**The Coventry Boys**

A few things about the Coventry boys, that my grandmother, their youngest sister – Ellen Emma (Coventry) McDowell, told me many times, and from my own firsthand knowledge.

* Hugh Norman was universally known by his nickname ‘Oak’.
* He was the 5th born child of Henry Coventry and Jane Henrietta (Spencer) Coventry
* He was every bit as good a footballer as his two younger brothers, Syd and Gordon (Nuts) – and I guess that meant he was very good
* The origin of the nickname ‘Nuts’ is unknown and all the media speculation as to its origin is untrue.
* Oak was shot in the back on 5/8/16 after bitter fighting at Pozieres.
* He had volunteered to go back out with a stretcher and pick up wounded, and was on his way back when hit
* His brother, Tom, was either with him, or in the vicinity at the time (my recollection is not precise on this)
* For this action, Norm was ‘*Mentioned in Despatches*’ for ‘*Gallant devotion to duty under heavy fire as a stretcher bearer*’
* Grandma told me a number of times that Uncle Tom, on his deathbed (in 1970) had vivid flashbacks to the day his brother died, and called out his name
* Noel Coventry, son of Harry Coventry (Hugh Norman’s older brother) served in WW2 and was killed in action on  3/5/45 in New Guinea, and is buried in the Labaun War Cemetery, also being ‘*Mentioned in Despatches*’
* Syd Coventry’s eldest son, also named Hugh Norman, served in WW2 and won a Distinguished Flying Cross.
* Jack Coventry, the second son of Syd & Gladys Coventry, also served in the WW2 as an airman, and was shot down over Italy. He managed to get safely back to England.
* Uncle Tom returned and eventually settled in Montmorency.
* I understand Uncle Tom was a public servant for a while plus a part-time orchardist.
* Coventry Street, behind Montmorency State School, was named after Uncle Tom
* Brother Jack (John Thomas) also served in WW1 and suffered gas poisoning.
* Uncle Jack returned to Australia and lived in and around the area until he died on Australia Day 1950.
* The Coventry property in Diamond Creek, known as ‘Gracedale’ overlooked where the windmill is now, was an orchard property
* Uncle Tom & Aunty Ollie moved to Kangaroo Flat, near Bendigo, in their final years.
* Uncle Tom’s son, Wallace Coventry, taught at Watsonia High School for many years, including a stint as principal
* It is a family ‘legend’ that, at one stage, Great Grandma Coventry wrote to the Prime Minister and advised him, that as he had already taken three of her sons for the war, he would not be getting any more!
* My Grandma, Ellen Emma (Nelly) always said that while the boys were away, you lived in fear of seeing the Vicar walking up the road towards your house.
* Unfortunately, the Vicar had to do just that to the Coventry’s one day in 1916.
* In addition to the 8 x Coventry boys, there were 2 x girls, ie. Nellie & Grace