

The Garnar Family

Edward Garnar, the son of Edward Garnar and Hannah Codlaw, was born in Norfolk, England in 1815. Frances Christian Tilney, his wife, the daughter of John Tilney and Priscilla _____, was also born in Norfolk in 1813. Edward Garnar, their first son, was born there also in 1842.

The Garnar family arrived in Sydney in 1849 aboard the ship James Gibb. It left London on 21st January 1849 and arrived in Sydney on 9th June, a journey of 141 days. The family travelled overland from Sydney to Dandenong. James William Garnar was born in Carcoar, south of Bathurst, NSW in 1850, during the journey.

Edward senior, upon his arrival in Dandenong, established a blacksmith and wheelwrights business. He also purchased 354 acres of land at what is today Hampton Park, bounded by Cranbourne, Hallam and Pound Roads. This land became known locally as Garnar's paddock. According to an article in *The Gippsland Gate* by Roy Scott, Garnar's Paddock was sold and sub-divided in 1917 or 1918. We don't think the Garnar's still owned it then.

Edward won first prize and a silver medal for showing draught horses at the Port Phillip Farmers Society show in 1858. He and his sons made all the ironwork for St James Church of England, Dandenong's oldest church. Edward died in 1868 aged 53 and Frances died in 1889 aged 76. They are buried in Dandenong cemetery.

James Garnar was educated at Dan Ahearn's school at Eumemmerring and at Malcolm McPherson's private school in Dandenong. James and his brother Edward helped their father with the business; it was situated in Lonsdale Street. The brothers necessarily developed skills in working with timber, repairing wooden wheels in the smithy's shop. Because of these skills, they were often called on to build coffins. It was a small step from this to carrying out the whole funeral. James purchased an undertaking business from John Hemmings (himself a smithy) when his father retired and ran it until his untimely death in 1913. Edward continued in the blacksmith business until 1884 when he sold it to Thomas Green.

James married Margaret Cariss in 1886 in St Georges Church Royal Park. They had seven children, one boy, William and six girls, Margaret, Alice, Ellen (Nellie), Florence (Dot), Elsie and Hilda. James and Margaret lived at the family property of 21 acres at Diamond Hill on the Cranbourne Road. James ran his undertaking business from Diamond Hill where he kept his horses and hearses. It seems likely that some farming activity was also carried out at Diamond Hill (at least feed for the horses was grown there). The office was in Lonsdale Street as a part of Green's blacksmith shop.

After her husband's death Margaret ran the business through the war years but struck financial problems. The firm of Monkhouse bought the business but they couldn't meet the payments and it reverted to the Garnars.

We are not sure when the Diamond Hill property was sold. But it is possible Margaret lived in a house in Robinson Street, at the top of Walker Street, before she

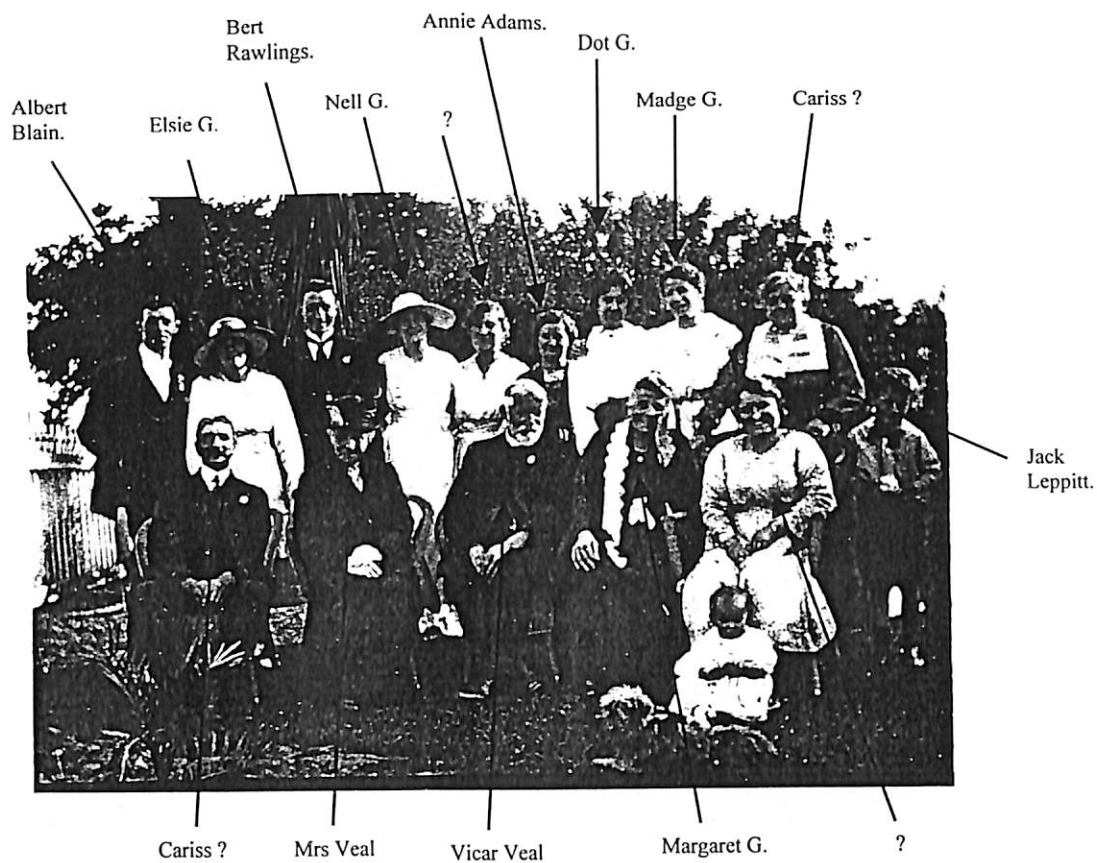
moved to Murrumbeena and therefor would have sold Diamond Hill prior to this move.

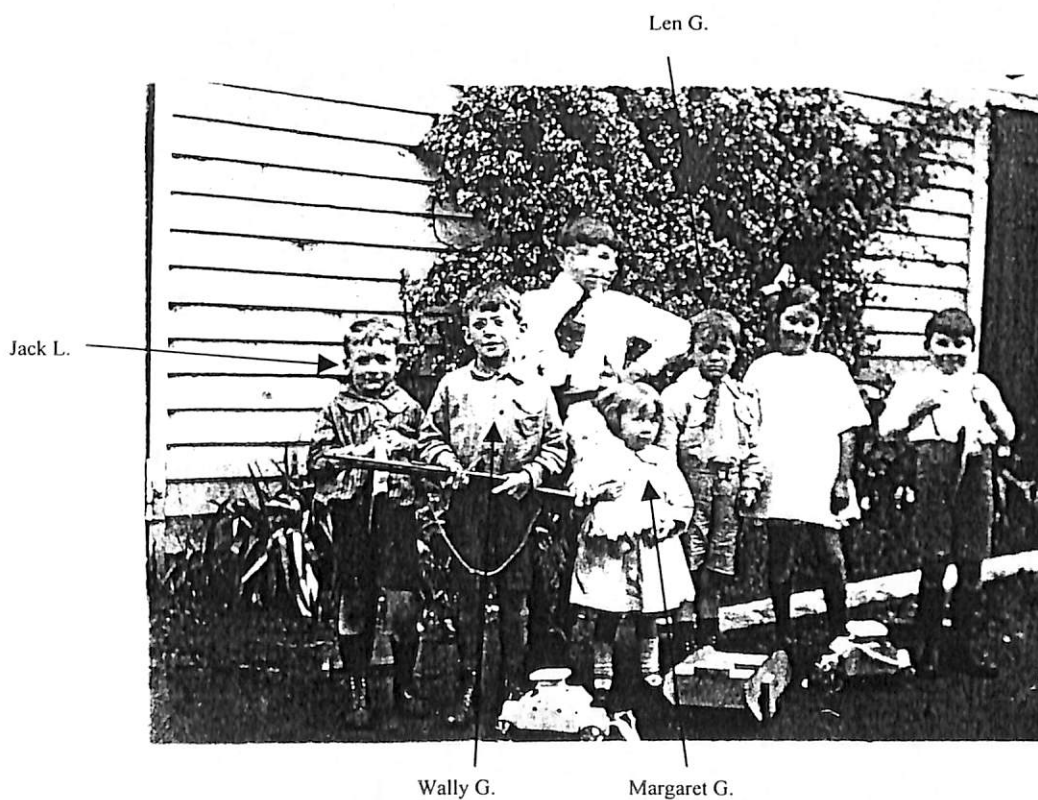
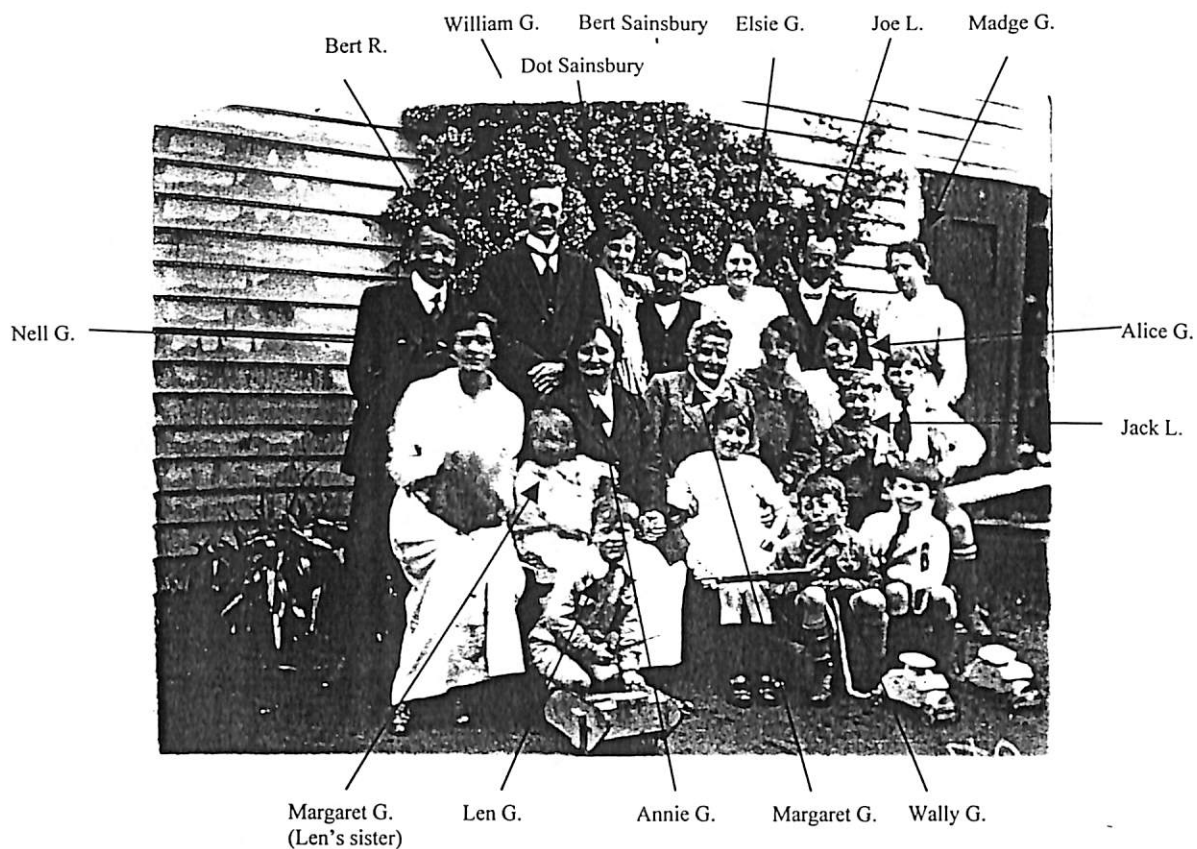
Margaret Garnar (Cariss) was the daughter of James Cariss, who came to Melbourne from Yorkshire in 1849 and Margaret Brien (also spelled Bryan) who came from Northern Ireland to Melbourne as a 12 year old in 1842. James lived most of his life in Nth Melb bought land at Eumemmerring in 1859 and lived there for some time. Margaret Garnar, the sixth of eleven children, was born at Dandenong and her two older brothers; Henry and James went to Dandenong East School. Margaret moved to Murrumbeena in 1927 and died there in 1946 aged 84.

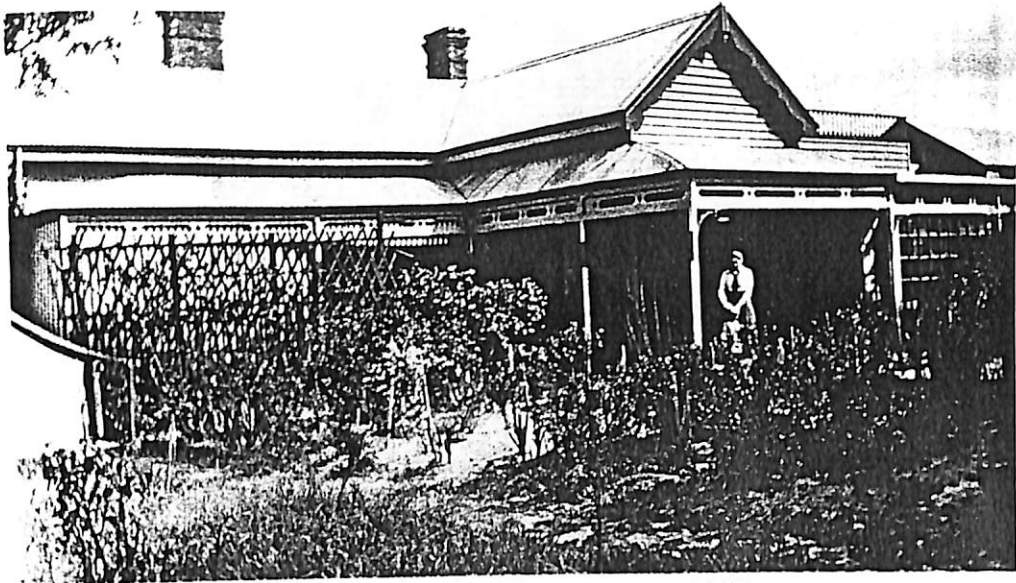
William married Annie Adams in 1909 and had three children Len, Margaret and Raymond. Annie died in 1948 aged 70 and William remarried. He died in 1968. William had been working in the undertaking industry in Melbourne; he worked for Allison's in Collingwood and then Thomas Rentle of South Melbourne. He bought out the South Melbourne firm. However, he moved back to Dandenong and took over the family business from his mother in 1927. He operated the business from 10 Walker Street where he developed full funeral facilities. William ran the business with his son Len until its sale to Le Pine in 1950.

Margaret, the second child of James and Margaret and our grandmother, was born in 1889. She grew up in Dandenong and, with her sisters, helped her parents run the family business.

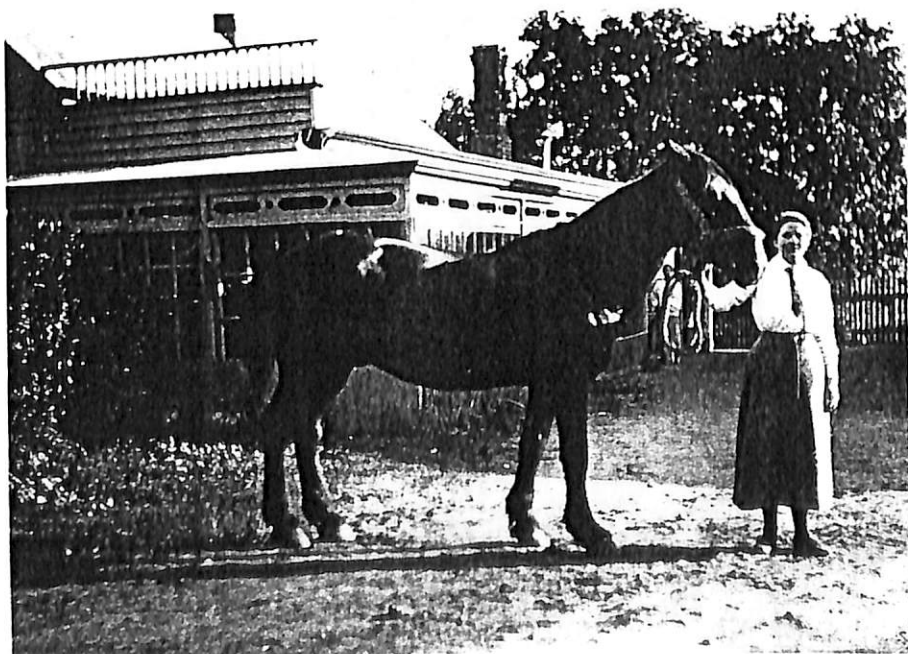
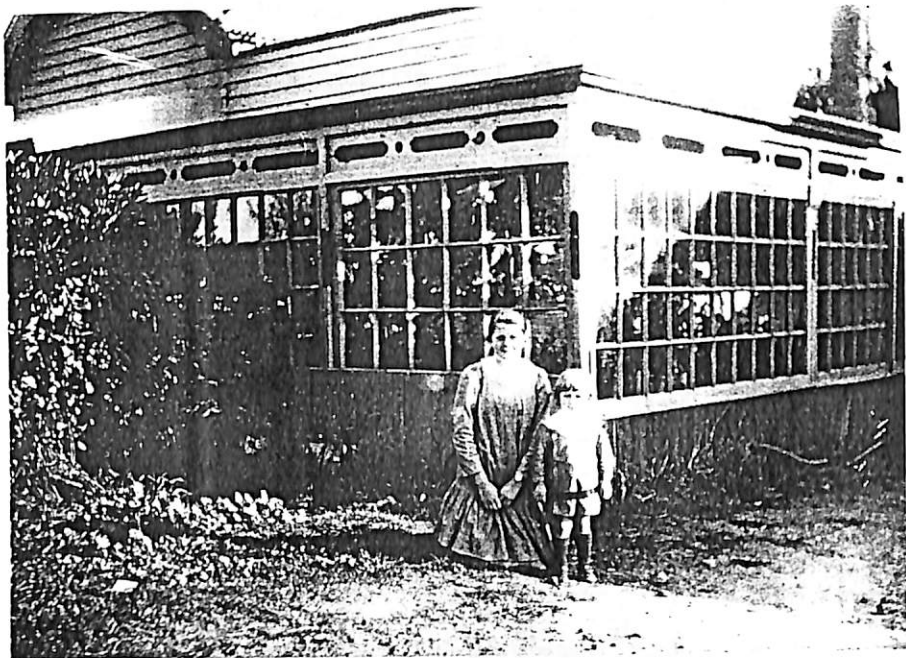
Of the other sisters Alice married Ernest Taylor and lived in Murrumbeena, they had no children. Ellen (Nellie) married Bert Rawlings and lived in Anne Street, Dandenong, they had three children. Florence (Dot) married Herbert Sainsbury, as far as we know they had no children. Elsie married Albert Blain and lived in Maffra, they had two children. Hilda never married; she was a deaconess in the Anglican Church.





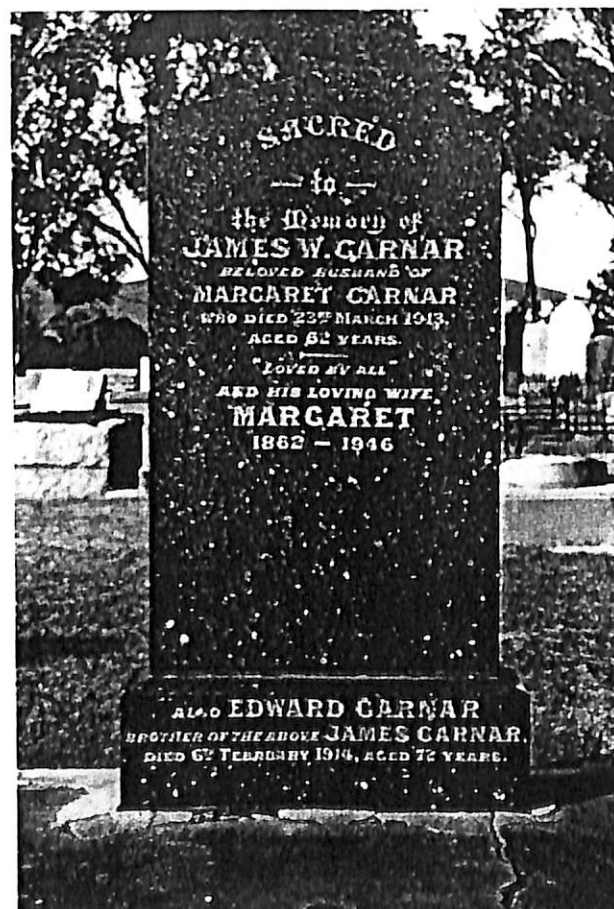


The Garnar house at Diamond Hill

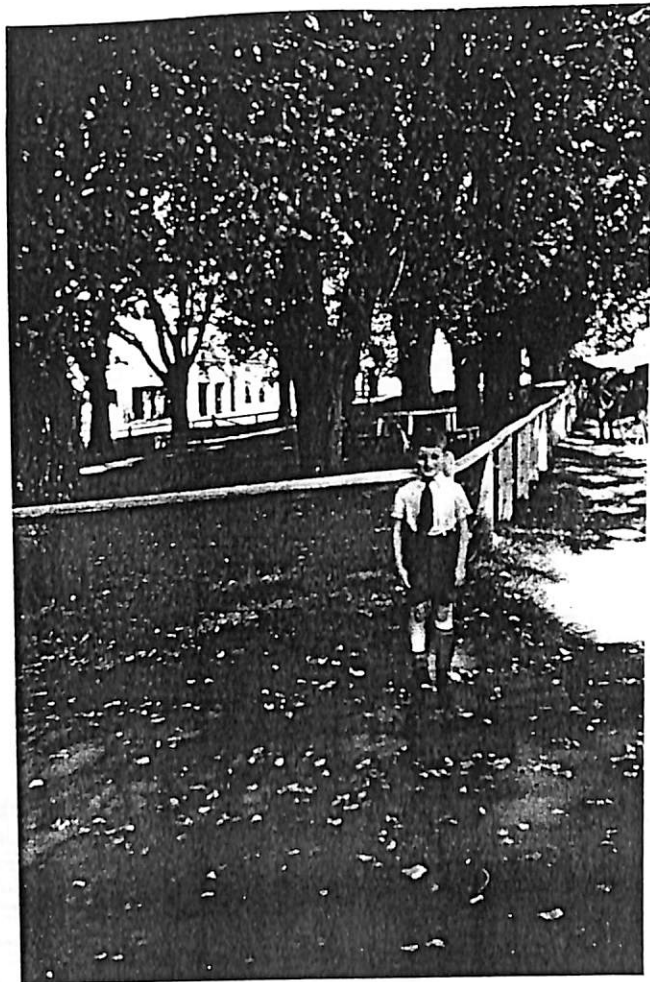




Edward & Frances Garner
Dandenong Cemetery



James & Margaret Garnar and Edward Garnar
Dandenong Cemetery



Langhorne Street Dandenong
From St James Church



Stewart & Co 217 & 219 BOURKE ST EAST,
MELBOURNE.

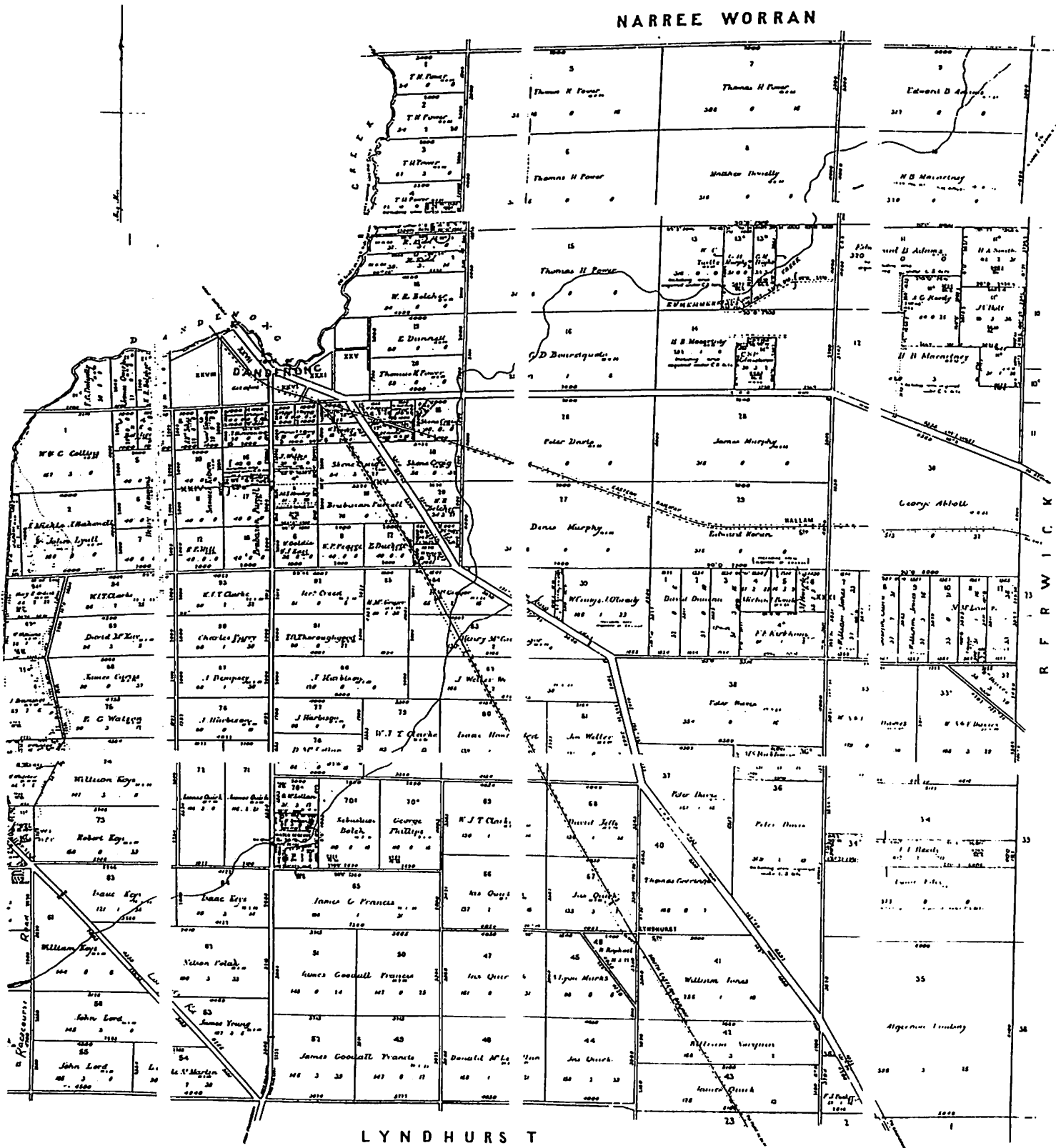
Margaret Cariss (Brien) & James Cariss

EUMEMMERING

County of Morriston

L. 52 61

SCALE
CHAINS 0 10 20 30 40 50
SECOND ISSUE
MEASURED BY 1400 MEASURED IN
C.S. 1878 ADJUSTED 1900



GARNAR

1. **Edward Garner:** b. 1816 Galverston Norfolk: d. 28 October 1868 Dandenong Vic aged 53: m. 1840 Norfolk, **Francis Christian Tilney:** b. 1813 East Stoddingham Norfolk: d. 18 June 1889 Dandenong Vic aged 76, having had issue:
 - 1.1. **Edward Garner:** b. 1842: d. 6 February 1914 Dandenong Vic, aged 72
 - 1.2. **James William Garnar:** b. 1851 Carcoar NSW: d. 23 March 1913 Dandenong Vic, aged 62: m. 1886 Royal Park Vic, **Margaret Cariss:** b. 1862 Dandenong Vic: d. 1/8/1946 Carnegie Vic, having had issue:
 - 1.2.1. **William James Garnar:** b. 3 September 1887 Dandenong Vic: d. 20 May 1968 Merr. Vic, aged 80: m. (1st) 1913, **Annie Maud Adams:** b. 1879: d. 20 December 1948, having had issue:
 - 1.2.1.1. **Leonard William Garnar:** b. 11 January 1913 Flemington Vic
 - 1.2.1.2. **Margaret Joyce Garnar:** b. 31 March 1916 Flemington Vic: d. 26 November 1991 aged 75
 - 1.2.1.3. **Raymond Victor Garnar:** b. 15 May 1921: d. 16 March 1966 aged 44
 - m. (2nd) **Harriet Mary Dinah:** d. 10 May 1986 Cooma NSW
 - 1.2.2. **Margaret (Madge) Frances Garnar:** b. 23 January 1889 Dandenong Vic: d. 19 June 1982 Boronia Vic aged 93: m. 12 June 1912 Nth Melbourne Vic, **Joseph Leppitt:** b. 7 January 1890 Springdallah Vic: d. 17 June 1969 Kew Vic aged 79, having had issue:
 - 1.2.2.1. **James John Joseph Leppitt:** b. 23 February 1914 Nth Melbourne Vic: d. 24 May 1984 Kew Vic aged 70
 - 1.2.3. **Alice Rachel Garnar:** b. 1892 Dandenong Vic: d. 20 July 1968 Kew Vic aged 75: m. 1919 **Ernest Waldo Taylor:** b. 1894: d. 5 August 1964 Kew Vic aged 70
 - 1.2.4. **Ellen (Nell) Christian Garnar:** b. 1894 Dandenong Vic: d. 20 September 1966 Noble Park Vic aged 72: m. 1919 **Herbert Rawlings:** d. 4 November 1959, having had issue:
 - 1.2.4.1. **Ellen Rawlings:** b. 6 August 1919: d. 1 November 1988 Perth WA aged 69
 - 1.2.4.2. **James Herbert Rawlings:** b. 1 January 1921
 - 1.2.4.3. **Betty Ann Rawlings:**
 - 1.2.5. **Florence (Dot) Jane Garnar:** b. 1896 Dandenong Vic: d. 23 February 1993 aged 97: m. 1918 **Herbert William Sainsbury:** b. 1880: d. 7 May 1931 aged 51
 - 1.2.6. **Elsie May Garnar:** b. 27 February 1899 Dandenong Vic: d. 27 September 1995 Maffra Vic: aged 96: m. **Albert Joseph Blain:** b. 23 April 1895 Carvoc Vic: d. 25 December 1966 Port Albert Vic aged 71, having had issue:
 - 1.2.6.1. **Pixie Blain:** b. 18 November 1923: d. 30 July 1985 aged 61
 - 1.2.6.2. **Shirley Blain:** b. 18 December 1924
 - 1.2.7. **Hilda Grace Garnar:** b. 1902 Dandenong Vic: d. 18 September 1965 Heidelberg Vic aged 63

FILE UNDER
"GARNARS"

Margaret Garnar with funeral conductor John Grant, Dandenong, 1918.

The Firms of J. W. Garnar and W. J. Garnar and Son, Dandenong

THE ORIGINS OF THE FAMILY FIRM OF GARNAR, OPERATING AS undertakers in the Dandenong and nearer-Gippsland areas, are currently lost in nineteenth-century antiquity. Obituary articles on James W. Garnar in the Dandenong newspapers for 1913 indicate that the founder (with his brother Edward) had been engaged in business as a blacksmith in Lonsdale Street, Dandenong, over many years. It appears that the 'smithy' had been sold to a Mr Green a considerable time before Garnar's accidental death. However long he had operated as an undertaker, at his death the Dandenong press still thought of him as a longstanding and respected blacksmith of the town. The family farm was to provide the cause of James Garnar's death, when a farm bull took to its owner with fatal consequences.¹

Len Garnar, grandson of the original Dandenong undertaker of that name, retains childhood memories of the Garnar farm at 'Diamond Hill' on the Cranbourne Road, with its unusual farmyard paraphernalia of horse-drawn hearses and coaches. James William Garnar, undertaker, had been born at Carcoar in New South Wales in or about the year 1851, the son of Edward Garnar, blacksmith, and his wife Frances. It appears that the father was not in fact Carcoar's resident blacksmith, but that the English immigrant family was moving along the road towards Victoria at the time little James was born. As a tiny baby he came to Victoria, and he resided there for sixty-one years until his untimely death on Easter Sunday of 1913. Most of his life appears to have been lived in the Dandenong area. James Garnar had married at Royal Park when thirty-five years of age, and there were seven children of the marriage all of whom outlived him. William James Garnar was the eldest child, the only son of that marriage, being twenty-five years of age when his father died. His six sisters then ranged from Madge and Alice in their twenties, to little Hilda who was eleven. James

Garnar's daughter Elsie recollects that the family name had originally been spelled 'Garner', and that her father had changed the spelling of his name in order to distinguish his business from others associated with the 'Garner' spelling.²

Len Garnar would himself operate a twentieth-century undertaking business under the family name over many decades, and remembers the production of highly-finished solid-timber coffins complete with fittings at the rate of one coffin per person per day. This was done in a workshop which, according to long-standing family tradition, possessed absolutely no powered machinery, and where even the saw marks on coffin timbers had to be laboriously removed with hand tools. Old-style rural Australians commonly regarded any kind of mechanical assistance as a form of cheating the Lord of his legitimate amusement at the sight of man earning his bread by the sweat of his brow.

It is unclear at what point in time James W. Garnar began to operate as an undertaker. A nineteenth-century blacksmith at a major road-transport centre like Dandenong needed the skills of a wheelwright, to be able to construct and repair the universal steel-tyred wooden wheels of horse-drawn vehicles. A wheelwright needed to be especially skilled in the working of timber, because of the special demands created by the shape and vulnerability to damage of wheel timbers. In an age of appalling roads, especially in the Gippsland area, wheel breakages were common. There is ample evidence from earlier Victorian colonial history, that the wheelwright of a small roadside settlement was often called upon to build a coffin when death struck his little community. From constructing a coffin, it was a small step to carrying out the whole funeral operation. James Garnar's daughter Elsie thinks that her father took over a short-lived Dandenong undertaking venture that had been commenced by a man named Hemmings. The farm out of Dandenong was apparently run in conjunction with the blacksmith's business over many years, primarily to produce chaff and pasture for J. W. Garnar's working horses.

The earliest references that the author has been able to find to the Dandenong firm of Garnar, in the standard *Sands and McDougall Directories*, date from the years immediately prior to the outbreak of World War I. War erupted soon after the founder's tragic death, but 'J. W. Garnar' still advertised its services as an undertaker in *The South Bourke and Mornington Journal*: 'First class hearses, mourning coaches and all accessories for Local and Suburban funerals at shortest notice'. Although Garnar's blacksmith's business had long been sold, the firm of undertakers still retained an office in Lonsdale Street, Dandenong.³ James W. Garnar early this century owned and rented out many properties in Dandenong's main street, but his main undertaker's premises were apparently even then in Walker Street, Dandenong.

At the end of World War I, the original Garnar funeral-directing operation continued in business under the control of the founder's

widow, Margaret Garnar. However, Mrs Garnar seems to have struck difficulties in continuing the family business in the tough post-war years. Her surviving daughter, Elsie, especially remembers the problems created by the infamous 'Spanish Influenza' epidemic of 1919, when the regular male staff were smitten by illness and her mother asked her to drive the horse-drawn hearse. For a young woman, the idea of being perched high above the front of the tall glass-sided hearse provided a daunting challenge, to be accepted with great trepidation and reluctance. The onset of the era of 'motor-funerals' would have faced Garnar's widow with some tough decisions, as the old farm-based horse-drawn equipment became obsolete during the 1920s. The widow solved her problems by arranging to sell the Dandenong business to the Brighton-based firm of Monkhouse, and it appears to have operated for several years as a branch office of that firm. It further appears that in those very competitive years, Monkhouse had difficulty in meeting the financial commitments of the purchase agreement, so that the undertaker's business reverted to the Garnar family. In or about the year 1927, William J. Garnar and his young son Len stepped into the gap, originally running the old-established family undertaker's operation in conjunction with William J. Garnar's South Melbourne undertaking business.

William J. Garnar, the eldest child and only son of the original undertaker, had been forced to learn his father's trade elsewhere, in conjunction with a larger metropolitan firm. The Dandenong enterprise, run in conjunction with a small farm, was not large enough to support several families. His numerous sisters contributed their efforts to the original family undertaking enterprise, more especially in the 'trimming' of the almost universal pine coffins of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

We are particularly fortunate that James W. Garnar's daughter, Elsie, is still with us in 1991 to throw light on some of the puzzles associated with the earlier years of the Garnar firm in Dandenong. The daughters of the house were actively involved in various aspects of the family enterprise, although not with the handling of corpses, which was considered a man's job. There was plenty of scope for the ladies of the family in the finishing work which coffin production then required. French-polished coffins were rarely used around Dandenong in the years before World War I, when the great majority of pine coffins for adults were covered in black cloth of which the type and quality might vary with the expense of the funeral. In order to protect vulnerable cloth surfaces, as well as for external decoration, strips of metal 'lace-work' design (akin to verandah trimmings of the Victorian era) adorned the finished coffin.

J. W. Garnar brought dried seaweed from Tooradin for use in lining the base and sides of coffins, advising his daughters not to 'stint' in the use of this material which would provide the long-term home for the coffin's occupant. The interior was then finished with appropriate

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Newspaper advertisement for
J. W. Garnar, 1914.

cloth linings, and the feminine touch contributed to the 'slips' and 'frillings' associated with this important part of the process. The hand-crafted coffin had all of its joints securely sealed with hot pitch, as did the wooden sailing boats of bygone days. This free use of pitch posed few aesthetic problems in that era, because coffin exteriors were almost universally covered with cloth after the construction process was completed.

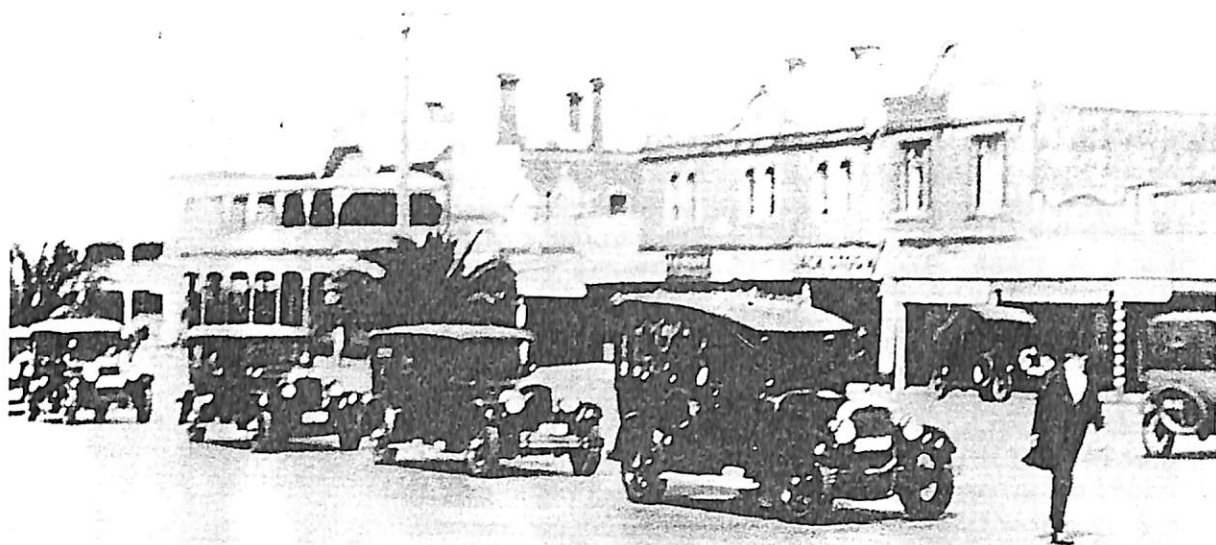
That pioneer blacksmithing and undertaking business at Dandenong had been a labour of love for James Garnar, who enjoyed working with animals and more especially with the horses that provided much of the everyday livelihood of a blacksmith and wheelwright. Garnar lived in a small and relatively tightly-knit rural community, in which each death was regarded as a community tragedy as well as a family tragedy. Old Dandenong was the supply and market centre for an extensive hinterland, stretching across much of nearer Gippsland. Beaconsfield and Pakenham were commonly catered for by the pioneer Dandenong firm, which would also occasionally conduct a funeral as far away as Korumburra, situated among the fertile green hills of South Gippsland. In bygone days residents of Upper Beaconsfield might occasionally be treated to the unusual sight of a horse-drawn hearse being prevented from over-running the horses on a steep gradient by the use of logs swung in front of the wheels. On the other hand, the Dandenong firm would sometimes undertake funerals which would end up at one of the city of Melbourne's old inner-suburban cemeteries such as the Melbourne General Cemetery in Carlton. A funeral like that was a major operation in an era of horse-drawn hearses and mourning coaches, horse teams being 'spelled' overnight at Oakleigh and picked up again for the return journey to Dandenong.⁴

W. J. Garnar had at an early age followed in his father's trade by obtaining employment with that prestigious and popular metropolitan undertaking firm, T. H. Allison of Collingwood and Carlton. Thomas H. Allison, along with John Allison, for many years played a central role in the organisation of the VMUA. When the Association was first formed in 1890, the leading identities of these two quite distinct Allison companies (along with those of Alfred Allison and Joseph Allison) were well known foundation members. As a boy, Len Garnar lived with his father on the site of the livery stables and coffin manufactory of T. W. Allison in Derby Street, Collingwood, and the son watched his father set out each day on his bicycle for the firm's office site in Elgin Street, Carlton. To any child, that sombre Carlton office where the funeral arrangements were made must have appeared a much less exciting place than the lively 'business end' of the establishment at Collingwood.

Even in 1991, Len Garnar clearly remembers that Collingwood base of T. H. Allison in his boyhood, around the end of World War I. The yard was built to last, by the use of those bluestone pitchers which commonly paved old Melbourne's laneways and alleys. There were sprawling livery stables and harness sheds for the horse teams, of

Opposite top: Early motor funeral conducted by William Garnar, Dandenong.

Opposite bottom: William Garnar's Dandenong premises between the World Wars.



which every town member of the VMUA was required to keep two pairs on his premises at any time. A member firm that tried the cheaper ruse of having one pair 'out at grass' on the metropolitan outskirts, was quickly made to toe the Association line. As with most colonial stables, there were high-gabled lofts. At T. H. Allison's premises, these lofts were used for timber storage and the manufacture of the all-important coffins. Coffin manufactories appear to have been commonly located 'upstairs' on an undertaker's premises, the heavy solid-timber coffins being manhandled to the lower regions when required, by a judicious and controlled use of the forces of gravity. Len Garnar vividly remembers the consternation caused by one little Collingwood girl playing in the timber lofts, when she was observed 'walking the plank', backwards, high above the life-threatening bluestone-paved stable yard.

During the later 1920s, W. J. Garnar was apparently offered the option of purchasing the established and highly respected undertaking business of T. H. Allison, but Garnar had somehow frittered away the funds that might have made him the proud proprietor. In 1927 T. H. Allison was bought out by that other pioneer Melbourne firm, A. A. Sleight, but before that time the Garnar family had moved on to the manager's quarters at the old-established South Melbourne firm of Thomas Rentle. The original Thomas Rentle had been the foundation President of the VMUA in 1890, and the main rival of Roderick McKenzie in the South Melbourne area.

W. J. Garnar was later offered the option of buying out the Rentle business, which he accepted. The once-thriving South Melbourne firm had fallen on hard times, with the firm of Roderick McKenzie competing strongly from Clarendon Street. As the original McKenzie had himself done in his earlier 'battling' years, W. J. Garnar applied for and obtained the Government Funerals contract. This work turned the fortunes of the Rentle business upwards again. However, as Len Garnar remembers, completing the Government contracts gave an unpleasantly clear insight into how the less fortunate of the metropolis lived and died. The boy was needed to help his father in picking up bodies from all sorts of unlikely places over a very wide section of the metropolis, and with the coffin jammed into a little Ford car, and a bulky policeman occupying the only seat-room apart from that of the driver, Garnar junior soon became skilled at riding the laden coffin homewards.⁵

Any reader remiss enough to see anything comic in this situation, should be warned that the ghost of W. J. Garnar may suddenly return to wipe the smile from his or her face. That generation of undertakers regarded smiling on the job as a cardinal sin. 'The dismal trade' demanded a humourless demeanour at all times, although a drop of alcoholic liquor was usually considered appropriate in the discomfiting presence of melancholy mortality, unless one worked for Joseph Le Pine. In the latter situation, one made do with the (possibly more

life-threatening) fluids provided by old Melbourne's water-supply system.

In or about 1927 W. J. Garnar moved back to Dandenong to take over the old family business from Monkhouse, who ran it as an agency of his Brighton business. Len Garnar had by that time attained to the mature age of fifteen years, which in 1927 meant that he had passed from the status of schoolboy to the responsibilities of life as a young working man: a worthy apprentice to 'the dismal trade', except that his professional flaw would appear to be a tendency to laugh at the ridiculous in the human situation, even in the presence of death. The Dandenong business still ranged far into nearer Gippsland, its business around Lang Lang being boosted by the energetic 'agency' services of a local butcher. This is an unusual variation on the historic links that have existed between our two major 'death industries'. The trade holidays of Master Undertakers and Master Butchers have been celebrated on the same date each year for many decades.

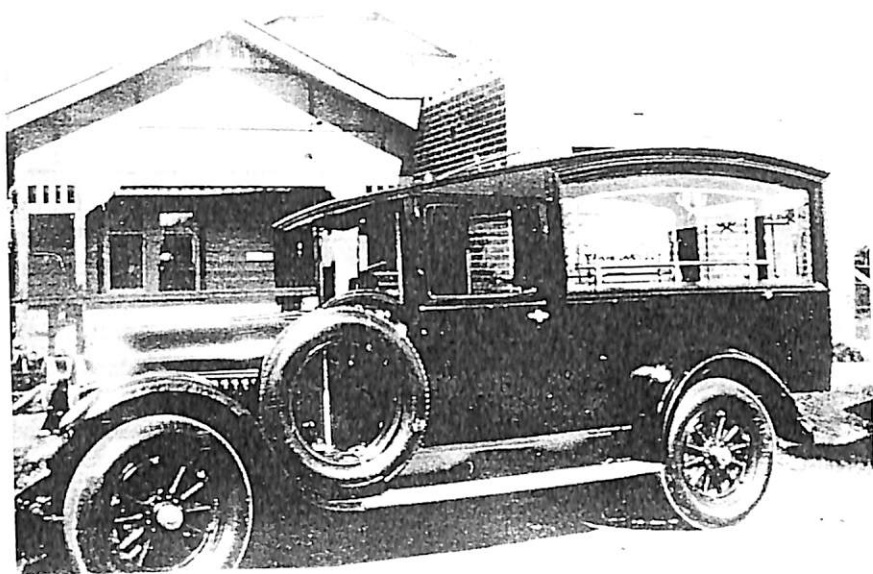
From their new Dandenong base, father and son continued to answer the ever-present calls associated with Government contracts. On one memorable occasion, the young Len was present with his father and the inevitable policeman at the 'removal' of the body of a suicidal farmer from the muddier recesses of his property. A bad winter has always brought out any latent suicidal tendencies in tillers of Australia's reluctant soils. Before driving to the morgue in their motor waggon at a late hour, the funereal party decided to 'drop in' at a roadside tavern for a clean-up after their muddy venture. It being long past 'six-o'clock closing' time, the sight of a constable's uniform was enough to send frightened after-hours tipplers scattering frantically into the surrounding darkness. Not even the law's loud reassurance that this was not an official 'pub raid', but merely an official uniform clean-up, could check the sound of hurrying feet in the night.

There were many other memorable Garnar adventures, including 'picking up pieces' scattered over the Dandenongs after the ill-fated *Southern Cloud* ploughed into a hillside there. Carrying out the Government contracts gave young Len Garnar a better-than-usual appreciation of the variety of interesting ways in which human beings can depart this life. On one occasion when a steam locomotive ran through a heavily-laden horse-drawn family vehicle on a level crossing, Len was not allowed to go along with the 'removals' party despatched to collect what was left of the mortal remains of a family. He still remembers those hardened men returning, literally sick after a very nasty job: the sort of uncomfortable prospect that was never far from an undertaker's mind. Even after long years of retirement, Len Garnar still sometimes experiences 'nightmares', related to the more demanding of an undertaker's enforced confrontations with unpleasant aspects of human mortality.⁶

Among the more pleasant aspects of life as an undertaker before World War II was the construction of beautiful coffins, as works of art

constructed from flawless and beautifully grained timbers, of a quality virtually unobtainable in our day. The young Len Garnar was taught this essential component of an old-fashioned undertaker's trade by a skilled craftsman with a background as a wheelwright. He recollects that the highest-grade coffins constructed in his youth were made from what was known as 'Jap. Oak'. This suggests that references in early Le Pine ledgers to 'English Oak' coffins may in fact refer to materials originating in Japanese forests. The majority of polished coffins were made from the relatively cheap New Zealand rimu, although some beautiful quality coffins were also produced from that New Zealand kauri timber which had long been a favourite material in Le Pine's workshops.

Early motor hearse of William Garnar of Dandenong.



Despite his appropriately sombre demeanour, and his great skill in persuading people to allow him the privilege of burying their dead, William J. Garnar seems never fully to have mastered the art of managing his business funds skilfully. For reasons that are obscure W. J. Garnar's business finances wobbled dangerously into the red. The business, as the major part of W. J. Garnar's estate, was 'assigned' to his creditors, and an independent accountant was put in charge of the firm's business operations. The rituals associated with burying Dandenong's recently departed continued to be solemnly arranged by W. J. Garnar, as hitherto. Len Garnar remembers that William J. Garnar was known to call on hospitalised acquaintances, to ask earnestly after their health. Stories are told of patients who wanted it clear that they desired no undue haste, in beginning the niceties of measuring them up for coffins.

When a little misunderstanding occurred, over the non-appearance in the firm's official financial records of certain moneys allegedly paid by Garnar's grateful clients to their respected local undertaker, son Len was called in by the assignees of the Garnar estate to replace his father in conducting funerals in and around Dandenong. Creditors have seldom been the most understanding of people when it comes to comprehending the human needs and frailties of debtors, but in this case 'Garnar and Son' was allowed to continue a less dismal path under the direction of 'Son'. In those depressed years of the middle and later 1930s Len Garnar continued the family business on behalf of his father's creditors. He was by then sufficiently highly regarded in the profession within Victoria to have been elected to the national executive committee of the Australian Funeral Directors' Association, newly founded in 1935.⁷

Len Garnar continued the family business of W. J. Garnar and Son through the tough years of World War II, when timber and other essential raw materials were very difficult to obtain. He remembers the first use being made of 'plywood' for coffin-making, although it appears that in those days a high-class watertight marine plywood usually reserved for boat building was used by Garnar's. On one occasion, he was required to exhume a body buried in one of these plywood coffins, some five years after it was put into a damp section of Springvale Cemetery. He was interested to find that the coffin was beautifully preserved, and that the original polish was still intact.

By 1950 Len Garnar had decided that there was more to human life than making coffins and organising funerals, and he was happy to sell out to the recently reorganised Le Pine organisation. He has not missed the responsibilities of life in a small family funeral-directors' business, where the proprietor was liable to be called out of bed at any time, into nasty weather or nastier human situations. Like many another undertaker, Len Garnar found that 'carrying' the expenses of funerals for lengthy periods while awaiting payments for services from deceased estates, made the financial side of the business difficult. At a period when a 'superior' funeral cost something like £50 including cemetery expenses, his little business had some £20 000 (not dollars) of unpaid accounts on its books. He attempted to alleviate that situation by 'loading' his accounts with a £10 surcharge, that extra charge being deductible in cases of prompt payment. A not dissimilar (but less systematic) method had been used in the tough 1930s by Stephen Le Pine, who had commonly allowed a small discount for cash payment of accounts.

When it took over the old-established Dandenong undertaker's business, the reorganised Le Pine organisation gradually began to introduce innovations. Directors' minutes for September 1952 indicate that a quotation for the installation of forced-draft refrigeration in the Garnar premises at 10 Walker Street had recently been accepted. In

those post-war years that basic need of any modern funeral director could be met for the sum of £445.⁸ Under Le Pine leadership, Garnar and Son in 1955 extended its business back towards the Dandenong Ranges, where the founding fathers of Garnar and of Le Pine had often previously engaged in rivalry for business. Smith's 'Fern Tree Gully Funeral Services' had been offered to the Le Pine organisation at a reasonable price, and given Stephen Le Pine's longstanding interest in the Fern Tree Gully district that was too good an offer to miss. As happened with the reorganised Le Pine network generally, the acquisition of further property in the interests of expansion almost automatically involved the issue of significant numbers of new shares in the name of Garnar and Son, to raise the necessary business capital.

In selling the family business, Len Garnar had stipulated that his ageing father be kept on at Dandenong, as an employee of Le Pine's new branch there. If W. J. Garnar was not very good at looking after his own funds, he appears to have been less skilled at administering other people's finances. Despite his professional skills and years of experience in the industry, the Le Pine organisation understandably felt that it could dispense with the services of a man who contended that when any 'old identity' of Dandenong departed this life, he deserved the best coffin with silver fittings whether or not he could afford to pay for it. The Board of Directors' Minute Books of 'Garnar and Son Pty Ltd' for 1953 refer to the 'written resignation' of W. J. Garnar having been accepted, and indicate further that (as a 'gesture of goodwill' without acknowledgement of any legal obligation) the new Le Pine directorship that was still headed by Stephen Le Pine had agreed to pay him a living allowance of £5 a week 'for the time being'.

In transmitting stories about one of the acknowledged 'characters' in the history of funeral directing in Victoria, Len Garnar stresses his respect for his father's abilities, more especially in the matter of attracting clients to the family business. The name of Garnar is highly respected in the Dandenong district, where a policy of silver handles for departed 'old identities' (regardless of capacity to pay) was understandably popular. In 1991 the Dandenong business continues active as a very important component in the Le Pine network, serving a broad and ever-expanding part of Melbourne's outer suburban fringe. The very significant casket-manufacturing plant that supplies the whole Le Pine network, Le Pine Timbercraft Industries, has long been established on land at Dandenong that was once a part of the Garnar family holdings.

Family put body and soul into Dandenong

WHAT'S IN A NAME DELVES INTO THE FASCINATING STORIES AND PERSONALITIES BEHIND SOME OF THE CITY'S BEST-KNOWN STREET NAMES. THIS WEEK THE JOURNAL LOOKS AT THE UNUSUAL HISTORY OF THE GARNER FAMILY, AFTER WHOM GARNER LANE IS NAMED.

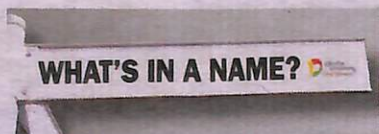
JAMES William Garner was killed in a bull attack in 1913.

He was a father of seven children and a well-respected man and his death shocked the tight-knit community.

During the late 1800s he'd worked as an undertaker at 10 Walker Street, Dandenong, ran a mortuary in nearby Crump Lane and was also involved in a blacksmith business based in Lonsdale Street.

The family name was originally spelled Garner but James altered it to Garnar to distinguish himself from other people associated with the Garner spelling.

His widow Margaret continued the family business after his death, promoting "first class hearses, mourning



coaches and all accessories for local and suburban funerals at short notice".

She struggled to continue the family business in the tough post-war years - the onset of the era of 'motor-funerals' seemed to create difficulties for her as the farm-based horse-drawn equipment became obsolete during the 1920s.

In 1927 James's eldest son, William James, and grandson Len, 15, took over the business.

They changed the business name

from JW Garner to WJ Garnar and Son.

The business relocated and operated from 44 Walker Street and it was behind this premises that Garner Lane was located until 2009.

William was known for leading funeral possessions on foot along Lonsdale Street.

His numerous sisters contributed to the family business, primarily in trimming and decorating the pine coffins.

In the 1930s, a severe flood hit Dandenong and William opened his mortuary to discover that two coffins - one empty and one occupied - had been swept away.

They were later recovered from the creek in Mordialloc.

Len eventually replaced his father



and continued to run the business until he sold it to Le Pine Funerals in 1950.

Garner Lane is now on the southern side of the new Dandenong Civic Centre, providing a pedestrian and

vehicle connection between Lonsdale and Thomas streets.

Want to know the history behind a street name in Greater Dandenong? Let us know and we'll find out! Email journal@starnewsgruop.com.au

LOOKING BACK

100 years ago

13 April 1916

Red Cross Dispute

SIR - Cr Pearson's statement as to the affairs, as between himself and the Red Cross Society, reveals him in an unfavourable light, there is more to reveal, and I can understand him not wishing to continue a newspaper controversy.

I would remind him that abuse is not proof, any more that statements, more especially when either the abuse or the statement is untrue.

A few matters may be mentioned very shortly that will convince the most casual reader that the President (Mr. Pearson has not confined himself to the truth).

1 The President states he did not demand that his wife be made the head of the Red Cross Society. The ladies themselves will state that he did, and he said to the councillors that she was entitled to it.

2 The President stated that he did not close

the room to the Red Cross Workers. He now admits he did so.

3 The matter was not brought before the council by the President as he states, but by a letter from Miss Hayman applying for another room, and backed up by a deputation.

4 The President attended a meeting of the Red Cross Committee on Thursday March 23rd and read a statement said by him to be signed by a number of people. Mrs Pearson now admits that the statement and names were in her hand writing and that there were no signatures.

R E Langley

Chair Red Cross Committee

50 years ago

12 April 1966

Move to end shambles

PLANS and specification for the new Dandenong High School buildings have been drawn up and are being checked for possible amendments. Tenders will be called soon.

Existing buildings would be renovated and improvements made to the administrative facilities and amenities for teachers.

Last year the Journal sparked off a drive for improvements to the school in a front page story.

It described the impossible conditions under which students were attempting to study matriculation science - a room which shook as people walked on the floor, with one serviceable sink, no equipment and windows which shattered as the old building creaked and moved.

20 years ago

15 April 1996

Star Struck

PLANS for a \$29 million, four star hotel overlooking Dandenong Park have been given "the nod".

Greater Dandenong council last Tuesday supported the rezoning of a site at 39-41 Pultney Street for the city's first big hotel.

The council resolved to prepare an am5 years ago

11 April 2011

Market patrons find it's no go

WOMEN'S toilets at Dandenong Market have been described as "an absolute disgrace" after the majority were out of order at the same time last week.

While market manager Chris Giannopoulos said the toilets would be repaired by last Friday's market, Dandenong resident Rob Gillings said the toilets had become an ongoing problem.

Mr Gillings said a friend, a woman who works at the market, told him about the state of the women's toilets near the Clelland Street entrance last Thursday week.

He said when he went to check women were lining up outside the toilets because only four of 11 were working.

- Compiled by Dandenong and District Historical Society

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Garnar

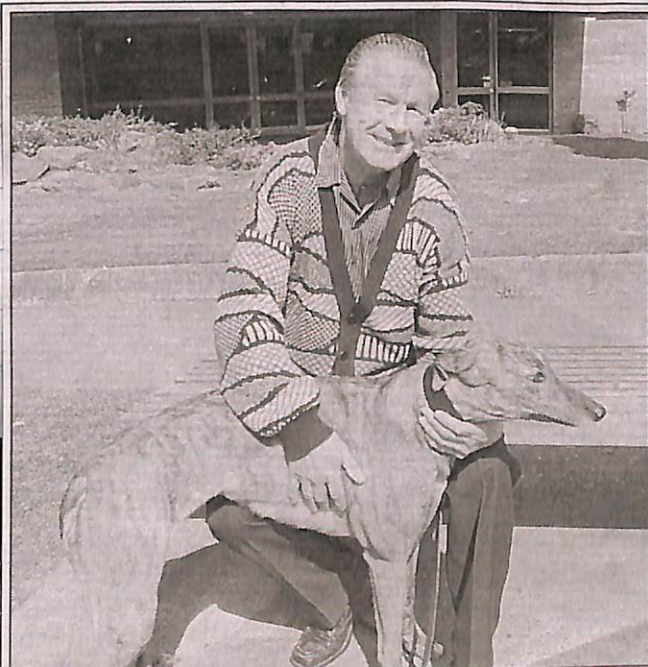
Garnar's Undertakers
was originally in Langhorne St
opposite Magg's Hardware.

Marie Allan daughter of Reader.

Mid to late 50's ?

Mortuary at the back
through lane at the
rear opp Rear of McEwan

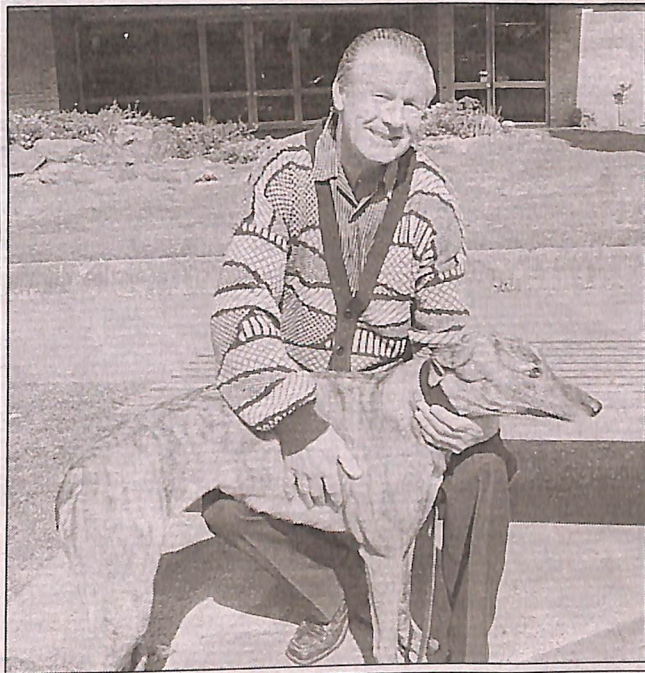
THE JOURNAL 16TH SEPT. 2002,



Close ties

Ken Irby, long-time employee of Le Pine Garnar, Dandenong, has just retired and plans to keep fit by exercising the greyhounds trained by his son Darren. He is pictured with Hasty Ribbon which recently won two races at The Meadows.

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The late Edward Garnar came to Australia from England in 1852, landing at Sydney and coming overland to Dandenong in the same year with his sons, Edward and James and there established a blacksmithing business, which he carried on until 1884, when it was purchased by Mr. Thomas Green. The late Mr. Edward Garnar and his sons made all the ironwork for St. James' Church, Dandenong. He was also awarded first prize and silver medal for shoeing draught horses at the Port Phillip Farmers' Society in 1858.

The Late JAMES GARNAR was born in 1852, when the family was en route from Sydney to Melbourne and his birthplace was a bullock dray at Carcoar (NSW). He was educated at Dan Ahearn's school at Eumemmerring and also at Malcolm MacPherson's Private School at Dandenong. On his father's retirement from business, he purchased the undertaking business from the late John Hemmings, which he carried on until his death.

WILLIAM JAMES GARNAR was educated at Dandenong and after disposing of a business, which he carried on in Melbourne, took over his father's business, which he still conducts at 10 Walker St., Dandenong. He is assisted by his son, Leonard William Garnar. Mr W J Garnar married Miss Ann Adams in 1908 and there is a family of three- Leonard William, Margaret Joyce and Raymond Victor. William James Garnar takes a very active interest in local affairs, particularly, the Dandenong Cricket Club and the Agricultural Society.

(Extracted from "Victoria & Riverina", published 1933.)

Garnars' Undertakers was originally in Langhorne St., opposite Magg's Hardware.

Marie Allan-daughter of Reader. *Eric-Marie, Les Reader.*

Mid to late 50?

Mortuary at the back through lane at the rear opposite rear of McEwans.

* Typed into Computer. - *h* 26/8/09.

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