Thomas Frederick Courtney

Read how one of our members, Marilyn, started her genealogical adventures on pages 3 and 4 and her finding this: “thoroughly honest, sober, trustworthy and reliable man.”

The photo shows Thomas with his hands in his pockets. He was always known to carry sweets in those pockets for the children. Thomas’ nephews and nieces, whose father had been killed in the first world war, “looked upon him almost as a father,” said his son, who has corresponded with Marilyn.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Have you visited our new website? After being out of action for several months due to hosting problems the website is back up and running. Thanks to Mal Williams we have a new url: http://www.milduragenealogy.com.au/index.htm You will find it now works a lot faster particularly when opening the larger files like the newsletters. Our Facebook page is attracting a lot of interest and members Liza Davison, Helen Stagg and Mal Williams are to be congratulated on keeping it up to date and relevant.

Unfortunately, due to work and other commitments, Andrew McCormick is unable to continue in his role on the committee and as Research Officer. Over the past three years Andrew has been a great asset to the society. We thank you sincerely Andrew and wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Our meetings have been interesting so far this year. Helen Petschel and Chris Cook were our guest speakers at the March meeting. They spoke about the life of Charles Gould and showed some of his letters that have been donated to the Red Cliffs Historical Society. The cartoons on the letters are wonderful. I particularly liked the one with the ducks swimming in the water surrounding the car and Dad and May sitting under an umbrella on the roof so they didn't get their feet wet. In April instead of a guest speaker we had a 'brain-storming' night. Some brick walls were broken down, new websites shared and tips on how to publish all that hard work we have done, made for a very interesting night. River Captain, Leon Wagner, enlightened us at the May meeting about the history of the PS Avoca. He covered from its earliest days and its life as a showboat through to its unfortunate sinking last year. A lot of people fondly remember the dances on the PS Avoca. It is sad to think it is now awaiting repairs.

Mel Dunstan, the daughter of our Thursday Team member, Chris Dunstan, took time out from a family visit to explain how DNA testing works and the impact it can have on our family history research. If you are interested in the subject Mel kindly consented to us copying her notes and they can be found pinned to the noticeboard.

Now for something a little different. Instead of having the July meeting on what would be our normal Monday night the 4th July we are going to have a "getting over the election hoo ha afternoon" on Sunday the 3rd of July. The rooms will be open from 1 p.m. with the meeting commencing at 2 p.m. This is a great opportunity particularly for those who are unable to visit the rooms during our normal opening hours to do some research as the meeting will only last about half an hour. Some of our more experienced genealogists will be in attendance ready and able to share their expertise. It will also be a good chance to get to know your fellow members or even meet up with someone researching the same area or even the same family as yourself.

Thanks to Nola Edwards who has once again made a large contribution to our library collection. We are always on the lookout for research material and donations such as yours are much appreciated.

Over the years we have accumulated reference items that are either duplicates, out of date or which no longer suit our requirements. We are therefore planning on having a "Book Sale" during family history week in August. We will let you know the finer details as we get closer to the event.

It is time to think about how you can be of assistance to the group by nominating for a position on the committee at the 2016 Annual General Meeting. You will find the "Notice of Meeting" and "Nomination Form" on the second last page of the newsletter. Please think about nominating for a position as many hands make light work and new ideas make for an interesting year ahead.

Lyn Grant, President.
MY INTRODUCTION TO GENEALOGY:  
a career soldier and some name confusion! by Marilyn Courtney

When I joined the Mildura & District Genealogical Society in July 2015 I started to research my husband’s English paternal grandfather, Thomas Frederick Courtney, a career soldier in the British army as I thought this case would be fairly straightforward with well-organised military records.

To set the scene, my husband and his baby brother migrated from Northern Ireland to Australia with their parents in December 1951. Many years passed before any member of the Australian part of the family had the opportunity to return to their roots and as a consequence, many relationships were lost.

I made contact with my husband’s cousin, Eric, who grew up in Carrickfergus Northern Ireland. He had regular contact with his grandfather Thomas Frederick Courtney until his death in the 1960s. I asked for whatever firsthand information he may have although Eric was only ten years old when his grandad died.

There are a couple of anecdotes passed on by Eric. Thomas reportedly guarded the Carrickfergus Castle as a young man. ‘Grandad’ had not got on with his step-father, and after a confrontation, he hit him on the head with a frypan, before leaving home to join the army. Eric said that Tom joined the Somerset Light Infantry, serving all over the world with the military, including China, Egypt, India, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland and Europe. His final rank was Regimental Sergeant Major but the image of him bellowing orders at platoons of soldiers, Eric said, seems contrary to his “soft, lovely nature.”

Armed with this limited information, I then reviewed ‘what I now know’, and set out to fill the gaps. My husband’s sister-in-law, Heather, has visited the family in Ireland in recent years and also has an interest in the family history. She told me that Thomas Frederick Courtney was born 22 April 1890 (I have since found out from the birth certificate this was March) and he married Jane McGookin in Carrickfergus on 13 December 1920 and he died July 1961. With Jane he had four children: Mary Ann, born 15 April 1922, Thomas Frederick, born 4 October 1923, Gordon, (my husband’s father) born 30 November 1926 and James, born 17 January 1934. (Interestingly I have recent letters from James who recalls his father as taking on some ‘father-figure’ roles for his nieces and nephews whose own fathers were killed in WW1, including the ‘continuous supply of sweets in his pockets.’)

I then began to visit the genealogy rooms for my research as often as I could. I bought the Legacy software for use at home, and began spending time browsing Family Search.

Grandad’s name was the first stumbling block. I had not entertained the idea at all that this could be a problem with the spelling of the surname. Of course I now realise many
Genealogists are aware of this. I had found his details in the 1911 UK census. He was listed as **Thomas Frederick Courtney**, aged 20, born in Yeovil, Somerset. He was attached to the 1st Battalion, Prince Alfred’s Somersetshire, Light Infantry.

I then searched his name in the 1901 census, only to find no reference at all for a Thomas Frederick Courtney. Further back in the 1891 census, no Thomas Frederick Courtney. By this time, I was beginning to think that I might have to change tack altogether and engage a researcher. However, something made me trawl through similar spellings of the Courtney name and BINGO, there is Thomas F **Courtenay**, grandson aged 1, born 1890 in Somersetshire. His residence in 1891 was Yeovil, Somerset, England. The child was listed on this census with Jane Courtenay, widow, and two females, Mary A Courtenay aged 23, and Rosa Courtenay aged 19, both daughters of Jane Courtenay. This information lined up enough for me with the 1911 record showing **Thomas Frederick Courtney**, age 20, born Yeovil Somerset.

This was my first encounter with the name spelling variations. So that gave me something to work on, even though the 1891 and 1911 census both had reference to Thomas Frederick Courtney/Courtenay, the 1901 census was still a mystery. I next sent away for a birth certificate for Thomas Frederick Courtenay. When it came back to me, it showed the correct birth date as March and his mother as Mary Ann Courtenay, born in Yeovil, Somerset England in 1867 and her parents, Thomas Courtenay and Jane Jennings.

Next was the task of finding where Thomas Frederick had gone by the next census, 31 March 1901 when he was eleven. On Family Search, I found a Mary Ann Courtenay married Albert Clements in 2nd quarter of 1894. The 1901 census has a family consisting of Albert Clements, Mary Ann Clements and a blend of children. Further research disclosed that Albert Clements was widowed and had two children when he married Mary Ann Courtenay in 1894. Mary Ann had her son Thomas Frederick Courtenay and subsequently three sons were born. Thomas Frederick had assumed the surname Clements on this census. I have not researched whether or not this was a formal arrangement, but as he has reappeared as Thomas Frederick **Courtney** in the next census, and the copies of his birth certificate state Courtenay, I have left it there at present.

Through further family contacts in the UK, I now have copies of the Certificate of Birth, Regular Army Certificate of Service and Marriage Certificate.

Looking into Thomas Frederick’s history I have located his mother, grandfather and his great grandmother and great grandfather. Also a large step-family, including a step-brother who also joined the military with Somerset Light Infantry.

This is just a snap-shot of my journey, and I have become a genealogical addict in the process!

*PS Thomas Frederick Courtney served 22 years and 246 days in the British army.*
James Percy Anderson, a shearer from Rushworth, was 39 when he enlisted at Casula in NSW on November 22 1915 and he embarked for the war on 7 January 1916. Anderson (No 4069) was a member of the 12 Reinforcements, 4th Battalion. He married Isabella Hughes, a tobacconist’s assistant aged 34 in Coventry, England on 21 February 1919. James Anderson died on 17 September 1956.

Several letters published in Australian newspapers shed some interesting light on the lives of our soldiers at the Front including on James Anderson. In 1916, Anderson wrote to Mrs Roatch and her daughter of Albany, Western Australia who had sent a letter and a scarf to the Front as a gift for one of the soldiers. Extracts from the letter follow:

Printed in The Murchison Advertiser and Murchison, Toolamba and Mooroopna, Dargalong Express, 14 July 1916

"Your very kind letter, attached to a scarf, was handed to me today (April 16th) by our very popular chaplain, Captain McKenzie, and I am indeed very grateful. It is a regular comfort to me in this very cold country. It has been snowing, raining and freezing here. It is terrible. I am quite proud of our women folk, especially our girls who seem to be always doing or trying to do something for us here. I have been in Egypt and Africa, and now I am here. ...I am not allowed to tell where I am—I mean what part of France, but you can guess when I tell you that the roar of the artillery is dreadful. Aeroplanes on top and mines underneath, but it's a soldier's duty and duty must be done. I have just heard of great riots in Sydney. If they want rioting they can get plenty of it here. They must do as they are told here or take the consequences. This is a beautiful country, but now in winter, as I said before, fearfully cold; so different to Egypt or Australia. And, oh, so sad. The poor women
all in black, toiling in the fields. The peasantry, I mean. It is a story without words. ... And now, my kind friend, accept my grateful thanks and believe me when I say your noble efforts and those of the other women-folk of your town and district are greatly appreciated. I may say I come from Victoria, a mining town called Rushworth. My mother and sisters live there and are all workers for the cause in some way or another. ...I may, of course, get killed at any moment, but I trust whatever may be my fate I have the satisfaction of knowing I have tried to do my little bit."


This excerpt is from the letter from Flanders dated 17 October 1917 in the 1918 01 02 Riverine Recorder. 

... We still have a hard row to hoe, but two years such as I have had is too much, and I'm getting no younger. I doubt if you would know me, with my nerves broken down and so shaky that I can hardly hold a pannikin to my lips. Since the first Australian troops landed in France, I have been in battle (except Messines). I have been wounded and buried, and at times almost welcome the end, but I'm not broken-hearted, and am still going strong............ Everybody has his work to do. If a shell kills a hundred you have to walk on. Every man plays his part. ....

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**The John Malcolm Perpetual Trophy**

John Malcolm was a third generation Justice of the Peace who served the community of Balranald as a NSW JP prior to his Victorian appointment. He then became an active member of the Royal Victorian Association of Honorary Justices, (RVAHJ) Sunraysia Branch, including serving a term as Chair. After Mr Malcolm’s passing in 2013, his widow Betty handed on a number of his JP belongings to the Branch including an RVAHJ badge originally designed for attachment to the bumper bar of a motor vehicle. It was seen fit to create a Perpetual Trophy (created by placing the badge on a polished Mallee stump) to be awarded to a Justice (Justice of the Peace or Bail Justice) considered to have contributed significantly to the Branch during the preceding 12 months.

Trevor Aust JP was the 2015 inaugural winner of the award, acknowledging his service as Branch Treasurer, Coordinator of the Signing Centre at Mildura Police Station and editor of a quarterly newsletter. Pictured: Mildura Genealogical Society member, Trevor Aust, who is delighted to be awarded the trophy but acknowledges the excellent support he receives from his colleagues, particularly those who attend the Signing Centre at Mildura Police Station.
Library Report by Kaylene Charles

Material accessioned during last three months.

- Pioneering Women of Bacchus Marsh 1838-1990
- CD - Surgeons at Sea

Thank you to the Mildura Rural City Council Library for the following books:

- A Genealogical Gazetteer of Scotland
- General Muster of New South Wales 1814
- Domesday Book of Devon part 1
- Domesday Book of Devon part 2
- Domesday Book of Nottinghamshire
- The Exiles
- Early Hawkesbury Settlers
- The Catholics of New South Wales 1788-1820 & their families
- Cemeteries, our Heritage
- Shipping arrivals and departures Tasmania 1843-1850
- Shipping arrivals and departures Tasmania 1834-1842 & Gazetteer 1803-1842
- Shipping arrivals and departures Victorian Ports Vol 1 1798-1845
- Shipping arrivals and departures Sydney 1788-1825
- Shipping arrivals and departures Sydney 1826-1840
- The Bibliography of the Convict Transports
- Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip by R V Billis and A S Kenyon
- Australian Biographical and Genealogical Record 1842-1899 Vol 3
- Debrett’s Peerage & Baronetage 2000
- The Port Phillip Almanac and Directory for 1847
- Sydney Commercial Directory for 1851
- Biographical Index of South Australians 1836-1883 Bicentennial edition Nos 1 to 8.
- The Centenary Celebrations of the landing of William and Sarah Head
- Pitman Families in Australia 1838-1990
- Ghost Towns of the Mountain Goldfields

Thank you to the family of Nola Edwards for the donation of the following books:

- Postcards from Avoca
- Avoca the Early Years
- Boorooburra 1885-2000
- A Bush Girl
- No Doubting Thomas: from Cornwall to the Colonies
- A History of the Lander Family
- The Lace-makers of Calais
- Well Suited to the Colony
- Cardross Chronicles Celebrating 75 years of schooling at Cardross 1925-2000
- Mildura and Sunraysia
Whilst doing some research into the family of Archibald McLarty (c1937-1929) for Sharon McLarty, I came across an article in the Mildura Cultivator which included a reference to a McLarty in the winning tug-o-war team in an inter-Lodge competition conducted on Easter Monday 1903.

As I have a photo of a tug-o-war team, sourced from Ernie Hillier in Merbein, I believe this may be the same photo presented to the team members as mentioned in the above article. I am hoping that someone may be able to match some of the names in the team with those in the photo. I know Hillier is on the far right (Amos Charles I think?) Below you can read the part of the article which names the team members.

The family is that of Archibald McLarty who married twice and had a total of 13 children. He and his 2nd wife Margaret Jane (nee BATES) are buried in the Mildura Nichols Point Cemetery. The boys’ names, who could be in the photo, are Donald (1865-1941), Alexander Duncan (1869-1950), John Malcolm (1871-1937), Charles Archibald (1876-1962) and Dugald Gordon (1885-1958). Sharon was particularly interested in any information regarding her gg grandparents and great uncles, John Malcolm and Donald. Can you help? Email me at milduragenealogy@gmail.com attention Mal Williams.
Leon Wagner
(Guest speaker May 2 meeting MDGS) & the story of the PS Avoca.

The PS Avoca was built in 1877 at Milang as a river cargo transporter, and had a number of different owners over her long life. In 1891 she was taken out of the mouth of the Murray River to Port Adelaide where she traded, carting wheat in the St Vincent Gulf along the coast to Port Broughton, a role she did until the early 1900s after which she was brought back onto the Murray and used for a while in the lock and weir construction.

Built from wood, the Avoca required a lot of maintenance. By the 1920s, the Avoca was in the hands of Dan Treacy who used it as a cargo boat, carrying firewood along the river. In 1932 Dan Tracy converted the Avoca to a showboat and started running short tourist trips out of Mildura. In the early 1940s, the Collins brothers bought it and operated a dance cruise every Sunday night. In 1958 it was sold to Eric Doecke, the mayor of Murray Bridge and he conducted party trips out of Murray Bridge. Doecke removed the steam engine and installed a diesel-electric system.

Leon Wagner and a few friends got the idea to run a pleasure boat out of Mildura. The PS Melbourne was doing short cruises and the Wanera was doing 5 day cruises. Forming a syndicate, they purchased the Avoca and on 21 Jan 1976, they departed Murray Bridge for Mildura with Norm Collins and Paddy Hogg as official Masters in control of their new ‘pride and joy.’

It proved to be an eventful trip with many issues including looking for fuel on a Sunday on their way upstream and the considerable leaks which manifested on the journey. On arrival in Wentworth, they decided to leave the boat there till the following weekend and to organise a momentous trip to Mildura. And so it was that with three busloads of people and a band on board, they had just cast off, when one of the electric engines burst into flames and the guests had to be bussed back to Mildura, but not until after partying all day.

The following week, the Avoca was brought back to Mildura on one paddle-wheel where they found they were unable to get through the lock due to deposits of sand from the 1975 flood. A month later, she made it through to Searle’s slipway where repairs were undertaken.

In October 1976 the Avoca commenced her commercial cruises, a daily lunch cruise, and sometimes an afternoon cruise and a dinner cruise. At Easter 1977 huge crowds took advantage of the cruises and Easter Saturday’s three cruises carried nearly 1000 people. Leon Wagner sold his interest in the boat in 1980 but his affection for the boat was evident as he shared her story with the members in attendance.
Your society, your benefits…

Can you help?

Can you consider giving up a half day or a day once a month or so to help on the roster at the Genealogical ‘rooms’? Please contact the secretary if you can help or would like more details.

Can you bring a friend along to a meeting? It would help spread the word about Mildura’s best kept secret…. The Mildura and District Genealogical Society.

New members are welcome! Which reminds me: have you seen this fabulous little film clip we made a few years ago as part of ABC Open? https://vimeo.com/68590904

Can you consider nominating for a committee position for 2016-2017?

Please give it some thought.

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Grapeline pub. March, June, September and December. DEADLINES for submissions:

# 15th February 1st Quarter March Issue # 15th May 2nd Quarter June Issue # 15th August 3rd Quarter September Issue # 15th November 4th Quarter December Issue.

Members are invited to submit stories of interest, enquiries re their own family research, or questions about research in general. Material needs to be received by the deadline as above to be included in the next available issue.

I welcome all contributions from you, our readers, so please send me your genealogical stories, suggestions for successful searches which may help other members or reviews of reference materials from our Society Library or elsewhere. Photos with a brief story are also welcome. I look forward to hearing from you. Send contributions marked “Attention Grapeline Editor” to milduragenealogy@gmail.com

Till next time, happy family searching, Helen Stagg, Editor.

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Membership Benefits:

Free use of library; Free research queries published in Newsletter.

Meetings: - 1st Monday of month except January and December, 7.30 pm Carnegie Centre, Deakin Avenue Mildura.

Library Hours: - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday: 11.00 am - 4.00 pm.

Closed all Public Holidays. Library Fees: - $10.00 for non-members per day.

Research Fees: $30 for first 2 hrs. $15 per additional hour.

Membership: - Joining Fee $10, Ordinary $22, Concession $16.50, Joint $33. Badge Fee $10
NOMINATION FORM FOR THE ELECTION OF OFFICERS & ORDINARY MEMBERS
OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE MILDURA & DISTRICT GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC.
Registered No. A0023291P

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016

NOMINATION FOR ELECTION OF OFFICERS & ORDINARY MEMBERS

We, the undersigned, being financial members, being entitled to vote at the forthcoming election wish to nominate

Nominee Name: ______________________________________________________________

For the position of ____________________________________________________________

Printed name and signature of Nominator:
_________________________________________________________________________

Printed name and signature of Seconder:
_________________________________________________________________________

I consent to my nomination.

Printed name and signature of Nominee:
_________________________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________

Nominations for Committee positions close on the 18th July 2016.
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Mildura & District Genealogical Society Inc.

Notice is hereby given that the 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Mildura & District Genealogical Society Inc. will be held at the Carnegie Centre on the 1st August 2016 at 7.30pm.

The Agenda:

1. To receive reports from all portfolios and accounts for the year ended 30th June 2016
2. The election of office-bearers and members of Committee
3. The appointment of an auditor
4. Nominating Bank signatories; and
5. The setting of fees, categories and ‘pay by’ date

Nominations for Committee positions close on the 18th July 2016. (nomination form on previous page)

No nominations will be accepted after the close of business on the 18th July 2016.

Committee Positions:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Assistant Secretary
- Treasurer
- Librarian
- Publicity Officer
- Research Officer
- Newsletter Editor
- Roster Officer
- Webmaster
- Catering Officer

Please forward nominations to the: Secretary “Returning Officer” P.O. Box 2895, Mildura, Victoria 3502 or email: milduragenealogy@gmail.com

The M&DGS Inc. gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Mr Peter Crisp, Member for Mildura, whose office has printed this newsletter, free of all cost, as a community service.