sisters and live with Stan and Ernie at Pambula. She sold up her holdings in Alberton and contributed to the purchase of the *Broadwater* Estate. Eliza, Stan, Ernie and Georgia's estate each owned about a quarter of the *Broadwater*.



The *Broadwater* Estate, 2012

In August 1904, Stan introduced Eliza to Archie Boyd and his wife Jeanie, friends that he met when he first arrived in Eden in 1901. Archie and Jeannie used to hold tennis parties at their house *The Hollies* and Stan was a regular player. They used to yarn and play cards together - no doubt Archie was a fountain of good advice for Stan.

The Connor family attended the Christ Church (Church of England), Pambula. Ernie joined the church choir and played his flute at every social opportunity. As in Alberton, Stan and Ernie also played cricket, initially for Eden and later for Pambula clubs. The Connors visited the Boyds regularly, and sometimes Jeanie Boyd would visit Eliza at the *Broadwater*.

Eliza, Stan and Ernie gradually improved the *Broadwater*, establishing pastures, and planting fruit trees and vegetables, using the experience they had gained from *Jack Rivulet Run* and *Homeleigh*. It was not without setbacks – a bush fire in December 1904 destroyed some fencing and came close to their house. By 1906, they were exhibiting fruit, vegetables, merino sheep and working dogs at the Eden Agricultural Society show, and winning prizes. Ernie was on the show committee, as was Archie Boyd. At the 1907 Pambula show, the Connor Brothers won prizes for their horses, poultry and farm produce. Ernie was the horse lover of the family, and they won jumping competitions at the Eden show.

The new Federal Government supported compulsory military training and introduced a bill into parliament to regulate this. Stan and Ernie, although aged 37 and 36 and beyond the proposed age limit for compulsory training, decided that they should contribute to Australia's defence readiness. Stan joined the Pambula Rifle Club while Ernie joined the Australian Light Horse 3rd Regiment and was appointed Second Lieutenant in April 1908. Ernie in particular was proud of his father's military service in the Carlton Rifles, and was inspired as a lad by wearing his father's old uniform.

In 1909, the Connor Brothers continued to work their estate, growing good crops of peas, pumpkins and maize, but it appears that they had begun to follow different paths. Ernie tried to talk Archie Boyd into investing in a sawmilling venture, without success. Ernie took his appointment as an officer in the Australian Light Horse very seriously and spent increasing time training with his Squadron and caring for his horses.

In January 1910, Archie Boyd's niece, Isabella ('Ella') Sprott Boyd came from Sydney to Eden for a holiday at her uncle and aunt's place. Ella was a mature woman of 28 years, attractive, well educated and travelled, and from a well-to-do family. Her father was Robert Mitchell ('Mitch') Boyd who made his fortune running sugar plantations and mills in northern New South Wales and North Queensland.



Tennis party at *The Hollies*, December 1909

Stan met Ella at a tennis party at *The Hollies* on Australia Day, 26 January 1910, and they were immediately attracted to each other. During 1910, Stan was often at the Boyd's place. Ernie was appointed as Area Officer for a new Australian Light Horse Squadron based at Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., and in November 1910, Ernie left the *Broadwater* to take up his posting.

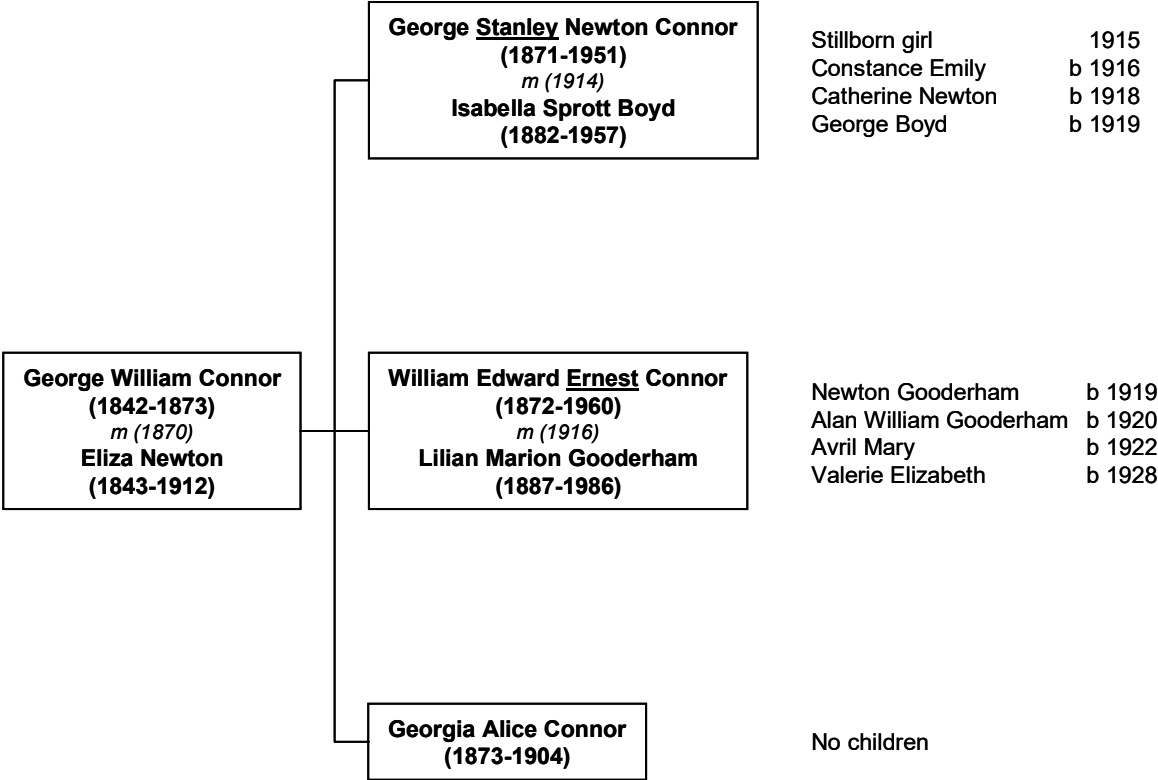
After Ernie left Pambula, Stan and Eliza continued to run the *Broadwater* estate. Eliza was in her mid-sixties and Stan was 39 years old. Then, in June 1911, Eliza's two maiden sisters, Emma Sarah Newton and Alice Newton, died quite suddenly. Eliza was heartbroken and over the rest of 1911, she became increasingly depressed. Ernie came to visit her in October, but Eliza's health continued to worsen until, in December 1911, she was diagnosed with acute melancholia and admitted, by request, to the Gladesville Mental Hospital, Sydney.²⁰

On 3 April 1912 after three and a half months in hospital, Eliza Connor died of "*exhaustion of melancholia*" and the following day, Eliza was buried in the Church of England portion of the Field of Mars Cemetery at Ryde, Sydney.²¹ Stan and Ernie attended the funeral. Eliza probably met Ella Boyd, her daughter-in-law to be, but Eliza and George never saw their sons marry, settle down and have children.

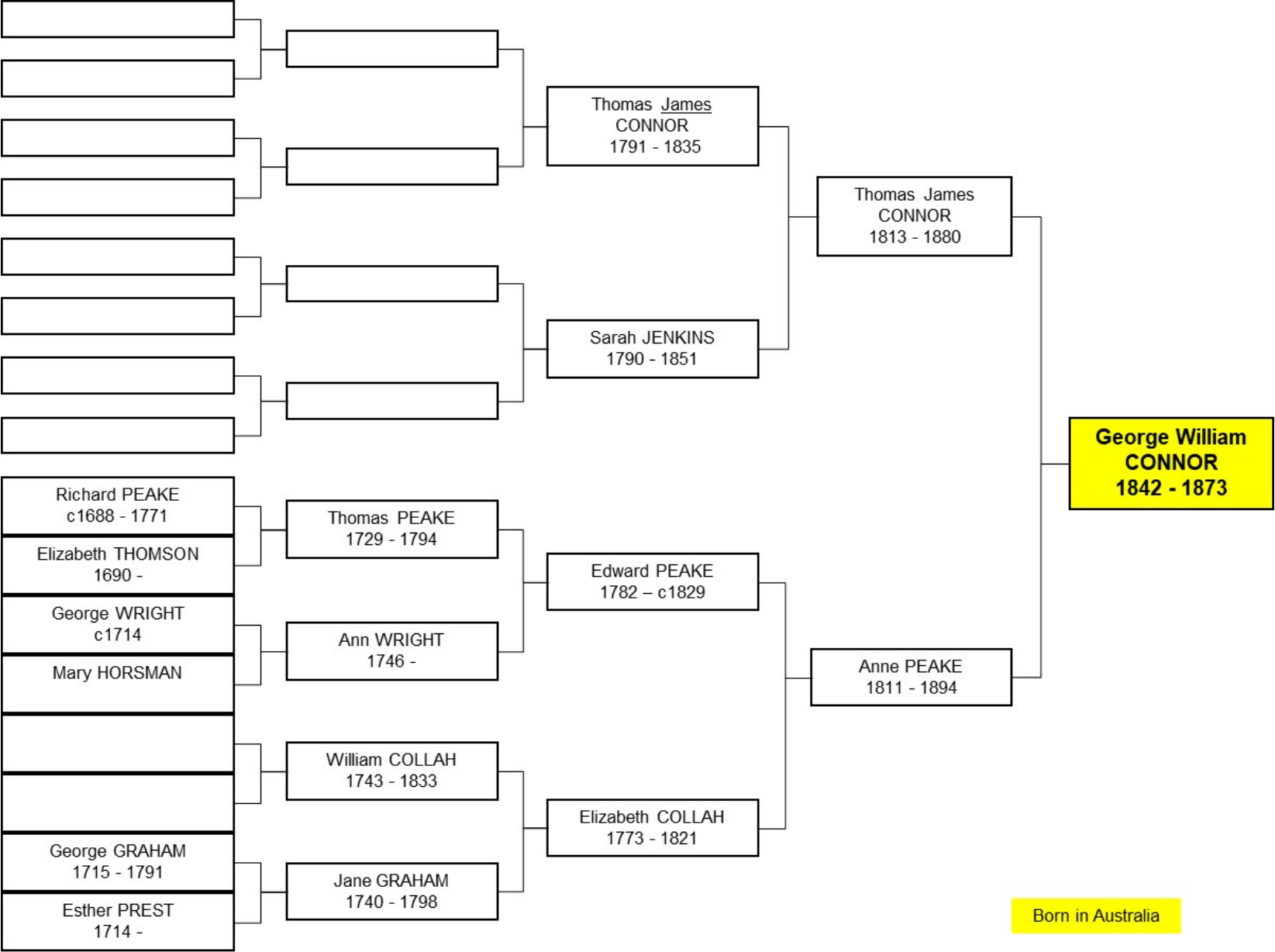
²⁰ N.S.W. State Records Office. Gladesville Mental Hospital. Register of Patients and Admission Book.

²¹ N.S.W. Death Certificate 1912/005575

GEORGE AND ELIZA CONNOR'S FAMILY



ANCESTRY OF GEORGE WILLIAM CONNOR



ANCESTRY OF ELIZA NEWTON

