

Lawlor Family of Buxton

William and Sarah Lawlor moved from St Hubert's, Coldstream to The Oakes (sic) opposite St Thomas Church, Buxton in 1904 when William was in his early 70s. The family farmed there for about 20 years. William could not read or write and his name is variously spelt Lawlor, Lawler and Lalor. Three of their sons served in WWI, two being killed in action.



In 2024 the derelict house still stands opposite St Thomas Church with two very big old oak trees on the road boundary.

Photos Judith Vimpani

More info on the house in the Appendix.

Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 7 Mar 1925

AN OLD PIONEER PASSES.

MR. WILLIAM LAWLOR.

By the death of Mr. William Lawlor, of Coldstream¹, at the age of 93 years, the district has lost a good resident and one of the small, fast disappearing pioneers of this country who have been the mainstay of it in the past, and who are mainly responsible for its development. Born in County Kildare, Ireland, deceased went to America about the year 1860 and when there only a short time he joined the United States army, and saw service in the American civil war in 1861. He was with this army for about 2½ years, when he left America. Landing in Australia in 1863, he first took up residence at Whittlesea, and later at Gisborne; then to remove to Lilydale; from there he and Mrs. Lawlor went to Buxton in 1904, where they have been resident for most of the intervening period. He was first engaged in the cartage of timber, etc., with Messrs. Lalor and Wadis, and was one of the hearty band of men who conducted business between Melbourne and Woods Point in the early days. Later he was engaged with the late Mr. Hubert de Castella



William, dog Spot & Sarah Lawlor

when the St. Hubert's vineyard was first put under cultivation². Deceased was well known and respected in this district, and his remains, which were interred in the Lilydale cemetery on Saturday last, were followed by a large number of mourners. His wife predeceased him on January 1, 1923. Deceased had six sons and three daughters (two married and living in the Buxton district). Three of his sons served in the great war, two of whom were killed in action. L. J. Lawlor was with the 6th Battalion, being killed at the landing at Gallipoli, and R.B. Lawlor, with the 22nd Battalion, killed in Belgium; his third son, Kavan, who served with the 8th Light Horse, returned in 1918.

William Patrick Lawlor (1832, Co Kildare, Ireland-1925, Lilydale) son of Thomas Lawlor, farmer and Marie nee Floyd arrived in Australia in 1863 via America. In 1867 he applied for land next to Charles Widdis property at Middle Gully Station, Gisborne. William is found competing in the 1869 annual ploughing competitions at Gisborne³.

In 1877 he married⁴ **Sarah O'Neale** (c1857, Belfast⁵, Vic -Jan 1923, Lilydale) at St Francis Church, Melbourne. At the time of their marriage William was working at St Hubert's vineyard and Sarah was a servant in Nunawading. Their children were born from 1878 to 1896 while the family was at St Hubert's and registered in Lilydale.

Three sons Kavan, Leonard and Robert served in WWI, Leonard and Robert being killed in action. Son, Marshall tried twice to enlist but was rejected for medical reasons.



Mrs Sarah Lawlor nee O'Neale
Note: all photos from Graham Eddy's scans.

William and Sarah's children:

1. **Mary Ann Josephine Lawlor** (1878⁶, Lilydale-1965, Alexandra). In 1907 she married **John James Gorman** (1875, Alexandra - 1943, Taggerty) son of John Hall Gorman. John James Gorman was a farmer in Acheron/Taggerty. See the Gorman family document for their lives together.
2. **Thomas Lawlor** (1879, Lilydale - 1889, Lilydale)
3. **William Patrick Lawlor** (1881, Lilydale - 1943, Lilydale) married **Eliza Jane McNabb** in 1907. They lived at Lodge Park, Coldstream where they farmed dairy cattle and sheep. They had one son, William Harold, who died in 1914, aged 5, and four daughters, two of whom, Wilma and Joan, were killed in a car accident in Lilydale in 1937.



4. **Kavan Charles Lawlor** (1884, Lilydale - 1951, Heidelberg Repat Hosp, bur Preston Cemetery). He enlisted in WWI on 19 Nov 1914, giving his occupation as Farrier's Foreman. (No 899).

Kavan married Mary Lily Auhl (1890, Yan Yean - 1937, Garfield) in North Fitzroy in 1915. Mary's paternal grandfather was one of the German settlers in the Barossa Valley.



Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 24 April 1915

A final send off was recently given to Mr K. C. Lawlor at Buxton, at which Mr G. Nichols presided. On January 8th when he first enlisted his admirers and friends marked their appreciation by presenting him with a wristlet watch. On March 17 he married, and brought his bride for their honeymoon to Buxton. While in the district a pleasant evening was arranged when he introduced his bride to his many friends. The hall had been nicely decorated with flags, foliage and flowers by Miss Jury and others. Since Mr

Lawlor has joined the colors he has made good progress. and though he started as a private he now proudly carries the three stripes of a sergeant. During the evening speeches were made by Messrs R. Scott, G. Nichols, J. Keppel and Jury, all of a complimentary nature and expressive of good wishes for the future of himself and wife. Mr Lawlor responded in felicitous terms. During their stay in the district Mrs Lawlor won the hearts and affections of all her husband's friends.



Kavan Lawlor at Buxton.

He served with the 8th Light Horse, leaving Australia in April 1915 for service abroad. His service records for the next six months are missing. We next hear of him being "taken on strength" with the 8th Light Horse at Gallipoli in September 1915, a month after the disastrous Battle of the Nek. After the evacuation from Gallipoli Kavan spent the rest of the war in the Middle East where he received the DCM (see later). He was appointed Squadron Sergeant Major and held this rank on and off as the position fell vacant when its holders were commandeered to other duties.

Kavan Lawlor's letter from the Gallipoli front lines dated 10 Oct 1915 and published in the Ringwood & Croydon Chronical on 10 Dec 1915. Also Healesville papers.

OUR SOLDIERS

GREETINGS FROM THE FRONT

(To the Editor.) Dear Sir,

A few lines to you to let you know I am still alive and well and I trust this note finds you and the people of Lilydale and district in which your paper is circulated in rattling good health. I have been here five weeks now, and am still in good going order. The weather is getting very cold here and some of the boys who have been here for five months are becoming a bit "groggy-looking" on it, though I hear that they are to have a spell off the peninsula, and it will do them the world of good. The 8th Light Horse, to which I belong, have had a very severe gruelling, and a lot of the best lads fell under very heavy machine-gun fire. Those who are left are in a rest camp but not more than half-a-mile from the trenches, and may be wanted at any time in the firing line. We get on very well for provisions, clothing, etc. and have with us some very fine officers, each and every one of whom take keen interest in their men, and so things bowl along from day to day very smoothly. We receive a little news of what is doing in France, Belgium and Russia, and so far we have been very pleased with the state of affairs and wish them continued success. I had a letter from my brother (Mr Will Lawlor) the other day and he told me the boys from Lilydale were enlisting freely. I can say this: they are all wanted if they can possibly get away. Now is the time to come, as the winter will be over and fine weather coming on just as they are about to arrive here.

I met some of the Lilydale boys - Harry Black, Mick Upton, and Ernie Comerford and Arthur Rouget - all of whom were quite well and looking for fight off the Turks. I have not seen them since I left for Egypt but trust they are safe and sound. Most of our work here is

preparing for a heavy winter. On one occasion I had a party of men cutting out a terrace for the purpose of storing rations and when I introduced the pick and shovel to one he said, "Blime, Sergeant, you're making it hot, ain't yer. I slung pick and shovel work in Victoria and had nine bob a day for it and now I've got to do it for six bob, and get shot at as well."

Now, Mr Editor, one of the reasons why I have written you is because I wish you to make known to the people of Lilydale and surrounding districts through your journal an item which has caused a great deal of controversy and discussion and that is the transit of mails and parcels sent to the troops of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force by parcels post. I am sure every precaution is taken to see that the Australian and New Zealand troops receive theirs, only an occasional letter going astray. Taking all into consideration we do well for letters and papers. Of course, owing to the high pressure at which embarkation and the consignment of parcels have been carried out, both at home and on the lines of communication nothing could result but loss to a certain extent. Then again, it is handled by the dockers, merchants, seamen. Egyptian and Greek labourers, military fatigue parties (frequently in the dark and occasionally under fire.) The difficulties of effective supervision are obviously great, so that when all has been said and done, the Australian troops are not doing badly as far as mails are concerned.

To any of the boys who are remaining I send my best wishes, and those who are coming over I wish good luck and a safe journey and return.

I will conclude by wishing all of the Lilydale and Coldstream folk a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

SGT.-MAJOR KAV. LAWLOR. Gallipoli Peninsula. 14-10-15.

(I must tell you also that I have been promoted to Squadron Sergeant-Major)

His most noted service is recorded in the citation for his DCM awarded on 4 Jun 1918 "on the occasion of his Majesty's birthday in connection with Military Operations with British Forces in Egypt". The citation read "for conspicuous gallantry & devotion to duty during a very severe enemy attack he worked impressively in the performance of his duties, showing the greatest energy & resource & a complete disregard to all danger and it was in a very great measure due to his personal exertions that the firing line was so well supplied with ammunition and bombs" - extract London Gazette.

From the recommendation document "This was during the severe enemy attack on EL BURJ on night 30th November/1st December 1917."

Six months after this valiant effort S.S.Major Kavan Lawlor was wounded in the ankle.

Ringwood & Croydon Chronicle, 31 May 1918

Wounded in Palestine,-Mr. W. Lawlor, of Coldstream. received word last week that his brother. Regimental-Sergt. Major K. C. Lawlor, was admitted to an Egyptian hospital on May 10th suffering from a gunshot wound in the right ankle. Sergt. Major Lawlor enlisted at Buxton, and was wounded during

fighting which took place in Palestine, he having up to that time served over three years. Two other brothers of Mr. Lawlor have been killed in action: L. J., at the landing at Gallipoli; and R. B., who was killed in Flanders on October 17 last year.

After he returned home Taggerty celebrated its WWI soldiers on 23 August 1919.

Kavan is 4th gentleman from the left with the moustache.

Kavan's name appears on the War Memorial at Coldstream and the Honor Roll at Buxton School along with brothers Len KIA and Robert KIA.



L-R Kavan Lawlor, Spencer West, Peter Kerr, Harry Patrick (tall man), Bill Kerr and Alf Burchall.

On discharge from WWI in 1919 and Kavan and Mary returned briefly to the Oaks. They were found working in Diamond Creek in 1924 before Kavan takes up a Soldier's Settlement farm on part of 'Caldermeade'⁷ in Lang Lang, South Gippsland. They remained on this farm til about 1936 when Kavan had to give up farming for health reasons⁸. He took up forestry work and was posted to Garfield.

In 1937 Mary died in Garfield and Kavan died in 1951 in South Melbourne. He is buried with his wife in Preston General Cemetery.

Kavan and Mary's children are thought to be:

- 4.1. Kavan Lawlor.
- 4.2. Mary Margaret Lawlor.
- 4.3. William Lawlor (1929-2005) married Margaret Forsythe (1930-1996).

5. **Ada Lawlor** (c1886-1965, Healesville) In 1912 she married **Hedley John aka Jack West** (c1887, Taggerty - 1939 fires, Rubicon). The West family was well-known in the district.

Alexandra & Yea Standard, 19 July 1912

WEST-LAWLOR - On the 18th May, at the Parsonage, Bridge Road, Richmond, by the Rev. J. David Hennessey, Hedley John, fourth son of the late John West, of Taggerty, to Ada, only surviving daughter⁹ of William Lawlor, of Buxton, near Healesville.

Jack worked as a labourer around the district. Declaring in the 1936 electoral roll that he was a forest ranger living in Healesville. It was this role as forester that resulted in him losing his life in the 1939 fires at Rubicon.



Jack West and Ada nee Lawlor

Riverine Herald (Echuca), 12 Jan 1939

They are still searching for 10 men who are known to have been in the heart of the fire area before the flames swept up the heavily-timbered Rubicon Valley.

Bodies recovered today were those of Baden Johnston, Alfred Nearson, Hedley John West, a Forest Commission employee, of Healesville, and one other man not yet identified. West was in charge of a gang of firefighters working near Niagaroon. He went to investigate the fire at a place known as the Tin Hut, near Clarks and Pearce's No 3 mill, and was known to have left this vicinity, to return to safety.

West had been 13 years in the service of the Forest Commission, and had recently been

What actually happened will never be truly known as there were no survivors of the final incident.

employed in the Niagaroon division, near Healesville.

Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 19 April 1941, unveiling of a bronze memorial plaque at the Forestry Commission Offices, supported by Victoria State Foresters' Association. The following comments were made.

Hedley John West.-On January 13. 1939, Mr. West, with a party of five men, left Rubicon to help fight the fire a few miles away, Around mid-day, after sheltering in a dug-out, the men were forced out by heat, and Mr. West perished In the flames. He left a widow, a daughter and two sons. The two last named are overseas with the Second A.I.F.

After Jack's tragic death, Ada lived on in the house in St Leonard's St, Healesville with her children. She died in 1965 in Healesville and is buried with Jack in Healesville Cemetery.

Ada and Jack West had 4 Children, interesting to note that Ada named her sons after her brothers:

- 5.1. Kavan John West (1912-1913, Taggerty) died aged just 12 months at his Aunt Mary Gorman's house in Taggerty.
- 5.2. Leonard Gordon West (1914 - 1992) enrolled with his brother in November 1939 for WWII, serving in Africa and Greece and in June 1941 was taken prisoner of war for the remained of the war.
He married Edna Rose Lomax (1910 - 1965) n 1953. By the mid-1960s they were living in Albert Park and Leonard was a labourer.
- 5.3. Robert Harold West (1916, Lilydale - 1986, Traralgon) enrolled with his brother in November 1939 he served in WWII giving his birthdate as 1911. He served too in Africa and Greece and in 1941 was captured in Crete and taken prisoner of war for the remained of the war.
Robert married Jean Sarah Duscher in 1949. He was working at the sawmill in Cann river in 1951 when he reported that his war medals along with other personnel possessions were stolen.
- 5.4. Ursula Nevell West (1918, Lilydale - 1970, "Killala" Warranwood, Vic))

The Age, 28 Mar 1930

PEDESTRIANS STRUCK BY CAR.

Alleged Callous Motorist.

As Mary Lalor, 19 years, of Moore street, Fitzroy, Ursula West, 20 years same address, and Elsie Fraser, 20 years, of Fitzroy-street, Fitzroy, were walking across Nicholson-street, Fitzroy, near the Exhibition Building, last night, they were knocked down by a blue sedan car, the

driver of which did not stop after the accident. A motorist pursued him and took the number of the car. Although the car passed over Miss West's body she escaped with cuts to the knees and slight shock. The other two young women escaped with a severe shaking. Miss West was treated at St. Vincent's Hospital.

Ursula never married and was still living at home in 1943, perhaps she continued to support her mother who lived til 1965. Ursula died in 1970 from heart and respiration problems. She was at 'Killala' on the hill at Warranwood, Ringwood the ex-home of the three Darbyshire sisters. Very little could be found about her.

6. **Elsie Catherine Lawlor** (c1889-Dec 1910, Heidelberg, buried Lilydale cemetery) was a dressmaker and contracted tuberculosis and died within the year at the Austin hospital. A death notice appeared in the *Alexandra Standard* 6 Jan 1911, recording her age as 21. She was buried in Lilydale Cemetery where so many of the other members of her family would later join her.

7. **Marshall Lawlor** (1891, Lilydale -1951, Kew), like his younger brother went to the Buxton School. He tried to enrol for WWI service in October 1916 but was rejected because of the state of his teeth. Again he enrolled in September 1917 (V69790) but was rejected because of the curvature of his spine. He admitted he was never a good walker and the inspecting surgeon found he could not stoop or bend properly.

This must have been very disappointing for him with three of his brothers already serving, one of whom had died at Gallipoli in 1915 and his mates joining up. He tried one final time in August 1918 (79077) and was accepted into the 3rd District Home Guard. This was not to work out because while in training camp he disobeyed orders and stated a falsehood. He was confined to camp for 7 days and then discharged in December 1918.

He married Margery Vera Coates in 1917 and they settled in the south east of Melbourne, Marshall being a labourer/driver. They had two daughters:

- 7.1. Vida Elsie (1919, Brighton - 1958, McLeod) Vida lived with her parents until her parent's deaths when she resided at Mont Park Hospital for the Insane.
- 7.2. Beryl Winifred (1921, Brighton - 2003, Orbost) married George Neil Ross in 1944 and they lived out their lives with the extended Ross family in Orbost. George was a timber worker rising to manager in 1980. They had a daughter and two sons.

8. **Leonard Joseph Lawlor** (c1894, Lilydale - 25 Apr 1915, Gallipoli) attended Buxton State School. He enlisted on 21 Sep 1914 (No 1155/2144.) He was part of the Gallipoli landing force on 25th April 1915 where he went missing. Leonard was pronounced dead at a court of enquiry a year after the Anzac landing at Gallipoli. On exhumation in the battlefield identification discs were found and forwarded to the family in 1922. The one thing his mother wanted to remember he son by.



Leonard and Kavan Lawlor

MG
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.
Receipt for Consignment from Defence Department.

I hereby acknowledge having received from the Officer in Charge of Base Records the undermentioned (1) identity disc being the effects of the late No. 2144 Pte. L.J. Lawlor, 6th Bn. consigned to me.

No.	Description,	Signature
1	identity disc	<i>M. Lawlor</i>
		Date <i>January 10th 1923</i>

NOTE.—This receipt should be Posted to—
The Officer in Charge,
Base Records,
Victoria Barracks,
Melbourne, Victoria.

D.1072/8.17.—C.10113.—50w.
 National Archives of Australia NAA: B2455, LAWLOR LEONARD JOSEPH

He is buried at Lone Pine Cemetery, Gallipoli, Turkey and his name appears on the War Memorial at Coldstream and the Honor Roll at Buxton School along with brothers Robert KIA and Kavan.

9. **Robert Byron Lawlor** (1896, Lilydale - KIA 1917, Belgium) went to Buxton State School.

War records show he was living at The Oaks in Buxton when he enrolled on 10 Feb 1916 (No 5044). He served on the Western Front and was killed on 4 October 1917. There are several versions of how he died - killed in a hop over near Passchendale, by shell fire near the Menin Road or shot by a sniper at Zonnebeke. He is buried at Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium.

Robert's name appears on the War Memorial at Coldstream and the Honor Roll at Buxton School along with brothers Len KIA and Kavan.



Robert Byron Lawlor

The Oaks at Buxton

In 2024 the derelict house referred to by locals as 'old Arthur's house' still stands opposite St Thomas Church with two very big old oak trees and their progeny, on the main road boundary hiding it. The property is at 2290 Maroondah Highway, Buxton.

The land was originally part of James Batchelor's large Taggerty Station. When Crown land sales came to the area about 1876. James chose to forego the large run and to put his efforts into about 1,000 acres around the homestead and river frontage at Taggerty. Today the remains of this farm has the official address - 2741 Maroondah Highway, Taggerty.



Photos: Judith Vimpani, Feb 2024

Who bought the land the Lawlors later occupied from James Batchelor is not known. There was an earlier hut on the block.

It is in 1904 that we know the owners are William and Sarah Lawlor who moved from St Hubert's, Coldstream. William Lawlor was in his early 70s when they came with 9 children ranging in age from 8 to 16, so would need a house with several rooms. Did they build this house or was it the existing house? The Lawlors lived in The Oaks til the early 1920s, Sarah dying in 1923 and William in 1926.

The next family were Ellen nee Johns and Jim Milne who married in 1926. They had 4 children and lived in the house until 1941.

Local identity Tom Robb purchased the property and it became part of *Robinvale*, managed by his son, Harry Robb.

The next owner was Keith Storey in the 1950s who is thought to have used it as a hay shed.

In the late 1960s Alan and Anne Rubenstein bought the property from Keith Storey.

Keith Storey was a keeper of Buxton's folk history, but never passed on details about the hut. He referred mysteriously to the fact that "it should have burnt down". The house was referred to as "Old Arthur's house", but who Arthur was is not known.¹⁰

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ William came to Coldstream in the mid-1870s and retired to Buxton in 1904.
 - ² Aus Dictionary of Biography Hubert de Castella entry -250 acre vineyard planted from 1862 over about 20 years.
 - ³ Trove newspaper searches.
 - ⁴ Marriage Registration in hand.
 - ⁵ Belfast now Port Fairy. From Marriage registration.
 - ⁶ Registered as Marian.
 - ⁷ Lot 44, 41 acres.
 - ⁸ The Age, June 1936.
 - ⁹ In fact her eldest sister had married John James Gorman in 1907 and died in 1965.
 - ¹⁰ Information from '*Buxton - its past, present, people and places*', edited by Julia Foletta, 2023.