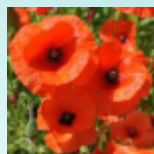


# Cat's Eye Weekly

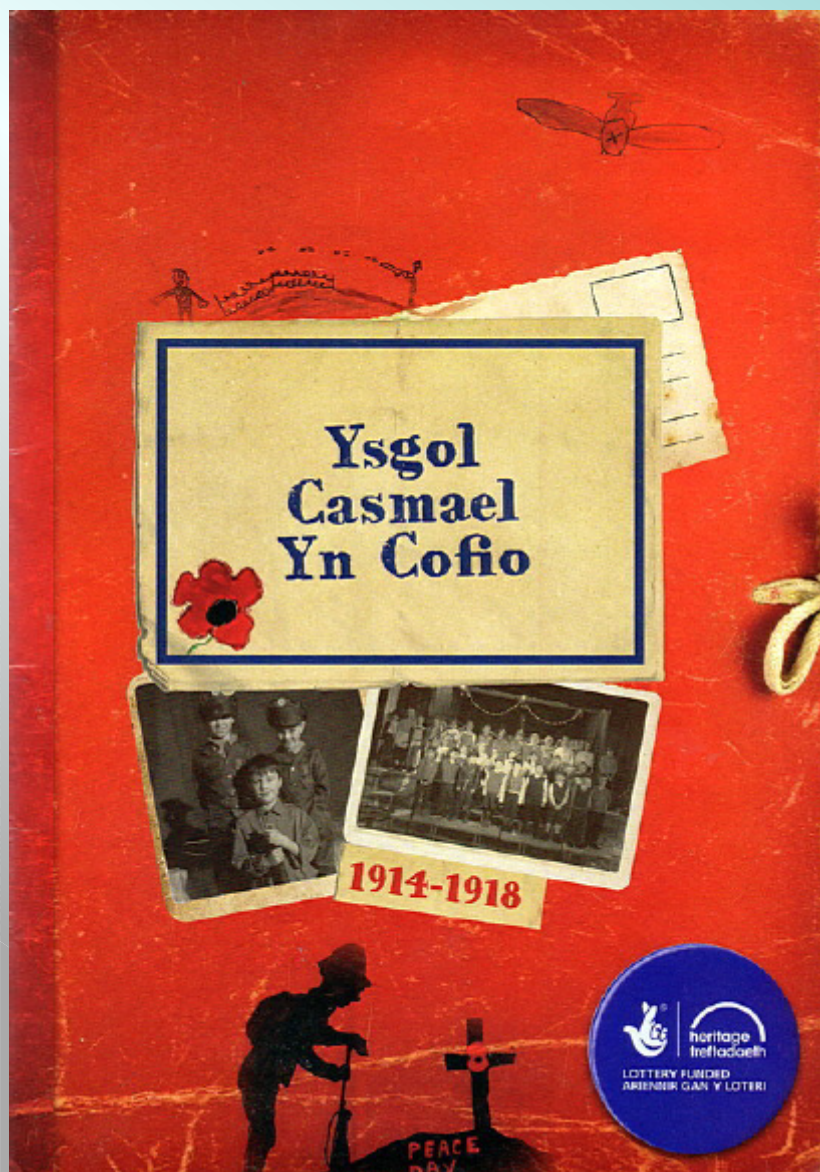
alias *The Ferret*

No. 133

25th April 2020



## Lest We Forget



How Welsh primary school children designed and helped to publish a book re. The First World War. See p3-4

### Inside:

How children gained an understanding of WWI

A tribute to my Dad and his mates of the 6th Light Horse

Monash: The man who gave so much to Australia

The Somerville's of Marsh Street — a short story

A fable: Think and Thought

Pet Medical Crisis: Two very meaningful rescues

The Animal Rehoming Service: Updates

Motoring Memoirs: 1935 Lagonda M45R

Intrigues in China: a book review



## Any excuse for stirring up the universe

Edited by  
Graham Price

*Once was weekly now highly irregular in more ways than one*

### HIGHLIGHTS

Children  
and WWI  
P3-6



Tribute to  
WWI  
soldiers  
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The man  
who gave to  
Australia  
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Lagonda  
1935  
M45R  
p22



## The editor's desk

It's a pretty little thing. Look at it under a microscope and you will view it as an object of considerable beauty — a corona they call it, a vividly coloured crown, unlike the crown of thorns they placed on the head of Jesus, but eminently far dangerous. Evolution has this way of making attractive that which is poisonous to nature and humanity. Survival of the fittest! Seducers in disguise! When humankind struts itself upon the face of the earth and declares itself to be the dominant species, along comes another which states "Oh, no you're not."

Nevertheless, we've seen it all before. There have been numerous pandemics in the past, beginning with a deadly plague in China around 3000 B.C., another in Greece circa 430 B.C. and so on into A.D. and the middle ages, with the Black Death 1346-1353 which apparently traveled from Asia through to Europe. Various plagues and pandemics continued all the way up to the 20th Century, culminating in the 'Spanish Flu' pandemic of 1918/1919 where it is estimated that between 50 million and 100 million people throughout the world died, and where Australia's infected people were sent to tent camps and state borders were closed. Elder persons living today remember the polio outbreak in Australia during 1937-1950s where between 20,000 and 40,000 contracted the disease, with some infection still being recorded up to the 1980s. For myself, I contracted the deadly diphtheria disease when I was but four and a half years of age, spending approximately six weeks in hospital. The little lad next to me died. The same occurred to my mother's little sister when she was of similar age to me. I recall a 13-year-old or such, young girl in our street who contracted poliomyelitis during the 1940s, who had to wear metallic braces on her twisted legs for much of her life. In time these epidemics and pandemics pass. We survive.

**On this, our beloved ANZAC day** we gather mainly at home or on our street curb. For the first time in our history there are no mass gatherings to remember the fallen and others who made the supreme sacrifice to keep Australia and New Zealand safe. Not since the end of WWI in 1918 has there been such a curb on remembrance activities, and it is something we shall not forget in a hurry. When all this currently restricted life is over we shall enter a changed world — a world in which many will question certain politics and ways of life; a world in which many will question why, amid the perhaps 90% of people being aware and managing social distancing, there was a minority still casually going about their social lifestyle. In fact, some who blatantly ignored the wisdom of health authorities and continued to consider that they could do what they liked. That is not an attitude that the ANZACS had, where men and women were determined to do their best to bring war to an end. To bring a virus to its knees does require 100% co-operation.

Warm blessings, *Graham*

Due to a few minor hiccups, Saigon Sunset is held over until the next issue.

Feedback to Cat's Eye Weekly  
is always welcome.  
Click onto my purrfect nose!







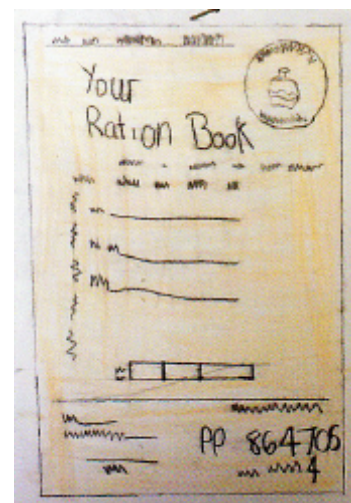
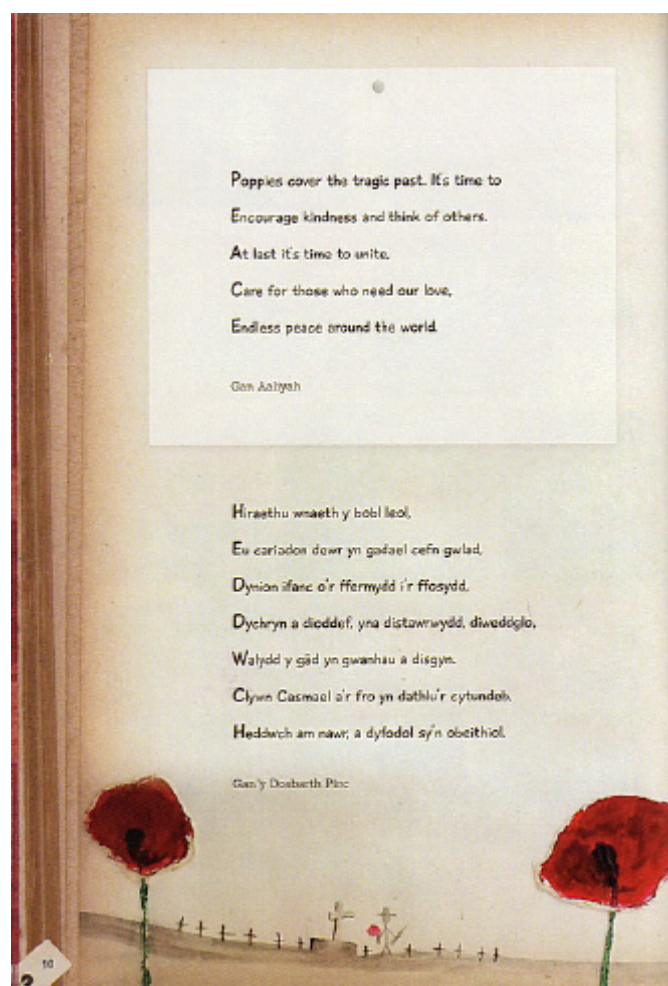
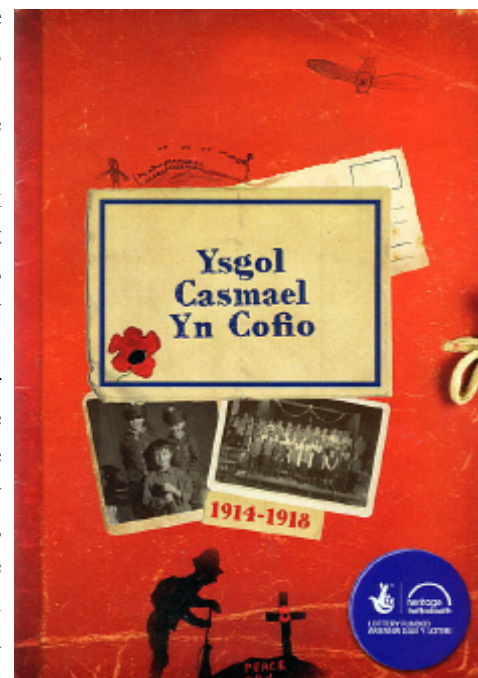
# How children gained an understanding of the carnage and sacrifices of World War One

## from Pembrokeshire, Wales

**Puncheston School remembers. This is a book written by the students of Puncheston School, Pembrokeshire, Wales — 60 pages of prose, verse and drawings, to inform and amuse.**

The book is written in both English and Welsh and is a remarkable testimony to the ravages of World War I and the bravery that came out of it, including sacrifices made on the home front. A footnote at the end of the book reminds us that “history teaches us that the peace which was established did not last, and within twenty years, Europe was torn apart again by conflict. Let us hope and pray that as the pupils of Ysgol Casmal mark the Peace of 1919, they will never witness war and strife in their lifetime.”

So, although the book contemplates the savagery and bestiality that war brings, it is a message of hope to future generations. In a word of thanks on the rear cover, the Head Teacher, Amanda Lawrence, remarks: “As a school, we were very fortunate this year [2019] to receive a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to discover more information about life in the area which surrounds Puncheston School during World War I. Using the grant we were fortunate to be able to arrange a wide range of activities, such as heritage visits and a special Christmas Show set in 1914; we also created mosaics, designed a special flag and wrote our own son. The results of all this research and work is contained within the covers of this book, a colourful and informative creation written by the pupils of the school, with help from Mrs Sarah Jones, Rev. Richard Davies, Mairwen Jones and Lisa Devonald.”





Page 27. Not only were ration books used to preserve reserves, a smaller dinner plate, called 'Small Measures Plate,' was made in Staffordshire factories to reduce portion size.

"Dear Grandmother

Hope that you are well and that the garden is providing a healthy crop for Cawl this year. I've recently moved to Staffordshire, thankfully I'm no longer making weapons. I'm now working at a pottery.

Due to the number of ships sunk by German submarines, as you know, food is in short supply. To encourage people to eat less, the Staffordshire potteries are in charge of producing smaller sized crockery and these are called, 'Small Measures' plates. They often contain a message from the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, encouraging people to eat less. On the back they state that they are produced by the girls in the potteries as the boys were fighting in the trenches.



Before long, you may be receiving some of these plates Grand Mother. They are quite delightful, however, just in case you're hungry keep those big bowls for Cawl.

Love always,

Nelly"

**Cawl is Welsh lamb soup with very thick vegetables.** A very sustaining meal, especially during the winter months. Letters within Great Britain during the war were well received. The country had an extremely efficient mail system which often promised deliveries twice a day. Letters from the troops and nurses abroad were also dealt with efficiently, and it was rare for any of them to go astray. The children of Puncheston School included one from a nurse at the front line to her mother back home in Wales.

To my Dearest Mother

Today I saved a life or two, but I'm fine. I met one of the new nurses today, her name is Chloe and she is kind and a very good friend (plus a good nurse). I was made to go into the trenches and recover some of the wounded soldiers. When I saw the conditions of the trenches, I almost fainted!. It was so bad, the smell was horrendous, There were dead bodies everywhere. I was just hoping that none of the bodies were my brothers, nobody familiar. This sounds terrible as everyone belongs to someone!

Is it true what I've heard about Dad? I was told that he was injured in the trenches near Belgium. I sincerely hope that this is not true, who will care for him? Waiting for these letters of reassurance must be worrying, I promise you that when I return home, we will rebuild our lives together.

I Must go, more of the injured are arriving in their dozens.

From your loving daughter

Daisy







Oats, potatoes and wheat were in high demand, so farms needed help. If Britain was to avoid starvation. The operations of the enemy fleet, both ships and submarines, meant a greater reliance on locally grown food.

**'Without the women, Britain would have starved.'**



Thousands of women were recruited to the Women's Land Army to work on the farms. They were planting and picking crops, working with the horses and driving the tractors.

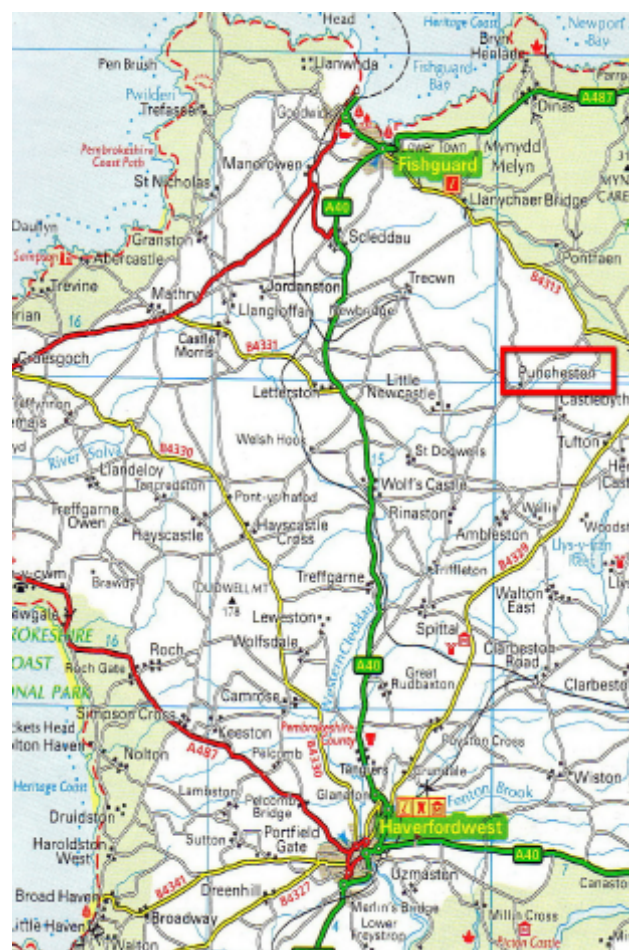
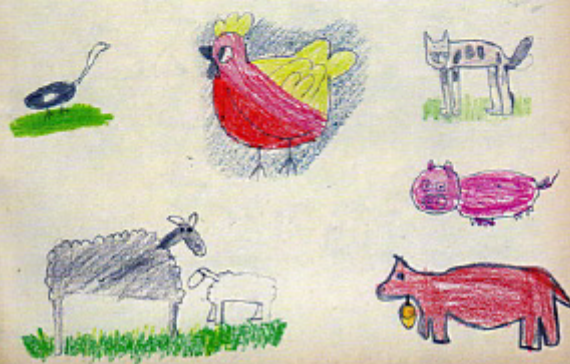


**GWASANAETH CENEDLAETHOL  
BYDDIN  
TIR MENWOD**

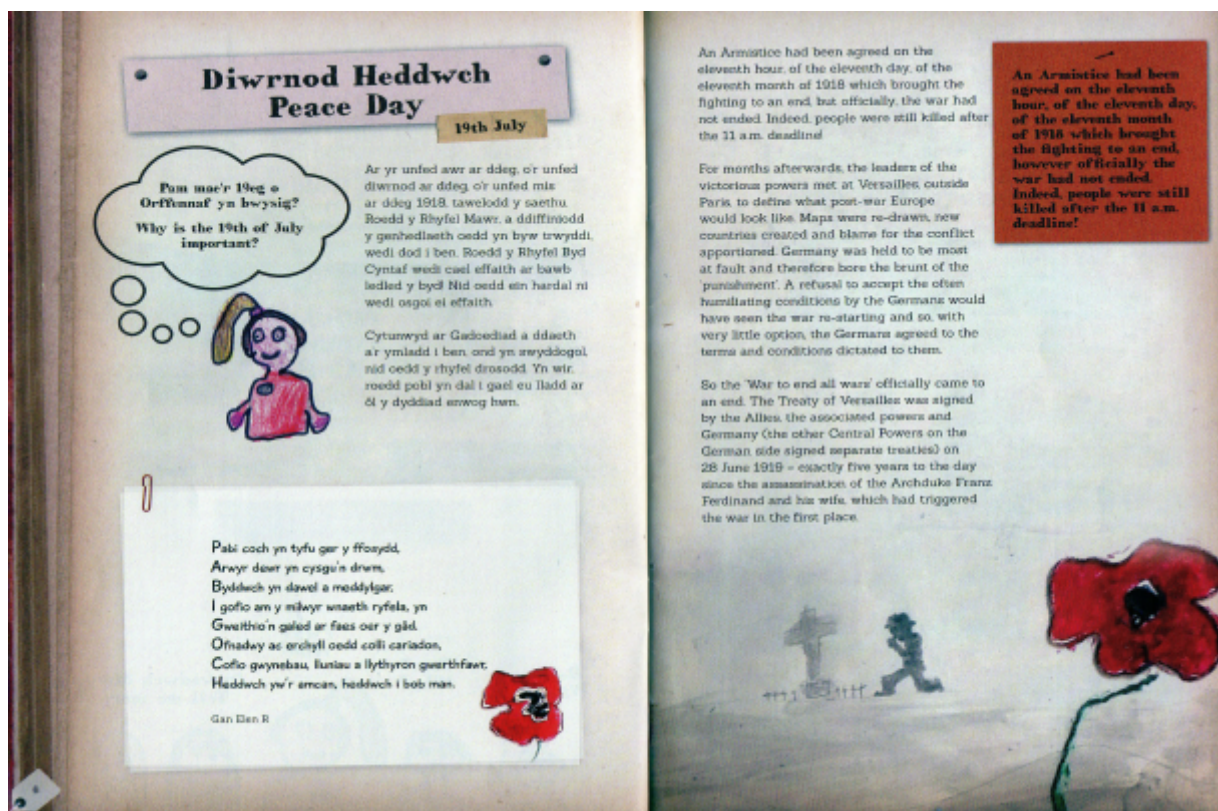


### Did the farmers have to go to War?

Sons of farmers were usually exempt from military service, however, it depended on the size of the holding and the number of sons a farmer had. Once conscription had been introduced, a man called up for military service could appeal the first appeal was at a local tribunal and local in this area meant the area covered by the Haverfordwest Rural District Council. Failing this, an appeal could be made to the county tribunal, however, failure at this level meant compulsory military service, unless an individual was a conscientious objector.







## Lest We Forget

# A fable

By the editor

The two great thinkers, Think and Thought were wandering around the brain the other day, poking at grey cells to see if they were awake or asleep. Think bumped into Thought and said "I fear more are asleep than awake."

Thought looked at Think with a puzzled face. "I found one awake down in the last labyrinth, but she was useless because by herself she couldn't wake up memory."

Think screwed up her eyes. "Yes, I had that problem with a bloke who was stirring a bit. . . had to tickle him into full awareness, but again, he didn't know what to do because there was no one else awake to show him."

"What shall we do?" said Thought "It can't go on like this or soon you and I will be out of a job."

Think considered that for a moment. "I'm afraid there is not much we can do. . . just about every brain I slip into is not really awake."

"Do you reckon the whole world is like this? Asleep or half asleep?" said Thought.

"Well, I hopped into a train the other day, and there were hundreds of those humans staring at some rectangular glass object, like a mirror. Their heads were down and their eyes were glazed."

"So," said Thought, "They were asleep!"

"It seems so. I slid into a few brains to find out. Nearly all the grey cells were shut down and most of the synapses just couldn't be bothered connecting to cells." •



## A tribute to my Dad and his mates of the 6th Light Horse regiment

**They were young — the three of them had recently had their 21st birthday parties: Sam O'Dell in Bingara with his family and friends, a country town in New South Wales. . . William John Harris, a leading jockey in Sydney with his friends of Manly. . . and William Henry Price, my father, who had been droving in northern New South Wales. Probably had his 21st at a local pub or with other drovers on a sheep station.**

He'd come up from Victoria, where he was born and settled. It had initially been a long family trek over many years from Barnawartha where he was born in 1896 to Geelong in 1903 when he witnessed his mother dying in childbirth. Later, he'd had to get away. The wide open country called and there were jobs available to those who could ride a horse. Up in the dry and sometimes flooding plains of northern NSW he'd earned his stripes — he was a town boy on the edge of the country who now rode like a bushman. So, the three of these sturdy young men, all seasoned horsemen, met up at Holdsworthy Army Barracks outside of Sydney, where they signed on with the 6th Light Horse regiment to help protect the Commonwealth of Australia and its allies from those who would attempt to destroy democracy. Well that was the plan, push the Germans and their allies the Turks back where they belonged into their own countries and be home for Christmas. But really, six months and it would all be over. Not much doubt about that.

They embarked on the troopship HMAT Clan McCorquodale from Sydney in February 1915 bound for Egypt. Originally, Australian troops had been bound for Europe, but with the change in threat by the Turks at a peninsular named Gallipoli, they were diverted. The Clan McCorquodale had been leased by the Australian government up to April 1915, though it appears this lease was extended because in February 1917 it transported Light Horse reinforcements, veterinary reinforcements and Medical officers. In November 1917 the ship was torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean Sea by a German Uboat.



*Trooper William Henry Price in Egypt 1915.  
Photo: W.H. Price collection.*



*Photo of Sam O'Dell now displayed in Bingara, New South Wales. Image compliments of Penny & Peter O'Dell*

Sam O'Dell had only married a week prior to leaving Sydney in February 1915, and now all three men were 22 years of age. Within a few weeks they had seen some of the world — traveling on board with their sturdy Waler horses. They saw sea birds they had never seen before, certainly waves they had never seen and sea sickness took its toll on some. After stopping for short spells at Aden, Suez, Ismalia, Port Said, they finally docked at Alexandria. From there it was a quick journey by rail to Cairo and then further south to the Australian Imperial Forces camp at Maadi. Long would these boys have memories of Maadi, where life and the food was good and where the English residents made them welcome, regardless of rank.

But the good times would not last. By July 1915, this third reinforcement of troops had landed on Gallipoli and sustained heavy attack. A week or so later, Will Price wrote to his sister, Evelyn, in Geelong, Victoria, stating that they had only been on Gallipoli about a week and that both Harris and O'Dell were dead. A witness to Sam O'Dell's shooting, Trooper W. Miller, later wrote: *"I saw O'Dell wounded about 22nd July last. He was building the trenches at Pine Ridge near Chatham's Post. I was due to relieve him at 4 o'clock and at 2. O'clock p.m. I saw him shot by a sniper in the head and shoulder. He walked down to the surgery at Regimental Head Quarters and made light of the injury. I have not seen himself or heard of his death."*

Sam had been shipped off to a Malta military hospital where he died on the 18th of August. The following appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*





under the heading of ROLL OF HONOUR. “O’Dell, Sam. In loving memory of our dear son-in-law, Trooper Sam O’Dell, 6th A.L.H. 3rd reinf., who died at Malta on August 18th 1915, from wounds received at Gallipoli. Inserted by Mr. And Mrs. F. Boland and family, Randwick.

A later report by Trooper A.R. Chrystall, 670, 6th Light Horse, stated “*Informant saw O’Dell being brought to the Dressing Station near Anzac at the 6th Light Horse headquarters. His shoulder appeared to be torn away from the body, the result of an expanding bullet. The wound was dressed by Dr. Verge who remarked to informant that O’Dell showed greater fortitude than any man he had ever seen, and added that O’Dell could not possibly live. Informant was told afterwards at the Orderly Room, and by O’Dell’s mate, that he had died.*”

In recent years, my nephew, Noel Wood of Perth, went to Malta and managed to discover Sam’s grave at the Pieta War Memorial. A very clean and tidy war cemetery. But the search for living relatives of Sam had not been concluded. I had tried back in the 1980s with no success — only discovering New South Wales relatives alive during the 1920’s-40s. Surely another attempt was warranted? 2015: Time for action. Further search led to the country town of Bingara in New South Wales where the local tourism folk were helpful. After a few hiccups we finally nailed it. Sam’s great nephew Peter and his wife Penny were alive and well on a property just outside Bingara. Oh joy! After all those years! Contact was made and great friendship has resulted ever since with transferring of information and photographs between us. Friends for life!

Of William John Harris, the second of the trio to die on Gallipoli, there seems to be only what the official records reveal at the time of his death and a short time thereafter. Try as we might, no contact has been able to be made with any living relatives of him. And it is not as if he was not well known. His war register notes that he was the son of Alfred John and Jan Harris, of Esoi, Varna St., Waverley Sydney, and earlier a native of Newcastle, being born at Islington. William John Harris had served in the Waverley Mounted Cadets in earlier years and attended Waverley public school. He died on Gallipoli, at Anzac Cove on the 14th of August 1915. Unfortunately, records of his jockey career seem not to be available. Again in latter years, an attempt was made to try and find living relatives with the simple reason of being connected through comradeship, but so far no results for William John Harris have come forth for us or the O’Dell family. Just to share the letter of my father to his sister back in 1915 would be such a wonderful memory and a renewal of that great bond of friendship and comradeship that was forged so long ago in the ravines and trenches of Gallipoli. He had written a letter to his elder sister, Evelyn Price in Geelong, Victoria, and she must have shivered as she read it.

*Gallipoli Peninsula  
Anzac Cove*

*Dear Evelyn,*

*I arrived here a week ago from time of writing  
and am doing all right so far.*

*You asked me in one of your letters who were the boys in  
the photo I sent you. The tall chap is Sam O’Dell and the other  
W. Harris. They are both dead. They were fine fellows to have  
for mates and I miss them very much. Sam was married a week  
before we left Australia. Harris was one of Sydney’s best  
jockeys. I was pleased to get the papers you sent. Anything from  
Australia is very acceptable here. I shall have to bring this to a  
close with best love and wishes.*

*From your affectionate Brother, Will.*

So he was left to go it alone, so to speak. His best mates were taken on that foul peninsula and he would remember them for the rest of his days. But hope reigns supreme. William Henry Price went on with the 6th Light Horse regiment into the Sinai Peninsular and Palestine, chasing the Turks and their German overseers. Sam and William John should have been with him, but they were far away in another world that he could not touch, nor ever see. The days they had enjoyed together in initial camp, on board the ship, at Alexandria, Cairo and Maadi. . . yes, they were memories never to be forgotten. Great mates to be sure. And the shame of it was that they were not here to see him and his fellows get stuck into the Turks — invaders of Arab and Jewish lands that belonged not to them. He’d often thought, no doubt. “We do it for you, Sam, William. . . we go on pushing against the odds because of what you died for.”





*With the 6th L H on the road to Jerusalem. Photo: W.H. Price collection.*

The 6th Light Horse Regiment, as part of the 2nd Brigade, would run into almost as much trouble as they had seen on the slopes of Gallipoli, except that this time they had their own personal horses to care for. Lack of water was one of their most consistent problems due to wells being so far apart in the desert, and then at times full of brackish water that the horses would not drink, even though they had not a decent watering in two to three days.

The contact with Turkish forces often resulted in skirmishes, but then there were the real battles in which they lost their bravest, and it was like Gallipoli all over again. One of the largest fights they ran into was in 1916 when the German general Freidrich Freiherr von Kressenstein jumped three and a half squadrons of British 5th

Mounted Yeomanry. Kress von Kressenstein had close to 3600 troops, which included ninety-five officers of almost three battalions, backed up by artillery and a regiment of Arab regulars. The effect of the attack on the British was devastating — the Germans, Turks and Arabs over-ran the British Yeomanry camp at Katia. Only eighty yeomanry escaped. Reinforcements arrived but were driven off. In time other reinforcements were called in including British and Australian regiments and the fighting became acutely intense. After several days the fighting centred close to a town named Romani, which was to be remembered by the light-horsemen forever. During two days — the 4th and 5th of August, they lost seven killed and 45 wounded. And one of the wounded was Will Price.

The regiment would go on losing men through their push to ram the Turks out of Palestine. The Turks and their German advisors were always on the offensive. At Amman and Es Salt the Australian 6th L H regiment had casualties numbering almost 100. It was Will Price's B squadron that took the brunt of the force of that battle, with 40 killed, wounded and missing out of 58 men. He survived that battle as he had survived numerous others, but would he survive anything in the future? Numerous men of the regiment, after they were wounded remained on duty — such was their dedication in support of their mates. Months turned into years as they marched and rode through desert storms and the debilitating frosts of winter and by July 1918, after a fierce skirmish in the death valley — the Jordan Valley, where water was again scarce, the regiment was moved to stand down. It had been a hellish two years and almost seven months since they had left Gallipoli. Their memories were strewn with the deaths of their mates, together with those wounded and sent to Great Britain for recovery — a recovery which some of them would never know.



*The 6th L H washed out in Palestine. Photo: W.H. Price collection.*

When the Turks finally surrendered prior to the great armistice in Europe, the 6th Light Horse moved back to their old resting place of Wadi Hanein, a very familiar and comforting area within that village of Jewish orange groves. Friendships

with the local population had long been struck up, and were renewed each time the troops returned for rest. There would be some troops who returned to Australia to plant their own orange groves and in doing so remembered the kindness and hospitality of the Jewish people they had left behind.

By late 1918 early 1919 Egypt was in a turmoil with rioting taking place. The Australians who had hoped to be long gone on a ship heading for home, were held back and turned into a police force to patrol numerous villages and towns. Will Price did not return to Australia until December 1919. In 1921 he married in Geelong, Victoria, his sweetheart Ursula Bennett who had waited almost five years for him to return. In time they had six children, five of whom went on to serve in the military while one stayed at home to keep the domestic fires burning. •



*The 6th L H with captured Turkish cavalry. Photo: W.H. Price collection.*

**LEST WE FORGET**



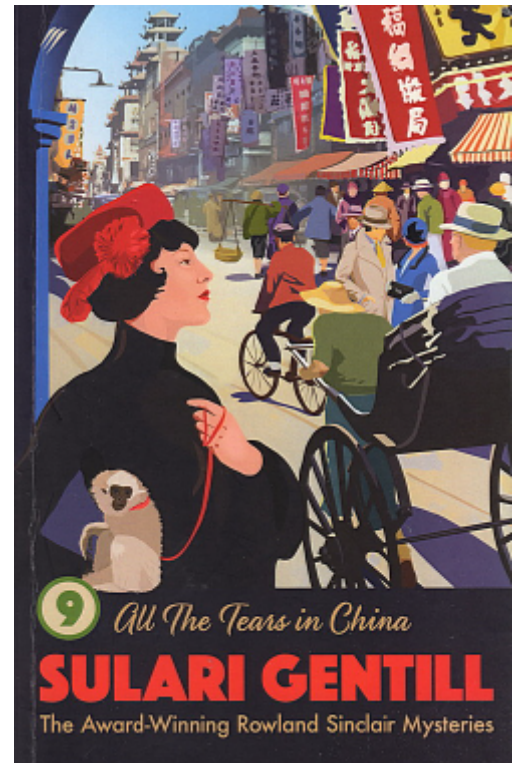
# Intrigues in Old China

Sulari Gentill weaves a fascinating mystery, in this her 9th series of the Rowland Sinclair mysteries, Set in Shanghai in the 1930s when many nations had a free concession to the district, *All the Tears in China* plays out these Western and Oriental links (mainly criminal) to great effect.

This book has an Australian influence because the main protagonist is Australian, sent to Shanghai by his brother to cover an important meeting but commit to nothing. Each chapter is headed by newspaper reports and other articles which purport to be of those times. The protagonist has friendly companions, his always just so much out of reach female, Edna Higgins — sculptress and connoisseur. We are kept dangling over many pages as to this relationship. Then there are two string-along male companions who give the book a flavour otherwise not found — Milton Isaacs a self-proclaimed poet, and Clyde Watson Jones, another struggling artist. Both Milton and Clyde are cupboard communists, so to speak. Not that that is a problem in the new Republic of China. But there are criminal elements in Shanghai that come out of the woodwork not long after the four arrive, with Rowland taking up his position to chat with potential Japanese wool buyers and trying not to be

committal. After all, this is mid 1930s and both Nazi Germans and Japanese spys are coveting Shanghai's foreign business communities with regard to preventing a blockade of Japan, due to their invasion of Manchuria. And they are exceedingly anxious.

Gentill brings trouble to Rowland Sinclair and his companions very early in the book. The machinations they go through trying to untangle themselves from lies and deceit, and indeed murder, fill many pages. Shanghai, city of delights, is not so friendly for them. And then, there are the Russians. Who can one trust?



*All The Tears in China*

By Sulari Gentill

Pantera Press, paperback.

Dymocks \$AUD32.99

Booktopia \$AUD26.95 plus postage

## The Council to Homeless Persons

Established in 1972, the Council to Homeless Persons is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development. In this time of COVID19, our services are most called upon.

<http://www.chp.org.au/>

See our Consumer Participation Resource Kit at:

[http://www.chp.org.au/public\\_library/cpkit/index.shtml](http://www.chp.org.au/public_library/cpkit/index.shtml)





For further information, please log onto  
<http://www.tars.org.au/>  
 The Animal Rehoming Service Inc. is a registered charity.  
 Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. (ABN: 51 275 837 567)

### The Covid-19 Social Isolation effect: Good and bad.

We're hearing from various vets that there's been a spike in people taking their healthy and re-homeable pets to the vet to be put to sleep. Whilst appalling, this is sadly within their rights. If you know of anyone contemplating doing this, please give them our number (Tel: 0409213131 ). Our service is free and owners get to meet and choose the family that adopts their pet from a shortlist of people we vet for suitability.

On a much more positive note, we only have four dogs needing homes (Marley, Imogen, Zuko and Peppa) and all four are either on or about to start trial periods. This has never happened to us before in our 20 years in rescue.



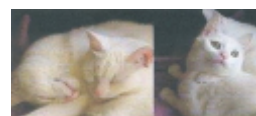
### Happy Adoption Tale!

From Leanne, Fionn the Papillon's new mum. (Pictured are Leanne, her daughter Courtney and friend Bianca, plus Raouley their cat.)

'We all have such a close bond. Fionn and Raouley have also bonded well. It took three days of checking each other from a distance, then it all came together. They now eat together, sleep together and Raouley goes on some walks with Fionn and I, which we've been doing plenty of in the fresh air. A great way to exercise given the Corona Virus.

He's such a happy boy and so intelligent — it's like he's always been part of our family. We all love him so much! A big thank you to his previous owners as it wasn't an easy decision to re-home him, as he was very much loved. . . and a big thank you to Michaela for finding Fionn for us. It's a match made in heaven Leanne.'

Thanks Leanne. We're very glad Fionn found you and your family! He's a lucky boy.



**We are now much loved in our new home and very grateful to TARS Inc.  
 Such a new lease of life!**



# The man who gave so much to Australia

Grantlee Keiza's book reads like a novel, but it is full of truths both beautiful and embarrassing. The fact is that John Monash, when young, was a bit of a scamp, which upon reaching his late teens and early 20s had turned him into a philanderer. Not that he set out to do harm to any of the female sex; it's just that he couldn't help himself when confronted by an attractive young lady. And those in his social surroundings certainly were of that ephemeral quality.

It is not that bystanders or historians have, by themselves, made this empirical observation — it is from the letters Monash wrote and the intimate daily diaries he kept. The man was a prolific writer. How he ever found time for that while studying and romancing, is a wonderment. His love affairs would make devils blush, even to the extent that he carried on with a married woman at one time. Did he ever consider who in time to come would read his eye-opening diaries? Perhaps he thought that after marriage he might burn them, but it is more likely that he would be too vain to do that. Because in those days he certainly was vain.

*Monash p113*: "Evie whispers in Monash's ear that they should have a 'love affair'. . . Monash accepts, though he tells himself that it's 'more for her sake than his own, for though the touch of a beautiful girl's lips is enticing to a young man, yet I cannot love two women at once'."

But this is not so, for that is exactly what he does, while carrying on with Rosie Schild at the same time. His love affairs get him into a lot of trouble — that is plain enough to see during the early pages of the book when there are still well over 500 pages to go and more affairs to be had.

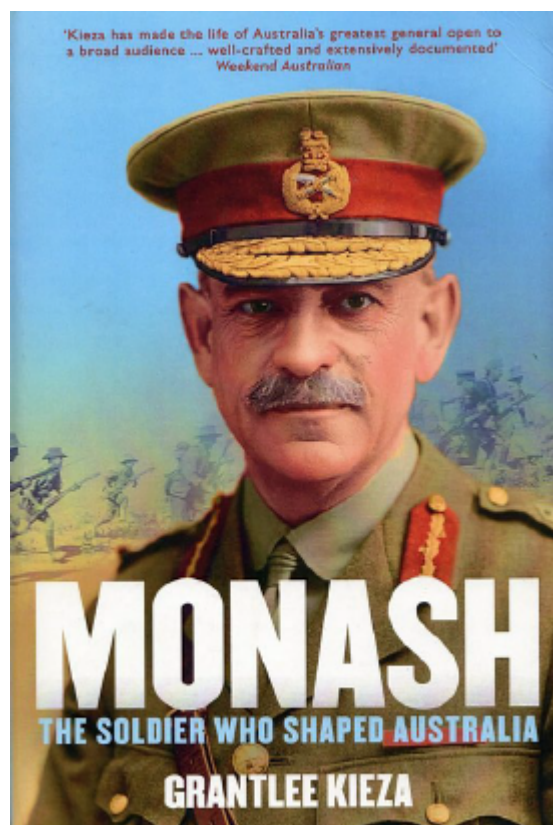
Apart from his engineering and military career, and his perchance for passionate love-making, Monash's achievements are prolific. He is an experienced bushwalker, a fine pianist, a smooth dancer, a captivating lecturer and sings beautifully; he not only writes and speaks English flawlessly, but also manages to use the German language to advantage, which of course is the language of his forebears. Mathematics, French, Latin, physics, are all too easy for him, as in 1879 for matriculation and civil service examinations he was only one of five candidates out of several hundred to pass in nine subjects. He also manages to find the time to sketch and paint.

Due to his lust for life his education is suffering, even though earlier university studies have seen him at the top of his grades. The fact is, he is having far too much of a good time during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Even so, his part-time military career with the artillery at the North Melbourne garrison is going well and he is promoted to senior Subaltern or Lieutenant, although he *was* hoping that it would be Captain. His talent for engineering has landed him good employment, and it takes an accident to jar him back to a reality about his romancing and personal life. In August of 1889 he was supervising the moving of heavy stones on a bridge when a rope snapped. A huge stone crashed down inches from his head, but a mason has his hand crushed. Monash realises that if he had moved he would have been 'finished'. His direction in life will begin to change, slowly but inevitably.



Baby John with mother Bertha in November 1865. (Monash family collection).

His vanity is still showing. After giving an artillery lecture, which was praised by many and excellently commented upon by the new commander of the Victorian Artillery forces, Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Dean Pitt, Monash says to his new girl and now fiancée, Vic, that the audience "came to scoff but remained to praise." Vic, known as Hannah Victoria Moss, is the daughter of the late Moton Moss, a London-born merchant, mining investor, gold broker, insurance agent and landowner. *Monash p115*: "One newspaper calls him a ruthless 'Modern Shylock', claiming that while most 'Melbourne Hebrews ... are to the fore in every work of charity and mercy' Moss is 'almost a solitary exception'. Even so, Vic and Monash are deeply attracted to each other, though Monash feels she might be too good for him, which is really a most exceptional thought for him to be having at such a young age. Just prior to this time, his affair with the married woman, Annie, is closing down with Monash coming to an understanding — after much pain and lingering doubts — it is better for all to cut the knot. But even then, with the full realisation of what is hanging over his head, he and Annie attempt one







last try at running off together. This is foiled by Annie's husband who punches Monash in the head, severely bruising him. Annie and her husband depart for Sydney. The affair is ended for the time being.

After a tumultuous on and off engagement, Vic and Monash are married. It is a hot and cold marriage. The 1890s depression comes, businesses close, Banks go bust, and numerous engineering projects are cancelled. Monash is scoring only a few days a week of work. Then on the 22nd Jan 1893 a daughter, Bertha, is born to the Monashes.



Grantlee Kieza describes what can only be an unhappy marriage until Vic finally leaves, after which the emphasis is upon Monash's military career and the eventual return of his wife. Much traveling around the country for engineering works ensues, while Vic at home is steadfastly solid in her role as a social butterfly. *Monash p155*: "at the Old Scotch Collegians' Club Ball the following night at the Masonic Hall, where she looks magnificent in 'a beautiful gown of pink brocade, the shoulder straps and edge of the skirt showing a row of beaver', and with silver sequins brightening the bodice. A few weeks later she is back at the Masonic Hall, 'handsomely gowned in yellow satin with passementerie trimming', at a dance in aid of the library fund for the Jewish Literary Society." Militarily, Monash moves on, being promoted to Major in 1897.

Monash uses his law (Bachelor of Laws 1895) and oratory skills to win numerous law suits on behalf of himself and other firms, but during his engineering partnership with Anderson (Monash & Anderson), several bridges fail during and after construction — in particular one where a manager was killed. This sets Monash back finance-wise and though he manages to scrape up enough money to send his sister to London to meet her fiancée, he cannot find further funds even to send a telegram

for her wedding.

*Vic and four-year-old Bertha in 1897. (Monash Family collection/ National Library of Australia).*

But time moves on and work begins to pour in. By 1909 Monash is a Lieutenant Colonel and spends much time at Victoria Barracks. By 1914 Monash is financially settled and comes to the conclusion that if he never did another day's work he would be safe from economic pressures. Monash is alerted to the troubles beginning in the Balkans. He is now in charge of a brigade and they commence manoeuvres in the country with several thousand men. *The Age* newspaper at the time criticizes him for pushing his men too far, but the inspector-General of British Overseas Forces, Sir Ian Hamilton, praises Monash. *Monash p217* "'an. . . Outstanding force of character' and says he has the makings of a first-rate commander. Some of the British officers have tears in their eyes at the commitment of the Australian citizen forces."

The inevitable occurs. The so-called Black Hand gang in the Balkans assassinates the pompous Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. The Austrian-Hungarian Empire invades Serbia and as a result Russia mobilises its troops with Germany joining in support of Austria, and demanding that Russia withdraw. The die is cast with other countries entering the conflict so that eventually Germany invades Belgium. Suddenly Great Britain and Australia — indeed, the whole commonwealth — are at war with Germany.

Racism rears its ugly head. Monash is given command of the 4th Infantry Brigade of the Australian Imperial Force. *Monash pp230-231*: "Hardly before he has given an order, Monash comes under attack from the very people he has sworn to defend. A hate campaign begins and Monash blames a 'clique' that supports his old adversary Marcus McInerney. One newspaper reports that Monash's past has been 'raked over by some ecstatic patriots who have discovered that though born and bred in this country, he had German parents'. A petition is started to force the government to dump him. His enemies send letters to Pearce and Kitchener. Rumours circulate that Monash can't speak English properly; that he only got the brigade command because of the wives of Monash and Pearce are related. (They aren't). Other officers with foreign backgrounds such as Julius Bruche also come under suspicion. . . some of the mud sticks and the Military Board eventually stops commissioning officers of foreign origin. Already there is talk of establishing internment camps for enemy aliens."

By December, Monash "says his goodbyes to Vic and Bert [his sister Bertha] promising them he will be back before they know it, as the Germans are already on the run. . . Eleven trainloads of troops singing 'Australia Will Be There' make their way from Broadmeadows to Port Melbourne. . . Most have never been on a ship before; indeed, many are seeing salt water for the first time. . . He boards His Majesty's Australian transport ship *Ulysses*, a 15,000-ton cargo vessel leased by the commonwealth from the China Mutual Steam Navigation Co. It is one of 17 ships transporting Monash's men. . . Monash's three horses, Tom, Dick and Harry, are also making the voyage. . . On Christmas Day, as they sail across the Great Australian Bight, the troops dine on ham and eggs for breakfast and for dinner roast pork, plum pudding and Christmas cake. As dinner is being served, Monash walks among his troops, wishing the men a merry Christmas and a happy new year."

*Monash pp251-252*: Kieza writes concerning the oncoming affray on Gallipoli. "[General] Hamilton tells the Australians that before them 'lies an adventure unprecedented in modern war. . . Privately he knows Gallipoli will be taken only with an enormous loss of life. 'Death grins at my elbow,' he writes in his diary 'I cannot get him out of my thoughts. . . Only the flower of the flock will serve him now, for God has started a celestial spring cleaning, and our star is to be scrubbed bright with the blood of our bravest and our best.' "

Kieza goes on to describe various viewpoints of the landing, while Hamilton remains "safe and warm aboard the ship *Queen Elizabeth*, anchored a long way from the fighting," even to what is occurring on the other side of the front under the



leadership of Mustapha Kemal. Then they are into it, troops scrambling off row boats, over the beaches and up the hills and one of the world's greatest debacles is about to begin.

Monash is in Shrapnel Valley coming under heavy fire. . . later, his men are attacking at Pope's, Quinn's and Courtney's posts with "desperate hand-to-hand combat and liberal use of the bayonet. By late April, 300 of his men have been killed. By May, even with reinforcements, he believes the attacks are suicidal and he tries to persuade General Godley from any further direct attacks. The death toll keeps mounting, and by December it is time to admit defeat and leave. Kieza devotes 167 pages to the Gallipoli campaign, from p247 to 314, noting that Monash has performed fearlessly and intelligently, especially while serving under the command of senior officers he is not in agreement with. Compared to other commanders, Monash's troops have done very well. *Monash p309*: "On one day his No. 14 machine-gun unit takes 30 Turkish prisoners in one group. . . Monash also sends out 'listening patrols' at dusk to spy on the Turks. . . When they are near enough the Australian boys 'let them have a shower of bomb' and then go out to collect the spoils — rifles, ammunition, equipment and occasionally a wounded prisoner. . . On 6 December Birdwood travels from his headquarters on Imbros to inspect Monash's intricate tunneling system, and compliments him on what he says is now the 'admiration of the whole Peninsula.' "



*Colonel Monash's headquarters, 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, at Anzac Cove. Monash is in the centre. (C.E.W. Bean/Australian War Memorial GO1187.)*

And so, after sunset on the 13th of December — unknown to the Turks — the miraculous evacuation of troops begins. *Monash p311*: "The Anzac garrison has been reduced from 41,000 to 26,000. Monash tells his men that under the plans put forward by Brudenell White, the 26,000 men are to hold the lines 'against at least 170,000 Turks (10 Divisions) until the second last day and on the very last day we shall have only 10,000. . . The Anzacs continue to trickle away from Gallipoli. . . Monash plans to stay with his men until the very last, and has chosen 170 diehards . . . Each one of the diehards is presented with a card showing the exact time he is to leave. . . There is no haste, no running, 'just a steady, silent ramp in single file, without any lights or smoking.' "

*Monash p314*: "We had succeeded in withdrawing 45,000 men, mules, guns, stores, provisions and transport ... Without a single casualty and without allowing the enemy to entertain the slightest suspicion. It was a most brilliant conception, brilliantly organized, and brilliantly executed." Three weeks later, Cape Helles is also evacuated. *Monash p316*: "The death toll from the eight months of fighting is staggering. The Turks number their casualties from defending their homeland at 251,309, including 82,692 dead. Australia lists 8709 killed, New Zealand 2701, Britain 21,255 and France 10,000."

Monash is now a Brigadier, who leads a task force into the desert where he performs well, but by May 31 1916 he is on his way to the most strenuous and exacting time of his life — the Western Front, where he prepares for the first Battle of the Somme. *Monash pp330-333*: "Lieutenant Archibald Harvey, a Bundaberg bank clerk, shouts, 'Come on Australia', but is wounded while hacking through the wire, as is Lieutenant John Roderick, and Lieutenant Robert Julian, a Geelong ironmonger, is killed. Corporal Richard Garcia, a Melbourne farrier wearing a luminous watch Monash has given him for night fighting, is shot through the shoulder and thigh but survives. Wanliss takes a machine-gun bullet in the mouth but, wounded again in the neck, arm and stomach, he leads 25 men over the bodies of the fallen. . . Monash still believes that the war in France is 'child's play' compared with Gallipoli, but Rawlinson's 4th army suffers 57,470 casualties on the first day of fighting on the Somme. . . Monash [is promoted] to lead the 3rd Division as a major general. Not all of Monash's men are sad to see him go. . . Monash has led his men through grim times, learning to love them in their life-and-death-struggles. He is now leaving them for London to take up his new command, and in the darkest days of war he will soon be in love again."

Kieza weaves us through Monash's intense anxiety concerning his wife, Vic, and her eventual survival from a cancer operation. He sought leave from the army to be with her, but was told that was not on. Vic and Bertha had previously planned to come and see him in Egypt, but he wrote back no, that's not on, either. Too dangerous. At London he finds it more as a carnival compared to sombre Paris. And tells his family "that it is suicidal to risk a visit to England with the Germans continuing their submarine attacks and with London in the grip of Zeppelin raids as the Germans pour fire from the sky."

Monash is now 51, but slim, if not a little swarthy from continuous exposure to the sun. He reunites with Lizzie Bentwitch, whom he has not seen for six years. It is a short time of peace, relaxation, a renewal of passion and certain comforts, especially as he moves to new headquarters by the river Avon. *Monash pp338-339*: "Instead of the 4th Brigade's 6000 men, Monash now commands 20,000 equipped with 3000 horses, 4000 mules, 64 artillery guns, 192 machine-guns, 18 cars, 82 trucks and 1100 wagons. . . His men include his nephews Eric Simonson and Aubrey Moss. . . prominent Sydney barrister Edwin Brissenden, who is a corporal working as a clerk at a divisional HQ, and Professor Harold Woodruff, the Director of the Veterinary School at Melbourne University."

Kieza's description of King George V's inspection of Monash's troops 7 kilometres outside Larkhill is so brilliant, one can easily visualise the scene, with 27,000 bayonets flashing in the sun to a 'present arms'. Monash had the ear of the king for two and a half hours with the king finalising "Well General, I heartily congratulate you. It's a very fine division. I don't know that I've seen a finer one." Monash is invited to Buckingham Palace.





Back on the Western front during the impassable winter of 1916-1917, *Monash pp352*: “Back from the line, Monash uses electric power from the tramways to light the empty factories and mills that are used to house most of his soldiers. . . Monash establishes his battle headquarters in the basement of the school amid a maze of telephone and telegraph wires and 27 interpreters. . . By the end of the month [Jan 1917] the 3rd Division has suffered more than 600 battle casualties, but has also landed its own damaging blows by men ‘who were just magnificent’, Brudenell White tells Monash: ‘A respect for you which began in 1902 has gone on steadily increasing.’ Kieza moves us on through time as Monash now becomes the senior AIF commander on the Western Front. Death, disaster, hellfire continue. During a short interval of leave back in London, Monash continues to see Lizzie Bentwitch. *Monash p370*: “He goes shopping in Bond Street for pearls for Vic. And for Lizzie.” Monash, the man, continues to be inflamed by passion.

The bulk of Kieza’s book is now taken up with what remains of the war in Europe. It is dedicated reading that few authors have described so graphically and with such a sensitive overlay — from pages 329 through to 546. It is when Monash, above all generals on the Western Front, becomes the one who shortens the war, is knighted, and the end of it is mainly due not only to his military experience, but to his engineering ability. The culmination of Monash’s brilliant manoeuvres and tactics which brought the war to a close are described in Kieza’s book through pages 525-530. As many have said, first an engineer, second a soldier. The fact is that his engineering experiences in Australia had imbued him with a mind that cared not for military rule books and tactics of old. He looked at battle tactics with an open engineering mind. It was that which separated him from other generals on the battlefields of WWI, many whose tactics were rooted in text book manoeuvres still stuck in the 1890s. He was as shining gold against dull brass.

And so, there is much more to read after his return to Australia, up to page 619, which depicts a great man born of a great Australian nation whilst continuing to exert his benign intellectual influence upon society and his strong exertion into commerce and public life until his early death in 1931 at the age of 66. It is fitting that he is remembered well by the society of the day, who held nothing but praise for the man who had changed his country. . . who had mounted it up among the leadership of the world. The likes of his funeral shall never be seen again — 15,000 men and women of the services marched past Parliament House with hats over their hearts while Monash’s coffin on a gun carriage stood there. *Monash p618*: “Lizzie is not invited to participate and instead watches her one true love go past on his final journey from the Windsor Hotel, weeping inconsolably with a friend’s arm around her shoulder. Above, De Havilland Moths and Westland Wapitis from the RAAF and Aero Club provide an aerial tribute. . . The gun carriage moves on down St. Kilda Road, followed by hundreds of cars and many more old Diggers on foot; they are determined to go that extra mile for their commander.”

“As Monash is laid to rest beside his wife, the ‘Last Post’ is played, followed by a 17-gun salute and the ‘Reveille’. ‘A prince and a great man has fallen,’ Rabbi Danglow tells the mourners. . . His name will forever live in the hearts of his people.”

**A short timeline of Monash’s achievements after WWI: May 1919. Received the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George from King George V. Initiated a programme called the AIF Education Scheme for 40,000 returned Diggers. Appointed Chairman of the State Electricity Commission in 1920. Qualifies as Australia’s first Doctor of Engineering from Melbourne University. Organises 5000 men (mostly returned servicemen) to take care of hoodlums and riots during the police strike of 1923. Becomes a part-time Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University 2 July 1923. Lends his car to be used by disadvantaged children. From 1924 he gives his support to the National Geographic Society, the Victorian Society for the Protection of Animals, the Big Brother movement, the Society of Australian Authors and several other societies. He begins to urge for a Shrine of Remembrance during 1927. On Armistice Day 1929, he is promoted to the rank of General.**



***Monash: the Man who Shaped Australia*** is an incredible read, factual, sensitive, eye-opener, full of romance and adventure, and an enduring legacy and endowment for an Australian man in the right place at the right time. A necessary ingredient on everyone’s bookshelf and a specific eye-opener for our millennials and younger Aussies.

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# Pet medical crisis

## from Jennifer Hunt

### 'Joey and Fergus' - When chronic pain hurts less because you have love from your doggies.

Chronic pain is often unbearable even when the rest of the world you live in is going perfectly. Imagine feeling constant pain leaving you unable to work for years, due to being a passenger in a car accident that rendered you unable to work. Needing back surgery Jennifer took the chance to do what she could, however the problem only got worse post operation. Luckily in this hard luck story we have a pair of heroes ready to save the day. 'Joey' is a 15-year-old Jack Russel x Pomeranian girl and 'Fergus' is 12-year-old whippet boy.

"My pets have saved your life, if I didn't have them and their comfort I don't think I would have coped. They are my family, my kids. I can't tell you how much your help has meant to me". Jennifer told team PMC.

'Joey' and 'Fergus' are all the beauty in the world to Jennifer as she struggles with her back, along with mental wellness issues from head injuries that occurred in the same accident. Jennifer lives with her mum who is an aged pensioner while they struggle to pay the bills that accumulate quickly when you only receive the most basic payments.

Jennifer first noticed that 'Fergus' who is slightly built at the best of times, had lost weight and wouldn't eat his dry food. At the same time 'Joey' stopped eating also and seemed unwell. Jennifer, the budding author, knows how deadly serious dental issues can be so she took them to the GAWS veterinary surgery in Geelong. After assessing that the pair of the dogs both needed some fairly urgent dental work, especially 'Fergus' Jennifer and the team at GAWS reached out to us at PMC. Thankfully we were able to assist managing and financing both dogs to be taken care of and returning to their normal life free from pain and danger.

**Thanks to the Geelong Animal Welfare Society team for helping out, I am sure we will work with you again. Please share our mission where you can and help us grow — social media does help our organisation assist more people every week.**



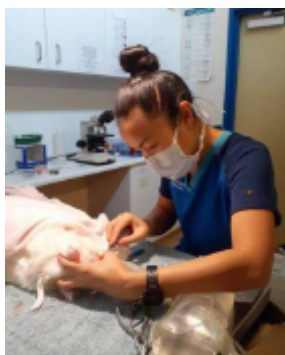
### 'Sasha' - The white light who keeps her mum out of the darkness.

Sarah adopted her three cats from the gutter when they were helpless kittens around 6 weeks old. Sarah loves the three of them dearly, but 'Sasha' has always had such a special place in her heart. Sarah has suffered from awful depression and anxiety for a long time and is currently on a pension, not working at the moment due to the COVID-19 crisis. Sarah adores her cats and would do anything possible to keep them safe and cared for especially her angel 'Sasha'. Sarah has gotten to the point she has questioned life, and the one thing that makes her want to be in this world is the love of her beautiful white girl 'Sasha'. This cat's love has been enough to save her life.

"I highly recommend anyone in serious need to contact Pet Medical Crisis. Thanks to PMC my baby is better and there is no way that I could have afforded her bills. I thank them so much for helping me. My cats are my babies, they mean everything to me I would go without food and my medication just to buy food or pay for their veterinary bills." Said Sarah.

Giving her cat a tickle on the chin Sarah noticed 'Sasha' was in pain and also had bright red gums. Needing help for 'Sasha' - Sarah took her to the local vet at the Niddrie Veterinary Clinic, where she was diagnosed with severe gingivitis and was in dire need to have several teeth removed. After working out the pretty kitty needed 5 teeth pulled Sarah knew there was no way she could afford the surgery that would change her cat's life dramatically. Pet Medical Crisis was contacted to request our help. PMC looked at the details and realized we were able to help Sarah alleviate her girls out of pain.

**Sarah now has all three of her cats at home as 'Sasha' recovers well. These cases show how much our animals mean to us, especially individuals dealing with mental health issues. It may open our eyes to the fact that some people even potentially contemplate their lives if it wasn't for them having a loved companion. Please share our quest to help aged and disadvantaged pensioners pets. •**



## Pet Medical Crisis

**A not for profit fund to save pets whose owners cannot afford their emergency care.**

[www.petmedicalcrisis.com.au](http://www.petmedicalcrisis.com.au) Email: [petmedicalcrisis@gmail.com](mailto:petmedicalcrisis@gmail.com)

**PMC is now on Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/PetMedicalCrisis/>

**Also, a walking harness — 'Dog-A-Long' — is available to assist your dog to become more mobile — supports dogs with hind leg problems associated with ageing, arthritis, hip & spinal problems. For suitability check with your Vet.**





# The Somervilles of Marsh Street

a short story

by Graham Price

**It was called Marsh Street because there was a swamp at the southern end of it.** Sheila and her brothers, Danny and Percy, often played down there, skimming flat stones off the water and frightening the birds. Sometimes old Mrs Hart from number 13 came and sat on the grass verge with them, bringing her folding chair and an easel. She painted water colours of the water birds and scenery, which according to the children's mother, Annabelle, the old lady sold in the big city when she took the trip once a month. It was a way of maintaining a livelihood, for Gerda Hart was a widow.

The Somerville children lived in 10 across the street and had known the old lady for as long as any of them could remember. It was a small street, cut down from a curving main road and because of the swamp was a cul-de-sac. No vehicles could pass through, though it was rare for anyone to see a strange car turn in, kind of lost off the main road. Marsh Street seemed a lonely kind of street from an outsider's point of view, but in reality it was a hub of association — the neighbours had considerable care for each other and often held charity drives for those less fortunate in the town. Times were tough; the long drought had affected local farmers harshly and everything was economically unstable.

Being on the edge of town, Marsh Street was the only habitable street for a mile or more — to the east was farmland and to the west behind the houses loomed dense bush forest, filled with eucalyptus, spindly paperbark trees and numerous ferns. The street was quiet too, rarely filled with the noise of a prop plane from the civilian airport on the other side of town, the railway being there as well. Tourist steam trains still ran occasionally, but diesel electrics were the go these days. Annabelle took the children into the big city once or twice a year, so that they would not lose touch with that other life — where there were shopping malls, fairs and cinemas and large cafes and restaurants. Once, Sheila saw one of Mrs. Hart's paintings in an art shop window.

"Look at that, mum," said the thirteen-year-old, it's \$550. Wow!"

Annabelle stopped and stared at the painting for a while. "Oh, that's unusual. She told me she never got much more than \$30 for her paintings. But yes, that's her signature at the bottom. So, strange."

"They are brilliant, though, aren't they mum?"

Annabelle Somerville thought so, but she simply nodded and moved on. That night she mentioned it to her husband Damien, but he laughed it off and said she must have been mistaken. It was someone else's painting. After all, Mrs. Hart was as poor as a church mouse, couldn't even afford decent clothes for herself, said Damien. . . has cardigans with darns in them, and she wears scruffy old shoes that have seen better days.

"And remember last winter. . . she didn't even have a decent coat to go to that civic thing you all went to in town. . . and you gave her one of yours. And then there were your sister's boots and that scarf that she sent out from Sydney. And the house, it's a bit of a shambles. Hasn't seen a good paint in twenty years or so. Her painting at \$550! Don't be daft."

Annabelle found it difficult to get off to sleep that night. Damien had gone off on night shift to his job as a security guard in the town and wouldn't be back until after dawn. She thought she would have dropped off to sleep easily for it had been a tiring day out in the back garden, making sure it was well weeded and kept clear of insect pests. The chook run needed a good clean-out too, but her back was aching somewhat, so that could wait until another day. Eleven o'clock and Sheila and the boys were asleep at the rear of the house. Annabelle worried about Sheila, who was now attending high school in the town, traveling to and fro by bus. The boys, Danny 9 and Percy 7, were still in primary and were taken and returned by Steven Singh's wife, Maria, from number 5. There had been a murder in the town last year — a fourteen-year-old girl from the same high school as Sheila's, who had been found on a country road out of town, badly beaten. So far, the police had not arrested anyone and the case was ongoing. Annabelle tried not to think about it too much, but it was there. . . it was always there. . . and no one seemed to be doing anything about it. She had cried for the girl, cried deeply over many weeks, because Annabelle had known the girl's mother when she herself was a teenager in that school. And now, she worried over Sheila.

But that night it was the incongruity concerning the painting that kept her awake longer than usual. How could Gerda Hart be getting prices like that for her paintings when she insisted she was only getting peanuts? And if she was getting good money, where was it going? She was still accepting hand-out clothes from the neighbours. As Damien said. . . poor as a church mouse. One good thing, though, Annabelle thought . . . restlessly turning in the bed. . . Gerda had taken Sheila under her wing and had begun to teach her how to paint, with Sheila coming back from number 13 every week after lessons, smiling and



laughing, sometimes with the results to show her parents. There is talent there, thought Annabelle, Gerda is doing well with my little fluffy kitten. And I think it is also good for Gerda, bringing her out of herself. She's always been a kind of shy person, and somewhat gloomy since her husband passed on, but these days the trips down to the swamp with the children seem to have livened her somewhat. Gerda and her husband Henry were not local born Australians, in fact, Annabelle didn't really know where they were from. . . somewhere in Europe she guessed. They'd been here so long, long before the Somerville's moved into 10. How old was Gerda? Annabelle didn't really know. Late 60's perhaps, early 70's, but smooth of complexion and hair that possibly was dark once, now a stunning white. . . a clear and clean white, thought Annabelle, no yellow streaks, and not even a whisper of grey. Unlike me. A few grey hairs showing when I looked in the mirror the other day. I must get myself to a hairdresser next week.

She wished Damien's night shifts would soon be over. She needed someone beside her during these nights — someone to talk to before she turned out the lamp beside the bed, to get things off her chest. She needed his comfort and his reassurance that Sheila would be okay. After all, the bus at the end of the street took her right past the school, so really, where was the harm to come from? But it was there. . . it was always there. . . this fear of the stranger out of control. . . the stranger who could take your child away from you in an instant. And then the searching, the waiting, the needing to know where she was. . . how she was. . . the hoping against all hope that she was safe. Oh, it was all too much. She turned again in the bed. Shouldn't have had that cup of coffee earlier! Can't sleep. She turned on the bedside lamp and took the book that was next to it. Might read for a while to settle myself. It was Alain de Botton's *Essays In Love*, published only a year ago in 1993. Her sister in Sydney, Merle, had given it to her for her thirtieth birthday. She found it to be a very comforting book and had poured herself into its chapters when she had the quietness of the house to herself. It was about Botton's love for Chloe, their synchronous meeting, the excitement and charm of an affair and their eventual separation. But Annabelle had not reached that separation part and was not yet aware that it had come to that. Her bookmark was stuck at the chapter headed *The Fear of Happiness*, and she began to read. 'One of love's greatest drawbacks is that, for a while at least, it is in danger of making us seriously happy.'

Was she happy? Was she still in love? She leant back on the pillow and considered that for a moment. After bearing three children and settling into a routine way of life, perhaps love could never be the same. . . and Damien's love-making in bed was out of all proportion to what it was when they first met and found themselves in the blissful state of young love. Could they regain that bliss, that heavenly state of intoxication that overcame them whenever they had been away from each other for even a few hours? They could hardly keep their hands off each other.

She laughed, a small bubbling sound that was more of a giggle. It was good to remember. Perhaps they could regain how it was in those days before the children came along? She turned back to the book. Alain and Chloe were visiting in Spain and Chloe came down with a sickness, which a Spanish doctor had diagnosed as *ambedomia*, being common with holiday makers. So, given a few pills and rest, she'd be fine. 'Eet is nutting,' said the doctor. The British Medical Association had diagnosed it as a mountain sickness brought on by sudden terror in the face of a threat of happiness.

I don't believe it, thought Annabelle. . . but then, perhaps! Perhaps the pursuit of happiness and the fear of happiness belonged to the same tree? But what is happiness, anyway? She put the book down and thought. I don't know. . . I really don't know. She glanced at the alarm clock. . . well after midnight. Better try and get some sleep. Although the next day was Saturday, the boys had gym training and Sheila early piano lessons with Maria Singh, the lovely Indian lady who often brought her delicious curries to Annabelle. Then there was the small farmer's market just off the main road that she needed to get fruit and veggies from. Get in early before the good stuff was gone. Anyway, Damien would be home by 7.30, so she'd better try and get some rest.

The coolness of autumn had now turned into winter and the gravel road in Marsh street began to become somewhat slushy. A farmer sometimes used it to gain access to the rear of his property and the tractor left large patterns in the mud that reminded Annabelle of the old convicts' arrows on their garments. Well, that was her theory, anyway, from the books she had read. Stripes more likely. She and Gerda were having a cup of tea in Gerda's kitchen and the wind was whistling through cracks in the timber walls and around the edges of the window frames. Annabelle shivered. "Aren't you cold, Gerda? Perhaps you should light the fire in the living room?"

Gerda gave a tight smile. "Oh no, this shawl is enough for me. I've always been used to the cold, especially back in the old country. But if you like, I can put the electric heater on."

"No, no, that's not necessary. I was just thinking that. . . you know, you're no spring chicken anymore, Gerda, and you need to take care of yourself more. Oh, the old country, where was that?"

Gerda looked at the ceiling, then dropped her eyes to the cup of tea in her lap. "I don't wish to talk about it. It's so long ago."





“Sorry, didn’t mean to pry.”

Gerda nodded. “Oh, you don’t pry. That’s one thing I really like about you, Annabelle, you don’t pry. But. . . but. . . it’s all so long ago, and as they say, the past is another country. I prefer to leave it where it belongs. Living is for today.”

Annabelle changed the subject. “Sheila is doing very well under your tuition. I think we should be paying you for that.”

“Heaven’s no, for goodness sakes, no. . . never. She’s such a lovely child and the opportunity is there for her to go on to great things. Henry and I never had children, though I would have liked. But he had some fear in him of little ones. I think it. . .” She stopped then and Annabelle noticed the glistening of the eyes and thought she saw a tear appear.

Gerda went on. “If we’d had the opportunity, I would have loved a child like your Sheila. She is so caring. One day she will make a good wife for some fortunate man. I know that.”

Annabelle laughed. “Whoa. Let’s not get too far ahead. She’s only just entered her teens.”

“Well,” said Gerda, “There’s that handsome young farmer’s son. I saw him looking at her with something a lot more than attraction the other day. He’s fifteen or sixteen, might be a good match later on. Did you know she winked at him?”

“What? Oh, just teenage silliness. Besides, for all I know she might have a crush on some of the boys at the high school she goes to. Did you know I once went there?”

“Is that where you met Damien?”

“As a matter of fact, yes. But he was such an awkward young thing. Couldn’t get his feelings out without stammering. Fortunately, he got over that when there was competition from several of the other boys.”

“So, you knew him from all those years. A teenage romance?”

Annabelle gave a small chuckle. “Yes, but you’re not going to suggest that Sheila is ready for anything like that, are you?”

“More tea? Oh, you never know my dear, the heart is a very efficient machine, but it does have a defect.”

“Yes, more tea, thanks. And just what is that defect, Gerda?”

Gerda stood up and swung her shoulder-length white hair. Her eyes had taken on a gleam. “It’s always. . . always searching for happiness, even under the most trying and horrific circumstances.”

And Annabelle wondered why searching for happiness should be a defect, and what those horrific circumstances might be.

On Sunday the Somerville’s had gone to church — to St. Paul’s Anglican, which was one of four churches in the town, the others being Catholic, Presbyterian and Uniting. Damien had originally been Presbyterian but had changed to Anglican when he and Annabelle married. He didn’t always attend, thinking that there was a little too much pomp and ceremony similar to the Catholic church, but when he did he found it enjoyable and loved singing the hymns. Sheila often said to him “You’re only half a Christian, dad,” laughing as she did so. At those times he grabbed her and tickled her ribs until she cried “I take it back,” with laughing tears rolling down her face. Later, she would run past and slap him on his behind, yelling out “Love you, dad.” And she did. He was tall, lean, and handsome — had come out of the army as a sergeant in the 80’s to find that Annabelle was still around and still unmarried. There was no doubt that she was still in love with him and it was only a matter of months before they were engaged, and six weeks after that married. There wasn’t much work in the town but he had taken on security which was a natural for him and had enough from his army pay to put a deposit on the house in Marsh Street, which they both considered a bargain. It was 1930s vintage, as were all the homes in the street, needed some considerable repairs and a paint, which he and Annabelle had attended to. It’s best feature was the rear yard, large enough for plants, trees, and a chook run.

“Why doesn’t Mrs. Hart go to church?” piped up Percy, as they were driving back in the somewhat rusted Holden.

Annabelle turned to look at him and the others in the rear seat. “That’s really none of our business, Percy.”

“I suppose,” said Damien, “That she doesn’t have that kind of belief.”

“How many kinds of belief are there, dad?” queried Danny.

“Can we wait until we get home, dad’s trying to concentrate on driving,” said Sheila.



“Oh that’s okay, I can talk while driving.”

Danny rapped his knuckles against the car window. “You sure can talk, dad, like you’re always talking to Mrs Singh. Did you know they were Catholic? I thought they’d have to be Hindu.”

Annabelle laughed. “You kids know too much for your own good. Where do you get this stuff from, surely not from me or your father.”

“It’s that mad teacher they got in primary school, mum. You know, the one with all that hair and the beard,” said Sheila.

“You mean Mr. Munroe? Oh, don’t be crazy, he’s a lovely man.”

“Well, I think he’s weird.”

“Sheila! That’s not like you. Why do you say that?”

“Well, when I was there, he used to touch the girls on the arms and one day he touched me on the neck and said that I’d soon be a woman. And he would ask the boys about their hygiene in front of us girls. I just didn’t think it was right.”

Annabelle had gone cold. She felt frozen to the seat and simply stared out of the windscreen, and the silence from Damien was murderous. His hands squeezed the steering wheel as if any second he could break it into pieces.

That afternoon, though it was cold and windy, the sun came shining through and Gerda Hart had set up her easel by the swamp. The children had joined her, with Sheila sitting cross-legged with a large drawing pad on her knees. Danny and Percy were running about kicking a football and Gerda decided to include them in her painting. The scene with water birds frolicking in the background began to take shape, with Sheila watching and attempting to copy with crayons. Around three o’clock after the boys had wandered back home, Gerda decided it was enough and began to pack up her items. Sheila helped, taking the box of paints under her arm as they walked back along the road.

“Come in for a nice hot cuppa,” said Gerda as they reached the picket fence of number 13.

Inside, they talked and sipped their tea. Sheila was in the mood for conversation. “We have this group at school, well it’s nothing official like, but we study astrology and it’s amazing how it fits into modern life. It’s all about numbers and I have this incredible string of numbers that keeps appearing. Like 13, for instance, your house, my age now, and seven and nine.”

Gerda smiled and patted Sheila’s arm. “I’d be a little careful with that. You know, there was a man who also lived by what his astrologers said, but in the end it only brought him trouble.”

“Oh, who was that, then?”

“A man called Adolph Hitler.”

Oh, him. But I don’t see what that has to do with our little group. Anyway, I want to get a tattoo of those numbers. Some of the other girls have had theirs done, some on their bum where their parents won’t see it. It makes us all one, don’t you see. We need to be close to each other and wherever we go in the future, it will help us to remember our group.”

Gerda sat still, with the smile remaining on her face, though it now seemed somewhat taut. “I was part of a group many years ago, and yes, I also have a tattoo that makes me remember that group. But, dear Sheila, sometimes I do not wish to remember. It is always there, wherever I go it is always there.”

Sheila gasped. “You have a tattoo. . . how lovely! May I see?”

Gerda took another sip from the cup, put it down on the saucer, and Sheila noticed that Gerda’s fingers trembled a little. “Yes, you may view my tattoo. You see, it also is about numbers, for without numbers there is no order. Without numbers there is only confusion. You cannot have a herd of sheep or cattle without numbers, without knowing what you have, and so, certain tattoos always remind you that you are part of a numbered group. . . that you have a place within the universe, whether you wish it or not.”

She rolled up the sleeve of her left arm and there were what appeared to be five numbers in a row. Somewhat blurred due to her wrinkled skin. Gerda stretched the skin down with her right thumb so that the numbers came clear. Sheila stared at them for a moment and then suddenly looked away, because she now knew what those numbers meant.





"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry Gerda. I didn't know. I didn't know."

Gerda slowly rolled down her sleeve. "You need to know, as all the world needs to know. Yes, our married surname was not Hart. We had it changed from Hartstein, and my maiden name was Finkel. My husband's first name was shortened from Heinrich to Henry. We were, and will always be, Jewish."

"Is that why you had a private funeral for him in the city?"

"Yes, at the synagogue. It is a beautiful place in which to rest one's soul in prayer."

"My class went on an excursion there last year. It was rather magical, so peaceful. The ceremonies were explained to us. Greta, why don't you go more often?"

"I can when I can. It is not easy."

"You met your husband in that concentration camp?"

"Yes, but on the railway journey to the camp, after having been separated for some time. God only knows how we survived that death camp at Auschwitz, but we did. Our parents did not, neither did my elder brother, Jacob, or my sister Goldie. But why Heinrich and I should have survived, is known only to God. Perhaps it was our love for each other. You see, Sheila, we were two teenagers desperately in love with each other. We'd only met a few months before the nazis rounded us up and put us on a train to Auschwitz. There, we were separated male and female. But how could love endure all those years? Oh yes, you could keep love in a death camp — there was much love among the cruelty, the beatings, the pain and the starvation. We re-united again when we were freed, but it had been a terrible long search for each other. We succeeded, and oh, the joy! The love we had kept in our hearts survived more than the hate that surrounded us. We were still in love when Heinrich — I suppose I should really call him Henry again — went to Heaven."

Sheila was crying, the heavy sobs wracking her body, and Gerda came around the table and held her, stroking her hair and talking softly. "It's all right, my little one. But it may prompt you to understand and realise what a group tattoo really means, and that sometimes it may be forced upon you by other people's opinions. So, it is up to you to decide whether it is something you wish to live with for the remainder of your life. In a free world such as we now live in, you are the only one who can make that decision. No others."

"Your paintings. We saw one in the city with over five hundred dollars price-tag, why is that, Gerda. . . but I think I have already worked it out."

Gerda nestled her head against Sheila's, wiping the tears away with a clean handkerchief. "Yes, but you must never tell. It will be a secret between us."

"I remember our studies at school. There's an organisation, isn't there, for survivors of the Holocaust who are poor? And that's where all your money goes."

"Shhh! No one outside these walls must know. Promise me?"

Sheila sniffled. "I promise, cross my heart. I'll keep your secret, forever."

Later, when Sheila had told Annabelle about it, her mother was at first horrified, then dumbfounded. The family sat around the kitchen table that Sunday evening simply awed by the tale that Sheila had to tell. But Sheila kept back the part concerning the painting in the art shop window.

Percy looked up from his fish and chips and grinned. "Mrs. Hart has a heart! Mrs Hart has a heart!"

"Mrs Hart has more than a heart, she has belief," said Sheila. "And without belief and love, this world would crumble."

Annabelle looked at her daughter. "I'm proud of you, my darling, for having had the courage to own up to what was happening at school, both the high and the primary. Very proud of you." She turned to Damien, who sighed, put his knife and fork down and said: "I'm full."

Annabelle looked him straight in the face. "Come Monday, we are both going to town to see the primary school principal about Mr. Munroe. I think it's time." •



# Motoring Memoirs

## 1935 Lagonda M45R (C1—11)

**This car , which arrived in Australia sometime during the 1960s, is capable of achieving 160km/h, and still has the original and very effective rod brakes and adjustable suspension. Due to clever engineering the M45 was the fastest British sports car in its time.**

In 1933 the M45 was released with a 4.5 litre Meadows engine, but one of the finest example was this 1935 model. In June of that year, Lagonda put two cars into the Le Mans 24 hour race and drove to victory, but sadly the company was in financial trouble and could not take advantage of the win. A sad ending for a great company that began in 1899. This car features one of the 52 Rapide engines that won in Le Mans. It is owned by Graham Lawrence of New South Wales. •

