

## The Children of Heather Farm.

The remarkable life of the Dau children is briefly described. The Children are listed in birth order.

Sarah was born in 1866 at Somerton she was a “very bright girl”, by age 13 she had achieved her Certificate of being Sufficiently Educated. The school master approached Johann and Martha to see if it would be possible for Sarah to continue at school but with the move to the new farm at Wandong and the ever growing family, Sarah was needed at home. The parent’s refusal to let her continue her schooling saw her run away from home to Melbourne where she found work. By age 17 she was working in a drapers shop owned by Andrew Black. He was newly widowed at 68 years of age and had 12 children, Sarah accepted his proposal and married him (Andrew was very proper and couldn’t possibly have Sarah there while he was a single man), it is no surprise that this marriage was not a happy one however it lasted 20 years until 1904 when Andrew died.

In 1905 Sarah married George Cole, they had three children one dying in infancy, and she also took in welfare children bringing them up for as long as she could. Eventually Sarah reconciled with her parents and was known as Sis by the family, she passed away in 1952 aged almost 86.



Sarah aged 47.

The next child born to Martha and Johann was Martha Maria usually called Mary or Mishy by the family, born in 1867 she was about 11 years old when the family moved to Heather Farm. It appears she stayed at Heather Farm until May 1890 leaving for Northcote where she joined a Methodist church.

Mary married James Cyril Cowden a recent arrival from Canada of Scottish descent and they moved through several suburbs before settling in Balaclava.

Mary and James had five children, son Wilfred Ferdinand last was born in 1894 a year before Martha had her last child Wilfred Stanley.

The other children of the marriage were Austin (Eldest son), Laurie (died at 10 months), Freda born 1902, and Edna Born 1905. Mary ran a grocers shop that her and James had brought, James spent his time working away for long periods while Mary kept the shop going,

The Dau family often visited the shop and Mary or Aunt Mishy as the young children called her, she often sent treats or presents from the shop to them.

James volunteered in the Boer war, it seems he may have joined a British Canadian contingent, "During that war he went out and rescued the Captains son under fire, James was shot in the lung and the same bullet went into another man's ear as he was standing next to him.

He enlisted in WW1 in the Light Horse after being rejected initially as being too old he dyed his hair, moustache and eyebrows and was accepted at another depot. After the war he decided to retire and spend his days doing the maintenance of the string of houses he had acquired over the years, he passed away at 62. Mary lived with Freda for two years before she passed away in 1858.



Mary with daughters Freda and Edna

Emma Elizabeth Dau was born on the 12/12/1868 at Somerton. The family moved to Heather Farm in 1878 and Emma married Alfred Coates in June 1888. They had four children two boys and two girls.

The family moved to the Methodist parsonage in Sunbury in 1904, just before that move youngest daughter Alice was taken ill with rheumatic fever. Alfred was often away for weeks at a time and Emma spent her time being involved in church life, teaching Sunday school, visiting families and attending church meetings.



However young Alice whose heart was affected by the rheumatic fever at 11 1/2 years old passes away a great blow to the family. In 1911 Emma is appointed as a Methodist Home Mission Deputationist, travelling around to stimulate interest and raise funds for Methodist social causes.

Emma died in 1947 at East St Kilda, Alfred having predeceased her in 1945.



Continuing the run of girls the next child born to Johann and Martha was Isabella, born in 1870 Bella as she was called started her education at Somerton but attended Wandong State School where she completed her education. After leaving school Bella stayed at home helping with the other children and the farm work. In 1889 she joined the Salvation Army moving to Preston then Sunbury and eventually Tasmania. it was while living in Tasmania she married John McIntosh a farmer, three children were born there. The family moved to the Lilydale area in Victoria in about 1907 and another son was born to them in 1911. The second eldest son Harry was slightly retarded but apparently a happy boy who did well at school, he died in May 1926 of acute meningitis.

Son Murray joined the army during the second world war and was posted to Malaya only to be captured by the Japanese and held in Changi Prison. He was taken to do forced labour on the Burma railway and like so many others did not return. He died on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1943, the family were not notified of his death until the war had ended. Isabella died in September 1957.

(The Wandong History group holds copies of Murrays diary from his time in captivity)

The next child to be born to the Dau family was Jane Eliza, her story is a sad one as she lived only until she was sixteen, passing away in the Heather Farm home from diphtheria which affected several of the children. The family were ostracised none would buy their produce and Harry could remember the butter and milk all unsold mounting up. Janes cries could be heard throughout the house” I don’t want to die I’m only sixteen, but die she did. Harry recalled going into Jane’s room as she was on her deathbed and the funeral leaving the home, travelling up the lane to the Wallan cemetery, Martha and Johann sitting in the vehicle beside the coffin.



Sixth child Sophia was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1873, sadly her life was to also be cut short, she died on October 16<sup>th</sup> 1897 from meningitis. In 1896 she had married William Hounslow, a carpenter who was some five years older than her, she was expecting their first baby when she died.

Daughter Alice was the next to appear on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1874, she was about 5 when the family moved to Wandong. There are few details of Alice's early years, but by time she is 20 she had joined the Salvation Army and was working in St Kilda with that organisation, we then see her move to Kyneton. By 1896 Alice is transferred to Tasmania, then back to Victoria then



Queensland where she meets her future husband Campbell Wiss, marrying in 1902. Campbell had been in partnership with his brother in the Wiss Bros Emporium. Their first child Evelyn was born in 1903, they then moved to Tasmania where a second child Marianne was born in 1905 but died in 1906. They had three more children and lived for many years on the bank of the Derwent river just opposite Hobart. Alice was said to be a lovely gracious lady, very gentle, and possessed some literary talent writing short stories and poems. In 1934 Alice and Campbell came to live in Sydney but Alice returned to Tasmania in ill health where she underwent an operation and passed away on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1936.

The eighth child to be born is Annie, known as Nance she was born in 1877 at Heather Farm. She attended Wandong State School and after her schooling became associated with the Salvation Army working all over the country but her life was to be plagued by illness, suffering from Hydatids and she underwent many operations that left her weak and in poor health.

Nance married local Walter Searle and this day was to be her last glimpse of her father as he passed away on the same day. The marriage produced only one child, Honor was born on May 15<sup>th</sup> 1917. (Honor Searle was to become a proficient pianist and taught several local children to play).

Moving from Reedy Creek the little family shifted into a house on the property Glenwood, close to the original family home, from there they moved into Wandong on the corner of Wandong Avenue and Dry Creek Crescent, Walter died in 1939, Nance passed away on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1954 and was buried in the family grave at Wallan.

Nance wrote sporadically in a diary and through these diaries we get a glimpse of life in Wandong at the time. John Morley has kindly copied pages of them relevant to the Wandong period of Nance and Walter's life and allowed me to publish excerpts.

Mar 14<sup>th</sup> 1931: It is a most lovely day after heavy rains, most unusual at this time of year. Wal is in town. Honor and I have had a weekend alone, which we both enjoy. Now school is on again and Mr Price is with us. The men of the village have gone out in the hills to look for the lost airliner the "Southern cloud", I am afraid they will be too late, 3 days now. I must try and get a little rest, my life is a busy one.

Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1932: As I go to the store I can look over and see the old home, far across the fields and I see the old trees, still blossoming there, with no one to admire their beauty. We are losing Mr and Mrs Price, how I will miss them and the dear little ones, Betty and Ray". (Mr Price was head teacher at Wandong State School)

May 6<sup>th</sup> 1934: We had one of Autumns loveliest days, a day of Blue and Gold. We had Sunday School as usual, a good number there, then went to the little Anglican church nearby".

May 16<sup>th</sup> 1935; "Yesterday Honor was eighteen years old, the child has quite grown up, at present she is giving Lucy a music lesson, it is a cold day for May".

25<sup>th</sup> August 1943: "Through the very inconvenient little swing gate, which is one of my earliest memories of Wandong, and into the store, where I had received letters for Mum and Dad while a child, from the same little boxes

with the initials on....Mr Thomas always cheery and obliging, was there today, and Jack....spoke to Mrs Nicholls on way home, she has not been well. Then Mrs Schrader walked to our gate with me, where Eileen met us”



The Searle home



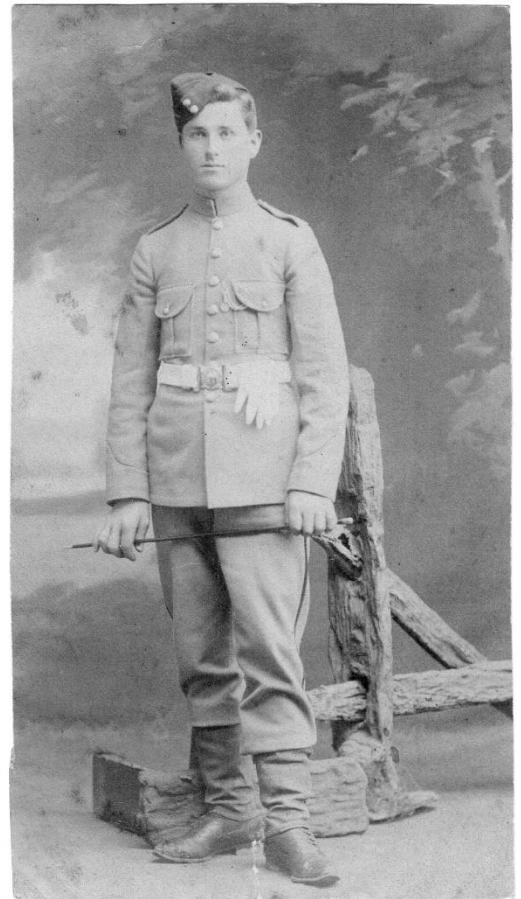
Nance aged 14.

Daughter Ada was born on the last day of 1878, by 16 years of age she was working as a House servant for Mrs Johnson in North Melbourne, Mr Johnson was a baker and employed 25 year old Tom Mundy and this is where the two met. However both were heavily involved in Salvation Army work which they decided to put before their burgeoning relationship. It was several years before they eventually married, Ada was now 28 and Tom 38, their first child Lulu lived only 16 months passing away from meningitis. Their second daughter Laurel was born in 1911, at Northcote, by 1914 they were living at Yarra Junction when Gwen was born. Ada ran a number of private hospitals, (possibly homes that had been converted), in 1925 Tom retired due to ill health and passed away in 1946, Ada died in November 1959.

In 1880 John Henry, the tenth child and first boy was born, called Harry by almost everyone, Harry's recollections of his father, He was a gentle man and could not bear to have his children punished, Martha was made of sterner stuff and when Johann saw her with the strap he would tell the children to, "run quickly and hide in the orchard"

In 1901 Harry and brother Ernie were planning to leave for Western Australia, they were sitting at Wallan station waiting for a train when the station master came and told them they must hurry home, as their brother Fred, fighting in South Africa in the Boer War had been killed. In 1902 Harry and Ernie resumed the trip to WA settling eventually in Sawyers Valley where Harry met Susan Maud Petite, they had ten children. Harry returned to Wandong in 1934 meeting six of his sisters and three brothers, one can imagine the family reunion

The birth of John Henry had started a run of boys finally for the Dau family, the next son Frederick was born to the family on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1882. Frederick used the spelling Dow and enlisted with the 5<sup>th</sup> Mounted rifles contingent in the Boer War. He was killed at Schueveberg Hoek, sister Nance records in her diary, October 14 1901 Seven weeks since Fred was killed. I would give my life for another glimpse of you old boy, oh how long will it last, this almost intolerable longing for your face, to hear you speak, but never more will you come to me again I loved you well dear, better than you or anyone else knew, and today you lie in your far away grave and I lie here, desolate.



Fred was engaged to Miss Ruby Gunn, after his death she never married.



Ernest Alfred Dau, the 12<sup>th</sup> child is born at Heather Farm on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1883. The first mention of Ernest is when he is about to leave for WA with his brother and the news of Fred's death came through keeping the brothers at Wandong for a further year. At about the same time Ernest had asked his niece Jessamine Black to marry him, she refused his offer. In April 1907 Ernest married Edith Searle sister of Nance's husband Walter, she was a talented musician and music teacher. They had four children, but the marriage was not a happy one and they parted company about 1921. Ernest had been corresponding with Jessamine and the two married in 1922, this caused a great scandal within the family, the divorce was one thing but marrying his niece. Ernest changed his name to James Ernest Black and the marriage produced three children. Ernest died in February 1959, he was on his way to the station, intending a trip to Melbourne. Jessie died aged 97.



Charles is the next born son arriving on July 6<sup>th</sup> 1885, in November 1908 Charles married Edith Patton, the Patton's were another well-known Wandong family. By 1910 Charles is working as a storeman/cook for the railways and the following year their second child Fred is born, Lillian is born at Wandong in 1913. By this time World War one was underway and like so many other Wandong men Charles enlisted. He embarked for England, via Egypt, after training his contingent left for France in September 1916. He was a sapper with the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Company. Charles was killed in a gas-shell attack near a railway tunnel entrance on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1918. Nance records in her diary. "Seventeen years since Fred was killed, and now

cruel war has robbed us of Charl, Dear old Charl you were ever the kindest of brothers to me. I hope Arthur will be spared to us, and dear old Wallie is coming home again."





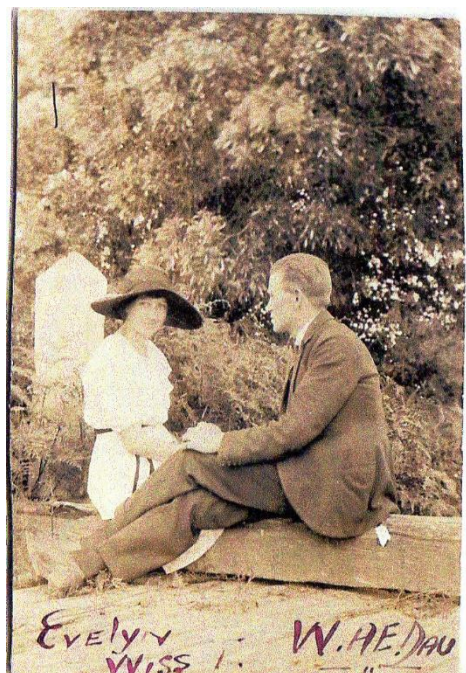
Ethel is the next born in July 1887, by this time sister Sarah has runaway to the city. Mary and Emma were married and Bella about to be married. Her sister Jane was to die only 7 months after Ethels birth. Ethel recalled walking to the church and school at Wandong,” The rough track across the paddocks and hills, two miles to the little school at Wandong. In wintertime we had to cross many flooded gullies. We wore heavy strong boots and I was often peeved as I compared my strong shoes with the dainty ones worn by the other girls at school also wrote, “In Wandong there lived a fine Christian gentleman, small in stature but big in heart and soul, a very busy man, the manager of a big time industry, his every spare moment helping to cheer others. (It was Ernest Gaskell manager of Robertsons Timber Seasoning Company). She also wrote of Freds death. “I can still remember when my brother Fred was killed in the South African war and our family at Heather Farm were seated around the large open fireplace silent and awed after the news was broken. The night was dark and cold but there was a knock on the door and our dear friend, Mr Gaskell entered, after a two mile walk over the bush track to comfort our parents. I can see him yet as he sat there with them, his head bowed in silent sorrow, tears brimming in his brown eyes. Blessing on his memory, dear Mr Gaskell. Years ago he left us to live in the land of the shadows, but while life shall last we will remember him”

Ethel married Albert Kershaw in 1906, he found work as a railway ganger so they moved often. One year after their marriage a daughter Gladys was born. Ethels life was lonely at times and it was during one of these periods that she found solitude in Christ, her life from then on saw her involved in the church. Valmai was born in 1911 and the family moved back to Wandong, building a small home near Heather Farm. On 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1915 Ethel gave birth to a son, Desmond. In February 1921 Ethel and Bert moved to Nojee where their fourth child Lesley was born. However, tragedy was to strike when they lost their home in raging bushfires that consumed most of the town The railways moved them to a house in Werribee where Bert continued to work as a ganger. Ethel passed away in 1965.

The fifteenth child born to the Dau family is Walter Albert Edward, born on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1889 he was to follow in the footsteps of his sisters and join the Salvation Army. By 1914 Walter was seeking preaching appointments in the Wagga area, he came home to attend the funeral of his father and on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1916 he joined the Australian Imperial forces serving with several units, he was discharged on in December 1922 and was officially the last digger home.

On his return Walter stayed with his sister Ethel at Nojee and there is a story of him just escaping the 1939 fires that took Ethel and Berts home. Walter often seemed to vanish and had little contact with the family. His last letter to the family was in 1956 and he was in Cartmill Qld.

(The quest for names for the Wandong Heathcote Junction War Memorial put the History group in contact with relative of the Dau family, through this we discovered that Walter had stayed behind after the war to help ensure that Australian soldiers were given proper burials, this prompted a family member to look further into where Walter had died and he was found to be in an unmarked grave in Queensland. After contacting the local RSL a plaque was put on Walters grave).



The penultimate child, another boy was born at Wandong on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1891; Arthur Herbert was to change his surname by deed poll to Dow. In 1919 he married Edna Ford they had two children, Peter and Pamela.

Arthur was a full time military man he served in World War One where he was awarded the Military Cross, this photo show him and Edna on the day the award was presented. He went on to serve in WW2. Edna passed away on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1946, Doll Cresswell, thought to be a cousin of Edna's came to keep house for Arthur. Arthur being very correct and particular married her; she had two children from a previous marriage. Arthur passed away on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 1979 and his ashes have been placed in the family grave at Wallan.



The final child to be born to Martha and Johann is Wilfred., by this time Martha is 45 years old and Johann is 63. Wilfred was two years old when his siter, Sofia died in childbirth. Like most of his siblings Wilfred attended Wandong State School, it is not known if he had further education. By the time he was 20, Wilfred had two brothers killed in war, his father died two days after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1921 Wilfred is ordained, his first appointment is Tallygaroopna, after Johanns passing Martha lived with Wilfred until her death. The next few years see Wilfred moving throughout the north eastern parts of Victoria as Rector of various churches and also acting as Prison chaplain and Chaplain to the mentally ill at Beechworth. The second World war was in full force and he was involved as a Military Chaplain, and expected to travel to the Middle East. This was thwarted by the Chaplain General who intervened to keep Wilfred at home and promoted him to the Dean of Bendigo. Eventually Wilfred was able to return to the army and worked in New Guinea. On his return he took up his former duties but noticed he was much overworked until ill health forced his retirement. Wilfred passed away in 1969.



THE ARGUS Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 1921

Wednesday March 23 at Two O' Clock, at rooms 422 Collins St.

Dua's Heather Farm, Heathcote Junction

All Cleared, weatherboard house Four rooms

JR Buxton and Co are instructed by the owners to sell at public auction at the rooms above.

This farm will carry sheep to the acre or dairy 35 to 40 cows: half a mile to from station, a mile and a quarter state school, a mile and a half Wandong township, 30 miles from Melbourne. Remarkably easy terms, £100 deposit, balance arrange at six and a half percent. Title Certificate.

So ended the tenure of the remarkable Dau family of Heather Farm.