

## Wych Cross & Felix St Hilary Jellicoe

---

*Wych Cross, one of 12 main Marysville guest houses in the 1920s, belonged to the very interesting character Felix St Hilary Jellicoe. It was built in Falls Road in 1919 and burnt down in 1926. It is significant because Eric Dowdle bought the land and built his flagship guesthouse, Marylands, there.*

The Jellicoes named their guest house<sup>1</sup> after Felix's wife, Katherine's family home Wych Cross cottage in Sussex, England. They were in Marysville<sup>2</sup> by August 1919 when Felix registered the theft of English china dinner services from the railway goods yard in Healesville. *Victorian Police Gazette, 18 Aug, 1919.*

*Critic Adelaide, 11 Feb, 1920*

There is a new and charming guest house that has just been opened at Marysville by Mr Felix St H Jellicoe, a cousin of Lord Jellicoe. The house has been built of Australian materials throughout by Australian labor. The house accommodates twenty guests in the main building, and a delightful cottage for eight, which may be rented complete for any specified term. The drawing room is twenty by thirty and the largest of its kind in Marysville. It was designed by Mrs. Jellicoe, who holds highest qualifications in England for art subjects. This room, which holds forty people, is a "bush room" built

entirely out of bush timber, decorated with bush ferns and flowers, and is quite unique.

"Wych Cross" has the great advantage that children are taken between rush terms, and a nurse is kept, who will look after them if the parents wish to go out alone. Some of the bedrooms are built on the new and popular "Indian bungalow" style, and a great thing in the country - the whole place is fly-wired. Gas, hot and cold baths, septic tanks, home-grown fruit and vegetables, garage and swimming adjoining are amongst the many advantages of "Wych-Cross." During the terminal holidays children will be specially catered for.



*Wych Cross c 1926*

*From the Photograph Albums of Henry Beater Christian (1886-1962) held in the collection of Kew Historical Society*

## Leased Cottage Burns to the Ground - 1924

*Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 26 Jan 1924*

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE. The eight-roomed cottage owned by Mr. J. C. Hansen, of Marysville was totally destroyed by fire last Thursday week. The premises were leased to Mr. Jellicoe, who conducts the well-known guest house "Wych Cross" at Marysville. The house is situated about 400 yards from "Wych Cross," and it was necessary for the guests who were occupying the leased premises to have their meals at "Wych Cross". Mr. T. C. Brennan, the well-known barrister, and his brother William, sub-editor of the "Argus", and party, occupied the leased premises. It appears that several of the lady members of the party had been using the bath heater to some extent about 6 p.m. The party dressed for dinner and left the premises to go to "Wych Cross" at about 6.30. As they were leaving Mr. T. C. Brennan told Mr. Hansen that the bath heater had been in use. Mr. Hansen examined the bath room, and as everything appeared safe he went to dinner also.

About 7 p.m. a troop of boy scouts who were camped 200 yards away noticed the house on fire. The boys immediately raised the alarm, and some of them ran down the street, while others went to the fire. Scouts Norman Barton, aged 13 years, Max Fitzpatrick, 10 years, and Roy Docking, 13 years, showed plenty of pluck and initiative by forcing an entrance into the burning house, with the object of saving property. The boys entered a

room, where they carried out a number of valuable books, the property of the Marysville Water Works Trust; they also removed a tin trunk and a favourite violin of Mr. Hansen. The scouts made another attempt to enter the building, but were forced back by the smoke and fire. The owner of the house was there soon after the scouts, and attempted to force his way in through a window. He had to break the window with his fist, and in doing so received a nasty jagged cut on this hand. So badly was he injured that he was taken to Alexandra, where he was attended to by Dr. Gandevi, who stitched the wound. Many other helpers arrived, but the fire had a strong hold, and nothing more could be done except to let the fire play its cruel havoc.

The premises and contents were insured for £900, which amount will not nearly cover this loss. The Brennan party lost all their clothing, and a quality of valuable Jewellery, worth in all £150. Much sympathy is due to Mr. Hansen in his severe loss. He is a hardworking man, and has been hit hard by losing the pretty home that took him years to build. Some practical sympathy was immediately shown to Mr. Hansen by the visitors at "Kooringa", who donated £19. Mr. Hansen wishes to thank all those who came to his assistance, especially the boy scouts.

Mr **Joseph Charles Hansen**, (1888, Camberwell-1958, Carrum Downs) worked in the timber industry being in Rubicon in 1909 and in Taggerty in 1913, a storeman. After marrying Mary Mildred Bassett (1893, Mulgrave-1975, Carrum Downs) in 1914 they lived in Marysville where a son named Joseph Charles Hansen was born in 1914, registered in Alexandra.

With WWI well underway and the call for more men, Joseph enlisted in the AIF early in 1918 and spent time in France. He built his house with assistance of the Repatriation Department so its loss was great for him. In Marysville Joseph was involved with the Marysville Water Works and Marysville Tourist & Progress Association.

After the fire they left Marysville to live in the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Joseph died in 1958 in Carrum Downs and Mary in 1975.



*Wych Cross c 1926*

*From the Photograph Albums of Henry Beater Christian (1886-1962) held in the collection of Kew Historical Society*

At the beginning of September 1926 Felix Jellicoe is reported to be making arrangements to spend £30,000 on a thoroughly modern private hotel at Wych Cross. He had formed a company known as the Wych Cross Private Hotel, Ltd.— Capital: £30,000. Subscribers: F. S. Jellicoe, H. B. Manderson, K. E. Jellicoe, M. Ashkanasy, T. C. Brennan. (Marysville, 26/8/26). Interesting to see the name of T C Brennan, the well-known lawyer and politician and one of the visitors involved in the leased cottage fire.

*The Argus, 16 November 1926*

*also in Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 20 November 1926*

#### **GUEST HOUSE BURNT. SERIOUS MARYSVILLE FIRE.**

Wych Cross Destroyed in 20 Minutes.

MARYSVILLE, Monday - Wych Cross, a well-known guest house at Marysville, belonging to the Wych Cross Private Hotel Co Ltd, of which Mr Felix Jellicoe was managing director, was burnt yesterday afternoon. At 3 o'clock yesterday morning a fire was noticed in the kitchen by one of the employees, and this was got under control with some difficulty by means of water and a chemical extinguisher. It is thought that some sparks from this outbreak which had smouldered unnoticed, caused the second fire, which occurred at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. At that hour, just as the motor cars were leaving for Melbourne, Mrs Jellicoe, who had gone to the front of the house, turned round and saw the roof in flames. Although a number of people were about at the time, and desperate attempts were made to check the flames the hotel, which was built of weatherboard was completely destroyed in 20 minutes. All the guests were away at the time and some lost their effects. Among these were Mr. O. Bainbridge who was on a visit to Victoria and who had arrived at Wych Cross the previous day, not only lost all his belongings but also a considerable sum of money. Mr Jellicoe was in Melbourne when the fire occurred. The guests are being accommodated at other houses at Marysville and Mrs Jellicoe and her family are at Mount Kitchener House. The buildings were insured in the Royal Exchange Insurance Company for a little more than £3,000 but the loss is estimated at more than £4,000. This will fall particularly heavy on the company in view of the holiday season that is just beginning.

Eric Dowdle bought the burnt-out block about 1927 and by 1928 Eric is listed in the Electoral rolls living at Marylands, with his first advertisement for Marylands - "something different in guest houses" placed in Table Talk on 10 May 1928.

## Felix St Hilary Jellicoe & family

---

**Felix St Hilary Jellicoe** (1889, England-1967, England) was born to Laura nee Peacock and George Roger Jellicoe in Staines, Middlesex, England. He arrived in Melbourne in February 1913, an insurance clerk with Katherine Barrs (1889, London-1951, Oxford), an art mistress. During their first year in Victoria they married. Katherine's mother, a widow, arrived at the end of 1913 and stayed a year.

They had four children -

1. Peter Roger Jellicoe (1916, Rochester-1955, New Zealand), trained with the Australian Navy and served in the Royal Navy including during WWII, married in England and immigrated to New Zealand where he lived out his life.
2. Michael Evelyn (registered Michael Richard Marston) Jellicoe (1918, Rochester-after 1980, pos in WA), he went with his parents to England as a young boy, married there in 1947 and appears in southwest WA in the late 1970s with a son.
3. Dorothy Alison Jellicoe (1919-1969) was born in Hawthorn and brought home to Marysville. She went with her parents to England as a young girl, and lived out her life there.
4. Max St David Jellicoe (1923-1946). was born in Healesville and brought home to Marysville. Like his siblings he went to England with his parents and lived out his life there.

Firstly Felix tried his hand unsuccessfully at farming with orchards at Nanneella, near Rochester. The next venture in 1919 was Wych Cross Guest house at Marysville. While in Marysville he was secretary<sup>3</sup> on the committee of the Marysville Tourist & Progress Association. He also obtained a Real Estate Licence in 1924.

After this Felix is about town as an actor. He is quite a character playing on his connection as 3rd cousin to Earl Jellicoe, Admiral of the Fleet. The following articles give an idea of Felix grandiosing.

*News, Adelaide, 27 July 1928*

### Played Many Parts

Those who saw "Outward Bound" the Sutton Vane play, at the Theatre Royal this week were charmed with the acting of Felix Jellicoe as Rev. William Duke. He is a nephew of Earl Jellicoe, and since coming to Australia he and his charming wife, who is a brilliantly clever "Girscon girl" have had many vicissitudes. They had a fruit farm in Victoria which was not a paying proposition, so something else had to be tried as a means of livelihood.

Mr. and Mrs. Jellicoe opened a guest home at Marysville, and a well-known Adelaide woman who stayed there said they were a charming host and hostess. "It was wonderful," she said, "to see this scholarly, good-looking gentlewoman peeling potatoes by the dozen for the sustenance of the guests, and everyone who stayed at the home came away full of admiration for her and her

husband". Mr. Jellicoe, who rumour says, is an ordained clergyman, used to read the lessons in church at Marysville on Sundays, and he performed the same office during the season of "Outward Bound" in Sydney.

*Smith's Weekly (Sydney), 11 May 1935*

### JELICOE'S RELATIVE

Among the officers to whom London held out the "glad hand" when H.M.A.S. "Australia" delivered Prince Henry safe and sound, was young Peter Jellicoe, a very bored young graduate of Jervis Bay. He is the . oldest- son of Felix Jellicoe, at whose guest house at Marysville, the Admiral, stayed during his visit to Victoria some years ago. Peter is in line for the title, although his father is something like fifty-seventh cousin of the Earl.

In 1930 Felix takes his young family back to England to return to Australia in the 1950s for a visit returning to England via New Zealand. He died in 1967 in England.

---

Felix Jellicoe made much of his relationship to the famous Admiral, Sir John Rushworth, 1st Earl Jellicoe variously referring to himself as cousin or nephew. In fact the two share a great great grandfather Adam Jellicoe (1725-1789). That is four generations back and making them 3rd cousins.

In 1919 Earl Jellicoe took on an extensive tour of the colonies to give advice on naval policy, arriving in Australia in August. At this time the Federal Government was based in Melbourne, meeting in the Victorian Parliament House. Felix was living in Marysville from 1919 so the Earl could well have visited him staying at the new Wych Cross. Marysville was a major attraction at this time.

---

<sup>1</sup> Notes from MDHS records pre-2009 fires credit Mr Ghans as the builder. No further information could be found about Mr Ghans

<sup>2</sup> MDHS had photos of Mrs Jellicoe at Wych Cross, lost in 2009 fires?

<sup>3</sup> The Argus, 9 Sep 1926