

the balboora o'connors

Irish blood, Australian sweat



Balboora, Collie

The Balboora O'Connors – Irish blood, Australian sweat

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FRONT COVER
Carrigafoyle Castle
William and Caroline O'Connor
Aerial view Balboora, Collie

BACK COVER
Tennis day at Balboora, Collie

the balboora o'connors

—

Irish blood, Australian sweat

David G Cullen



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Foreword

They say that every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, just not necessarily in that order. In **The Balboora O'Connors – Irish blood, Australian sweat**, one story starts, while another ends, adding layer upon layer to the rich tapestry of traditions and values this mighty family held.

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Recommend **The Balboora**

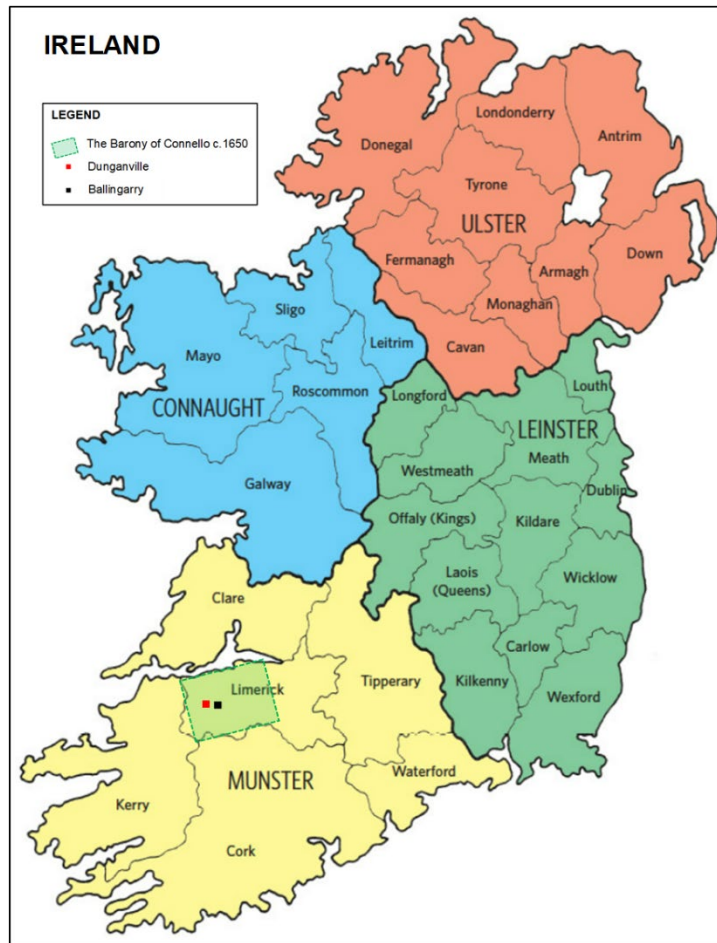
Introduction

The Balboora O'Connors – Irish blood, Australian sweat is a family history of the O'Connor family, who farmed *Balboora*, a property near Collie in western New South Wales, Australia. The study was commissioned by members of the O'Connor family who were raised at *Balboora* and wished to understand their heritage beyond the knowledge passed down through family memory. They knew their ancestry was Irish and that William O'Connor had selected land at Collie in 1901, which became the *Balboora* homestead. Before settling in Collie, it was believed that William, his wife Caroline, and their family had lived in the Echuca district of Victoria. Frederick O'Connor, one of William and Caroline's sons, owned *Balboora*, and he died in 1964.

William O'Connor was the logical starting point for the historical research. His birth was registered in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1847 by his parents, Patrick O'Connor and Margaret Kennedy, who later registered the births of five additional children in the colony. William married Caroline Mary Royal at Kyneton, Victoria, in 1873, and they had 12 children, including Frederick, whose birth was registered at Mitiamo, near Echuca, in 1886. Frederick O'Connor married Eileen Jean Chisholm at Gilgandra in 1917, and they had ten children. Both couples, William and Caroline O'Connor and Frederick and Eileen O'Connor, are buried in the Gilgandra Cemetery.

Family history research requires a detailed examination of primary sources, including birth, death, and marriage registrations; census material; land and travel records; military service files; and legal documents. These are supplemented by secondary sources such as newspaper reports, family papers, photographs, and historical reference works. *The Balboora O'Connor* history embraces both Australian and Irish perspectives. While Australian records are comparatively extensive, Irish genealogical research presents challenges due to the loss of many public records. The destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland during the Four Courts fire in Dublin in 1922 resulted in the loss of centuries of archival material, including court and parliamentary records, as well as the Irish census returns for 1821-1851. Consequently, Irish family research often proceeds by working backward from known

O'Connor, the patriarch and matriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*, arrived in Melbourne in late 1839, determined to seize the opportunities of their new world, and, in doing so, became Australian pioneers in the truest sense. Their resilience, hard work, and resolve laid the foundations for many in future generations, who inherited the same determination, adaptability, and refusal to yield in the face of adversity.



Chapter 1 – County Limerick 1700 – 1839 explores life in County Limerick, especially in the early decades of the 1800s, with a particular focus on the O'Connors of the Parish of Newcastle.

Chapter 2 – A New Horizon 1838 – 1839 explores the circumstances under which Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, along with their infant son Michael, and Patrick's 14-year-old sister Nora, made the bold decision to emigrate to Australia, and provides an account of their voyage on the *Westminster*.

Chapter 3 – Pioneers 1840 – 1877 tells the story of how the O'Connors from their early years in Ireland, established their first farm in the Riverina region of New South Wales. Patrick and Margaret secured substantial leaseholds in the area, and the family moved to the new leaseholds with the auction of their old leaseholds. Margaret, along with Patrick, played a significant role in the family's move to new leaseholds at Balboora.

Chapter 4 explores the family's early years in the Riverina, with images of William O'Connor, a prominent figure from Langley, who spent his nine years in the Riverina at Cobram and then moved to the south of Jerilderie.

Chapter 5 explores the O'Connors' first two decades in the Riverina, as respected farmers and landowners, overshadowed by the O'Connors of the entire area. Like many other families, the O'Connors' life on the Western Riverina was affected by the Great War and the economic downturn of the 1920s. In 1923, Patrick O'Connor put both his sons into the Riverina as successful buyers.

Chapter 6 tells the story of the O'Connors' life at Balboora under the leadership of Patrick O'Connor, a story of capability, resilience, and the many of their achievements.

Chapter 7 explores the O'Connors' life in the Middle Ages and is a story of the family's life in the Riverina, where the O'Connors' homeland lay in the Riverina region of New South Wales.

Barony of Iraghticonnor, County Kerry, 25 kilometres northwest of Newcastle town, County Limerick. For almost a thousand years, the *O'Connor Kerry* stood among the foremost Gaelic dynasties of south-west Ireland. This authority was strikingly embodied in Carrigafoyle Castle, the seat of the O'Connors in the land. The O'Connors were expelled from Carrigafoyle Castle by Elizabeth I, when the castle fell, and the O'Connors were eventually re-establishing

the indomitable O'Connor dynasty, and William, as well as the O'Connors, are mentioned in these pages. As the O'Connors have the responsibility for the O'Connors' generation.

Balboora and Lisfarran

The Irish venerated their heroes of the past, preserving their memory through folklore, song and story. The names *Balboora* and *Lisfarran* are certainly Irish, and they are so important?

meaning *Brian Boru's* victory, a High King of Ireland, his military dominance in Ireland, and his role as a Munster king and as a High King. It lies approximately

of Brian Boru at Clontarf. The name of Patrick O'Connor is a memory of Brian Boru, making it entirely appropriate that he chose to honour him. The name could write in the name of the name anglicised and

is a name that is forgotten. The name is just southeast of the name elsewhere in Ireland. The name *Balboora O'Connors* for

County Limerick 1700

Chapter 1

County Limerick 1700 – 1838

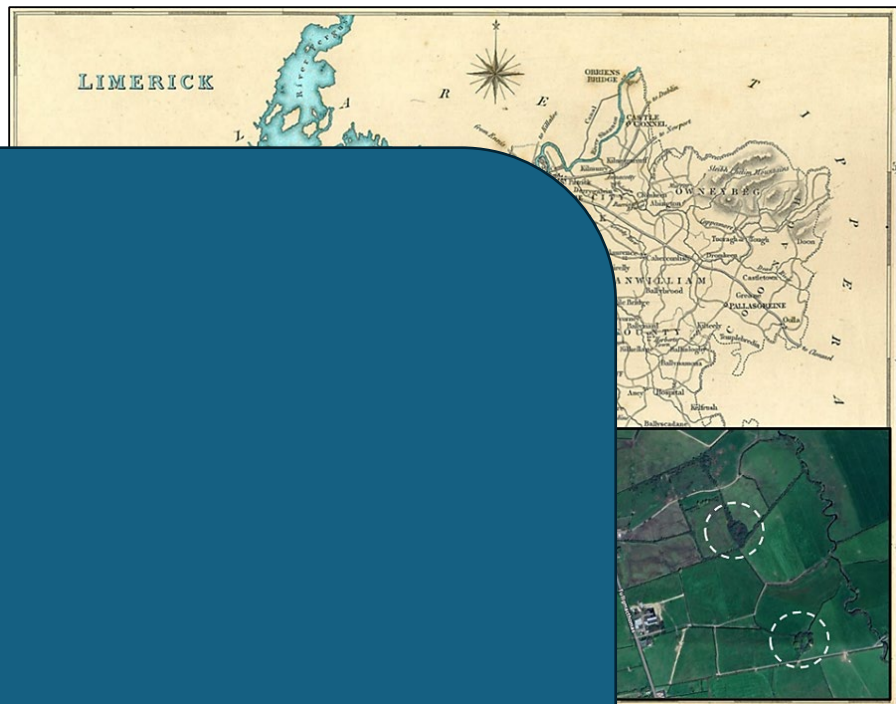
They couldn't call themselves O'Connor anymore...they had to be Connor or Connors, they had to keep their heads down and the only place you would find them would be in boggy places...they left their lands...they lost it all! Local folk narrative¹

After a millennium of relentless warfare, dispossession, and colonisation, first with the Vikings, then the Anglo-Normans, and most significantly the English, the once-powerful Gaelic dynasties of Ireland, including the O'Connor Kerry of Carrigafoyle Castle, were vanquished souls and driven from their ancestral lands. This turbulent and defining period is explored in significant detail in **Chapter 7 – Carrigafoyle Castle 600–1700**, the prequel to the *Balboora O'Connor* story.

By the beginning of the 1800s, most O'Connors eked out a miserable existence as tenant farmers, cottiers, or landless labourers, often living in deplorable conditions in the Barony of Connello, County Limerick.² William O'Connor, or William Connors as he was recorded in English registers, was one of these vanquished souls, and he is the earliest identifiable male ancestor of the *Balboora O'Connors*.³ **Chapter 1 – County Limerick 1700 – 1838** explores life in County Limerick, especially in the early decades of the 1800s, with a particular focus on the O'Connors of the Parish of Newcastle.⁴

The map (**next page**), drawn from the *Desmond Survey (1584)* and the *County Limerick Tithe Applotment Books (1829)*, reveals the prominence of the O'Connor name in west County Limerick.^{5 6 7} Of special interest is a small and obscure 16-hectare (40-acre) area known in ancient times as *Lios fearann*, later anglicised as *Lisfarran*, meaning *fort of the land*.^{8 9} The Irish word *lios* refers to a ringfort, while *fearann* means land or territory. *Lisfarran* today lies within the modern townland of Tulligmachthomas in Upper Connello. Ringforts were circular earthen or stone enclosures commonly used as defended farmsteads in early medieval Ireland between about 500 and 1100, serving both domestic and protective purposes. An inset in the map (**next page**) provides a contemporary view of the place once known as *Lisfarran*, where two ringforts remain clearly visible. This location is particularly significant because the name *Lisfarran* appears nowhere else in Ireland, yet the *Balboora O'Connors* later

adopted it for a section of their property at *Balboora*, Collie.¹⁰ The deeper significance of the *Lisfarran* connection is explored further in **Chapter 7 – Carrigafoyle Castle 600 – 1700**.



ber of O'Connor men
e Barony of Connello,
ty Limerick around
. The surnames
n and Kennedy are
highlighted. William
nnor married Ellen
n, while their son
ck married Margaret
edy.

Also, around 1659, fifty-nine O'Connor men leased sufficient *ploughland* in the Barony of Connello (**previous page**) to maintain a family, a concentration of O'Connor families greater than any other barony in Ireland.¹¹ Given that the Parish of Newcastle sits within the barony, William O'Connor's direct paternal heritage lay within four generations of one of them.

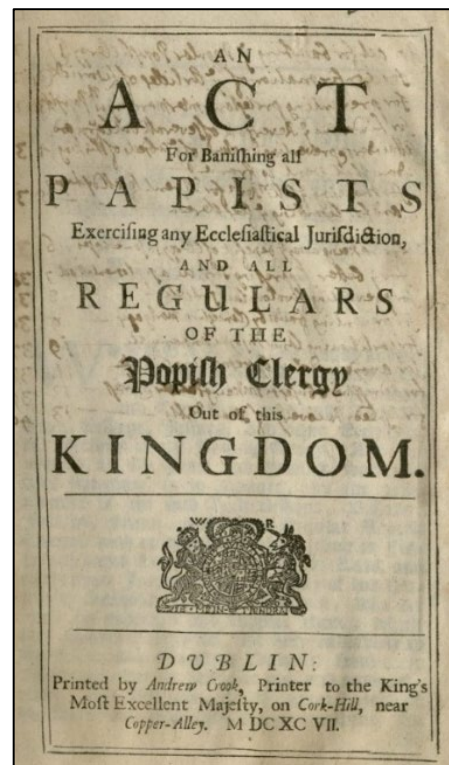
William O'Connor (c1785 – c1840)

William O'Connor was born around 1785, and he spent his early years essentially as a non-citizen. The malicious *Penal Laws*, instituted by the English, which permeated Ireland in the 1700s, stripped Catholics of all but the most basic human rights. The clear aim of the laws was to break the power of the Catholic majority and secure Protestant political and economic dominance. William's father and his father before him were forbidden to buy land and were limited to short-term leases, usually on marginal or boggy land. Access to schooling was non-existent, while entry to professional education, such as law or medicine, was prohibited. It was illegal for them to own any weapon or even a horse worth more than five pounds. William's father and grandfather were not entitled to vote or hold any public office. Although they could join the army or navy, they were not eligible to hold any leadership position.¹²

The cover of the 1697 Act for Banishing all Papists Exercising any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and all Regulars of the Popish Clergy out of this Kingdom.



The emblem of the Society of United Irishmen.



Of all the restrictions imposed on them, the loss of cultural and religious identity struck William and his family most deeply. Hoping to avoid further prejudice, many Irish people, including William O'Connor, set aside their respected patronyms, Ó and Mac, and, unable to read or write in English, unwittingly saw their proud and ancient names ignorantly reshaped by Protestant landlords, officials, and clerks who spelled and recorded them as they pleased. These uneven anglicisations also distorted many traditional Irish placenames beyond recognition.

Catholicism, a religion, including an order of monks, the *Regulars of the Popish*, were hunted and expelled from their ministry.¹⁵ As a result, many places to hear a mass in the language of law, trade, and religion, with

Painted by E. Foran.



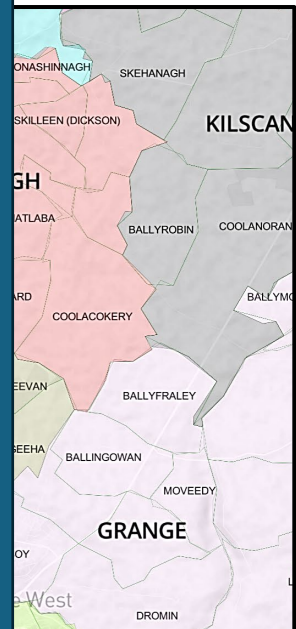
Through 1792 and 1793, influential Irish Catholics assembled to petition the British government for relief from the *Penal Laws*. Sensing a mood for rebellion, inspired by the American and French Revolutions, was growing amongst the Irish, the British government passed the *Catholic Relief Act (1793)*, which granted Catholics the right to vote (provided they leased land with a freehold value of at least forty shillings per year), enter the legal profession, serve as army and navy officers, and attend Trinity College, Dublin.^{17 18} However, all Irish remained barred from Parliament and from high office. The act also permitted Catholics to practice their religion freely, allowed them to bear arms under certain conditions, and repealed many remaining property and educational restrictions.¹⁹ These concessions, though, did little to dampen the Irish thirst for rebellion, and with a group of prominent Catholics and liberal Protestants, the *Society of United Irishmen* (**previous pages**), rallying support for Irish independence and parliamentary reform, much of Ireland fell into rebellion in 1798. The British responded to the uprising quickly and brutally, resulting in mass executions, atrocities, and widespread destruction.²⁰ The painting (**previous page**) depicts the 1798 Irish Rebellion and shows Irish farmers, armed only with pikes and farm tools, in battle against the British Army.²¹

William O'Connor married Ellen Hogan during the first decade of the 1800s, and on 17 March 1811, they had a son, Patrick, who was to become the Australian patriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*.^{22 23} William and Ellen had at least seven other children: Bridget, baptised in 1816; James (1818); Mary (1821); twins Johana and Margaret (1823); Elizabeth (1824); and Ellen [Norah] (1826).^{24, 25} They were all baptised in the Catholic Parish of Newcastle, County Limerick.²⁶ Baptismal records for this parish are available only for the period May 1815 to October 1831, and Patrick likely had other siblings born before May 1815.²⁷

In 1829, the only O'Connors registered as leasing land in the Parish of Newcastle lived very near one another, with just seven kilometres separating them across the adjoining townlands of Ballinena, Dunganville, Glenastar, and Churchtown, as well as Maiden Street South in Newcastle town.²⁸ An O'Connor family also lived in the townland Ballynabearna, adjacent to Dunganville, but in the neighbouring Parish of Ardagh (**next page**).

A William O'Connor leased a modest 20-acre plot at Dunganville. He was probably Patrick's father, as the sponsors noted in each of Patrick's siblings' baptisms included the surnames Ambrose, Wolfe, Carroll, Liston, Sweeny, Foran, Keane, and Barratt. All these surnames were common in Dunganville and the surrounding townlands.²⁹ Another Patrick O'Connor, likely William's brother, farmed 13 acres in a neighbouring block.³⁰

Bartholomew (Batt) O'Connor held 23 acres at Ballinena, Thomas O'Connor leased just a single acre at Churchtown, while Denis O'Connor leased a little over an acre in Newcastle town. Simply referred to as *Messrs*, a group of O'Connor men held 152 acres in Glenastar **(next page)**.³¹ The baptismal records for the Parish of Newcastle at this time show a multitude of newborns, parents, and baptismal sponsors bearing the O'Connor surname. Aside from those lucky enough to lease land, many lived as cottiers or worked as farm labourers, dairyw..., gardeners, ploughmen, sh..., carpenters, those O'Connors remain



and impact on the... left their homes to... ica, Canada, or... castle town, the only... ena and... 01, five O'Connor... esiding in the

fa...
town

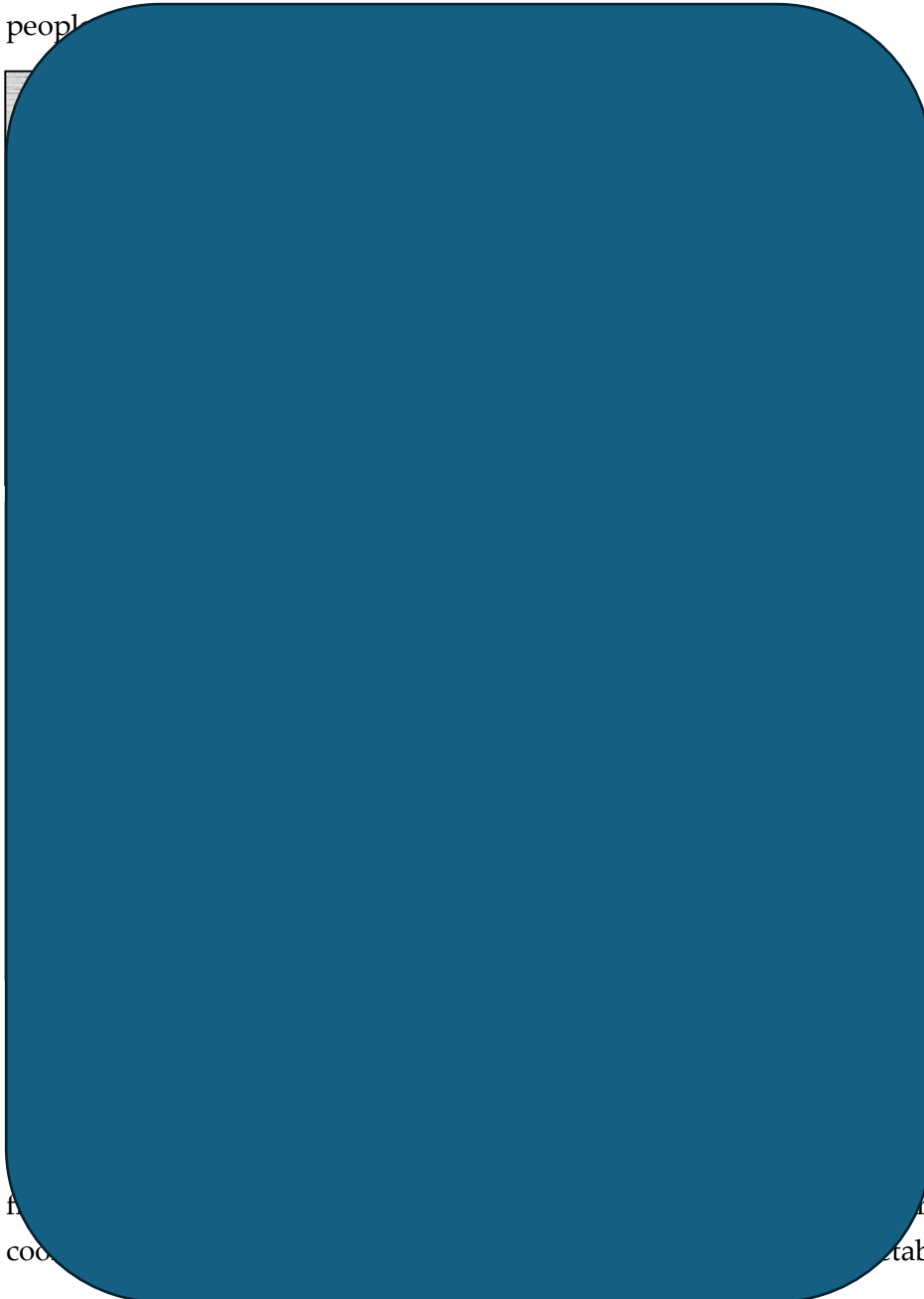
Extracts from the County Limerick Tithe Applotment Books (1829) detailing the amount and quality of land leased by O'Connors in neighbouring townlands Ballinena, Dunganville, and Glenastar. The annual sum they were required to pay to the local Protestant clergy (tithe) is noted in the last column.

Names of Townlands and Landholders	Acres	First Quality	Second Quality	Third Quality	Fourth Quality	Amount of Composition
	A R P	A R P	A R P	A R P	A R P	£ S D
<i>Ballinena</i>						
Robert Ambrose	29 0 00	5 0 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	4 0 00	1 13 2
Saines Ambrose	11 3 00	---	9 0 00	2 3 00	---	14 10
Cornelius Cremin & Son	144 0 00	10 0 00	27 0 00	7 0 00	---	3 3 6
John Burns & Sons	37 0 00	19 0 00	13 0 00	5 0 00	---	3 0 2
Widow O'pser	32 0 00	---	1 0 00	---	31 0 00	13 0 3
Ball Connors	23 0 00	4 0 00	10 0 00	9 0 00	---	1 8 11
Denis Hurley & Sons	147 0 00	16 0 00	22 0 00	9 0 00	---	3 9 11
	124 0 00	10 0 00	45 0 00	---	---	10 10 11
<i>Dunganville</i>						
William Connors	20 1 00	18 0 00	2 1 00	---	---	1 19 2
Patrick Connors	13 0 00	9 0 00	4 0 00	---	---	1 3 8
John Ambrose	12 2 00	10 0 00	2 2 00	---	---	1 3 8
James Ambrose	27 0 00	18 0 00	5 0 00	4 0 00	---	2 6 1
Daniel Ambrose	6 1 00	5 1 00	---	---	---	12 6
James Wolfe	58 2 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	28 2 00	2 12 4
John Wolfe	48 3 00	10 0 00	10 0 00	18 3 00	10 0 00	2 12 0
Pat O'Conor for Mary O'Conor	38 0 00	5 0 00	5 0 00	15 0 00	13 0 00	1 13 2
Patrick Kerby	1 0 00	1 0 00	---	---	---	2 0
						1 10 9
<i>Glenastar</i>						
John Upton	19 1 00	15 0 00	4 1 00	---	---	1 16 0
Morty Lynch	17 3 00	15 0 00	2 3 00	---	---	1 13 11
John Bough	9 1 00	4 0 00	---	5 1 00	---	11 11
John Peckley	21 0 00	7 0 00	5 0 00	9 0 00	---	1 7 10
Samuel Upton	15 0 00	---	15 0 00	---	---	1 1 3
Michael Madigan & Son	12 0 00	6 0 00	6 0 00	---	---	1 0 6
John Wright	2 20	---	2 20	---	---	10 2
Levy Ambrose	30 0 00	10 0 00	14 0 00	6 0 00	---	2 4 4
Richard Alley	5 3 30	5 3 30	---	---	---	11 10 3
Wm Connors	152 2 00	---	26 0 00	54 0 00	---	4 6 14 3
James Lynch	15 0 00	---	6 0 00	9 0 00	---	15 3
Dower and Partners	60 0 00	---	9 0 00	---	10 0 00	1 1 7 3
John Murphy & R Shesky	11 3 00	6 0 00	2 3 00	3 0 00	---	18 2

Newcastle – A Parish in Revolt

With the disappointments of the 1798 rebellion behind them, the Irish people entered the 1800s, a country deeply stained by religious, cultural, political, and economic divisions.³⁷ The O'Connors found themselves with barely a toenail on the bottom rung of the ladder of opportunity. At the same time, the Protestant landowners had climbed well beyond the ladder, an ascendancy which had given them a supreme level of privilege and power.

This power only intensified when, under the promise of Catholic emancipation from the British government, enough influential Irish people cautiously agreed to the *Act of Union* (1801), which abolished the Irish Parliament in Dublin and established a single parliament for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Incredibly, the British Crown refused to sign the government's bill for Catholic emancipation into law, rendering the relationship between Irish Catholics and the Protestant hegemony irreparable.³⁸ The tension between the people



mud and stone cabin

**ra Cob (mud)
laroe, west County
of the last surviving
in Munster.**

rely dependent upon
wellings were
ne, with earthen
of both warmth and
coo...table garden and kept

poultry, a cow, and likely a pig they fattened for market. During the harsh winter months, their already cramped quarters were often shared with livestock, blurring the line between household and barn. The rents were high and usually paid in cash and labour, leaving little margin for hardship. The two images (**previous page**), one a depiction of a cottier's cabin in 1840 and the other a photograph of a surviving mud-and-stone cabin in County Clare, provide an insight into the living conditions of the O'Connors.^{39 40}

The life-sustaining potato crop.



The potato, introduced to Ireland from Spain in the 1500s, spread rapidly among the rural poor and, by the 1700s, had become the dominant subsistence crop due to its high nutritional value and abundant yields. With most grain crops, such as oats, wheat, and barley, destined for the landlord's larder or exported to further line his pockets, the poor were left almost entirely reliant on the potato.⁴¹ For the O'Connors, a small potato crop represented not just food, but a fragile line between survival and starvation.^{42 43} The picture (**above**) illustrates the vulnerability of families whose survival was largely dependent on a small potato crop, often grown on hillsides and marginal boggy land.

The humble potato, however, was a mixed blessing. Its extraordinary productivity supported a population boom from around five million in 1800 to more than eight million by the mid-1830s, as even the smallest plots could sustain a family, leading to earlier marriages and larger households. Yet this growth came at a cost, with successive generations dividing farms into ever-smaller holdings and creating a densely populated countryside increasingly

dependent upon the potato for survival.⁴⁴ Families struggled to subsist, and a growing class of cottiers and landless labourers emerged, dependent on irregular seasonal work for meagre wages. To survive, many took to the roads each year, spade in hand, travelling across Ireland and even to Scotland, Wales, and England in search of employment.⁴⁵

These difficulties were exacerbated by a landlord system that frequently placed profit ahead of tenants. Landlords often demanded high rents and tithes to support the Protestant clergy. Many landlords, often in England, sought to maximise returns. Rent was a heavy burden on rural life. In such circumstances, life was very thin. A single acre of land could support a weight of population. Families such as the Connells were a reality. Nevertheless, the network of family connections enabled them to survive. This was the story.

The Connell family from Lower Connello, County Limerick, were a family from the 17th century who owned lands and relied on an estate. These over-extended families then leased to tenants in a system, in which the tenant paid for their labour in the farm rental system. The Connell family was the main family on the Connello estate.⁵²

The Connell family was agent to the estate from 1803–1815, Carte was agent to the estate between 1813 and 1815. To ease the experience, initiated the Connell family in search-needed employment

for struggling labourers and cottiers.⁵³ Despite his popularity among many local tenants, the estate's finances deteriorated sharply under his administration. By 1818, rental arrears had reached £63,500, more than four times the estate's annual rental income of £14,000.⁵⁴ Losing the confidence of the Courtenay trustees, Carte was dismissed later that year and replaced by the hard-line English lawyer Alexander Hoskins, who was tasked with restoring financial discipline to the estate.⁵⁵

The decision to appoint the ruthless Hoskins had profound consequences not only for the O'Connor family and their fellow tenants in the Parish of Newcastle but also for the entire country, as most historians agree that it marked the genesis of the *Rockite* movement in Ireland.⁵⁶ In the picture **(below)**, Rockites are depicted recruiting a new member.⁵⁷

**The swearing
in of a new
Rockite.**



Courtenay tenants deeply resented Carte's successor, Hoskins, who not only doubled rents but also ended spending on estate and town improvements that had previously provided employment. Also, in a bitter blow aimed squarely at the chin of the poorest of the Irish, Hoskins banned the letting of conacre to cottiers and landless labourers.⁵⁸ The ban, coupled with the failure of the potato crop in 1821, left thousands, including the O'Connors of Dunganville, on the brink of starvation.

At the same time, Hoskins flaunted an extravagant lifestyle, importing servants from London, purchasing costly furnishings, maintaining lavish dining habits, and indulging in foxhunting, which required expensive horses, hunting dogs, and carriages. His conspicuous consumption, in contrast to the widespread poverty in the district, fuelled hostility, even among the over-tenants, or middlemen, who refused to accept their financial burdens quietly.⁵⁹

In December 1830, a castle exploded when Robert Connors at the support of his Irish tenants, ordered Hoskins' bailiffs to clear the way, stormed the castle, Hoskins had been taken metres into the castle through the castle. The shameful arrest and her death added the pot further by the death of his Irish tenants and the death of the well, an act widely known. Parker, a road contractor, who was working on the roadworks was killed by Parker's horses and the reaction from local tenants drove Hoskins' men away. To local legend, his death was in *Rock*.⁶¹ Dillane played a leading role in the humiliation, tenant middlemen. It also was the O'Connors, who were living. They rallied

quickly and resolutely to fight for their livelihoods. In a *better-the-devil-you-know* scenario, the Irish even sided with some over tenants or middlemen, who themselves had often left much of their charity at home. At times actively encouraged by their middlemen, the rebelling Irish farmers, turned *Rockites*, organising quickly to raid Protestant homes, seize weapons, and issue threats from *Captain Rock*. The targets were the hardline, self-serving middlemen who had sided with Hoskins, seeking opportunities to increase their profits or advance the Protestant cause.

Hoskins and his supporters, staff, and informers were met with daily hostility and violence, with Hoskins eventually forced to hide in the heavily fortified Desmond Castle, to avoid a *Rockite* bullet with his name on it **(below)**. The disturbances on the Courtenay estate gained notoriety across Ireland and England when several men accused of violence against Hoskins and his family were acquitted, largely thanks to the skilled defence of Ireland's great liberator, Daniel O'Connell.⁶³ The acquittals enraged Hoskins and his supporters, but the mood among the broader population was one of triumph, especially when witnesses for the prosecution were attacked, with one, James Buckley, accused of being a Hoskins spy, stoned to death by an angry crowd.^{64 65}



Desmond Castle in the centre of Newcastle, owned by the Courtenay family, and home briefly to Alexander Hoskins.

With the Courtenay estate in turmoil, insurrection raging, and Hoskins a lame duck, the Courtenay trustees removed him. They then appointed Alfred Furlong, a local attorney who quickly defused the tension by restoring the abatements and abandoning Hoskins' repressive measures.⁶⁶

The appointment of Furlong, though, failed to quell the uprising. Many Irish tenant farmers had lost their livelihoods to the 1790s evictions. Rather than welcome the trustees, they subdivided small plots into even smaller ones, and evicted those families who could not pay the rent. These evictions were frequently, *Rockites* (after the *Rock*, to those who lived on usurped land, as in Dunganville).⁶⁷

The most violent of these evictions, was that of the Upton family. William Upton, William Upton's son, and Richard Going, who lived in Rathkeale, just north of the town, while local Irish farmers were played by Going in the early months of February and March 1800. The Upton family was evicted from Glenastar in 1800. William Upton to flee the area.

The Upton family was a dangerous district in the early months of the 1800s across Ireland and

The Upton family was from County Limerick and was evicted as convicts to the Upton family, including

On 10 August 1822, the *Dublin Weekly Register* reported the following:

LIMERICK ASSIZES
County Court, August 1

The following are the names of the unfortunate forty-one men who have been capitally convicted:

*[including]...William [Snr], Pat, Denis, Darby, Charles, John, and William Connors [Jnr], John Leahy, Owen and Pat Sweeny, for taking a gun from Mr. Hayes...*⁷²

Imagine the torrent of emotions that ran through the contingent of O'Connors as they watched the proceedings in the packed Limerick City courthouse to hear the magistrate order a sentence of death by hanging on their fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins. These O'Connor men, all brothers, apart from their nephew William [Jnr], were arrested on 12 June 1822 near Abbeyfeale, about 10 kilometres south-west of Newcastle town and charged with:

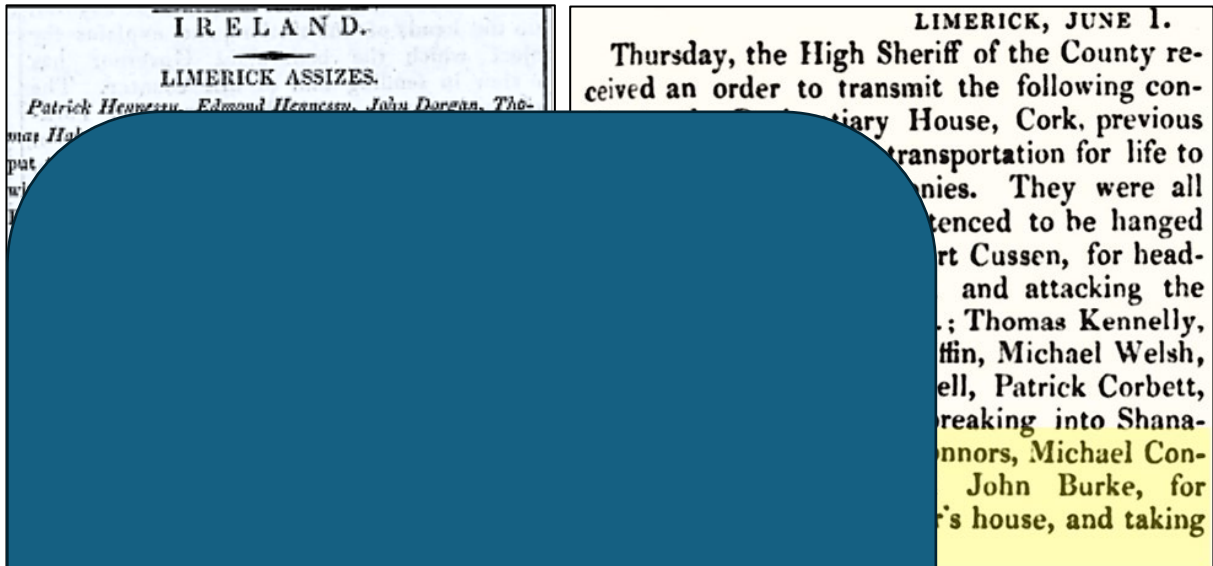
*...attacking the dwelling-house of Patrick Hayes, Esq., of Crag, last February, and burglariously and feloniously entering same, and taking arms and many other valuable articles thereout, and being armed with firearms.*⁷³

They were initially held at Newcastle Bridewell, the local lock-up, before being transferred under yeomanry guard, 42 kilometres, to the county gaol at Mulgrave Street, Limerick City, where they remained incarcerated until their trial date on 1 August.⁷⁴ Incredibly, less than a month later, their sentences were respited, meaning their punishment was deferred until a later date **(next page)**.⁷⁵

Similarly, John and Michael Connors, along with two other men, received a death sentence on 1 June 1822 for breaking into a house and stealing a gun owned by Adam Milier at Garrane, a townland very near to Newcastle town **(next page)**.⁷⁶

Fearing widespread rebellion in County Limerick, the courts sought to dampen the uprising by commuting most death sentences, preferring the penalty of transportation for life to Australia. Accordingly, within months of their convictions, these nine O'Connor men were fettered and shackled onboard the converted whaling ship, *Brampton*, bound for New South Wales. Upon arrival at Sydney in April 1823, these men were all separated for their convict assignments, and little is known about their lives in Australia.⁷⁷

Though it is unclear how these nine O'Connor men were related to Patrick O'Connor, a familial relationship, though, is inevitable, as all O'Connors in and around the Parish of Newcastle were likely of Carrigafoyle Castle stock.



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Those who were in outright
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suppress rural secret societies, such as the *Whiteboys* of the time, but in the 1820s applied to the *Rockites*, who protested high rents, tithes, and evictions through violent agrarian unrest. It gave magistrates, who were mainly prominent Protestant landowners, the military, and constables sweeping powers, including curfews, searches, and harsh penalties, to curb what they saw as threats to landowners and social order.⁷⁹

Catholic Emancipation and the Tithe Wars

By 1822, the *Rockite* movement, originating in the Parish of Newcastle, had evolved into a national agrarian uprising. The persona of *Captain Rock* became a powerful symbol of Irish resistance. Countless Irishmen invoked it, or similar figures such as *Captain Steel*, *Molly Maguire*, and *Major Ribbon*, across Ireland over the next twenty years or so as they fought for Catholic emancipation, seeking an end to Protestant tithes.⁸⁰

Obviously, with 96% of the people in County Limerick being Catholic, the tithe burden was an ever-present source of conflict and unrest. In creating a false narrative that Irish Catholic unrest stemmed from confusion rather than injustice, the Parliament enacted the *Tithe Composition Act (1823)*, converting tithes from payments in kind to fixed cash charges and formally recording each occupier's liability in the Tithe Applotment Books. The act did nothing to ease the tension, and any attempt by an overzealous tithe proctor or the Protestant clergy to collect tithes, particularly if farmers were struggling to put food on the table, was usually met with strong resistance. At the same time, a national movement led by Daniel O'Connell rallied the Catholic clergy and many liberal-minded Protestants in a successful constitutional drive for Catholic emancipation, delivered in part through the *Catholic Relief Act (1829)*. While the act provided additional freedoms for Irish Catholics, it did not eliminate tithes. Buoyed by O'Connell's success, many farmers across Ireland refused to pay tithes, leading to the so-called *Tithe Wars* of the 1830s.

The Parish of Newcastle again drew national attention when the Reverend Thomas Locke, the Rector of Newcastle, became a lightning rod for a revolt by local Irish, including the O'Connors, over his violent prosecution of tithe payments. Locke, hell-bent on securing every tithe owed to his Protestant churches, successfully petitioned the British government for military support in his mission. In his request, he described the Newcastle Catholics as *wild and very populous* and determined not to pay the tithes owing unless forced.^{81 82} Drawing on *Rockite*-era networks, Irish Catholics quickly mobilised to repel Locke's many attempts to seize livestock in response to tithe refusal. In one instance, in April 1834, at Feohanagh (very

near Lisfarran), a townland eight kilometres southeast of Newcastle, Locke, accompanied by his bailiffs, supported by the military and police, was greeted by over 1,000 angry Irish. As a bailiff attempted to seize a cow, the locals showered all and sundry with rocks, only to be met with indiscriminate gunfire, which killed five and injured a further 20.

The following year, though, Locke and his lackeys were outsmarted and embarrassed by Batt O'Connor, likely Patrick O'Connor's uncle, whose farm was just a few hundred metres from Will. It was reported in the

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in his pocket the Rev. Mr.
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Patrick O'Connor, the Australian patriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*, was born into a harshly divided Ireland. Family folklore ensured he was deeply aware of the O'Connor proud and ancient past in County Kerry. Through his consciousness, eyes, and heart, he witnessed first-hand the plight of his family and fellow Irish Catholics in their tenacious fight for survival and fundamental human rights against the tyranny of the Protestant occupiers that now controlled their emerald land. While Patrick's story through the early 1800s is similar to that of many Irish emigrants, his experiences were much more acute. He lived in the precise area that sparked the *Rockite* movement across Ireland, and his life was touched by the great Irish hero Daniel O'Connell.

Notes

¹ McAuliffe, M. (2014). O'Connor Kerry of Carrigfoyle: History and Memory in Iraghticonnor. *Béalóideas*, No. 82. *Local folk narrative*.

² A cottier was a landless rural labourer in Ireland who rented a tiny cabin and plot of land, usually just enough to grow potatoes, in return for low wages or labour.

³ National Archives of Ireland. *The Tithe Applotment Books, 1823–37: County Limerick* [online database]. Dublin: National Archives of Ireland. The *Tithe Applotment Books* of County Limerick (1823–1837) are survey records listing occupiers of agricultural land and the amount of tithe (a tax to support the Protestant Church of Ireland) each was liable to pay, based on the productive value of their holdings. The *Tithe Applotment Books* were enumerated by local tithe commissioners or valutors appointed under the Tithe Composition Act (1823), who went parish by parish assessing the productive value of each holding. Once completed, the returns were approved and signed by the parish clergyman of the Church of Ireland (the tithe recipient), together with the local tithe commissioners, before being deposited for official record.

⁴ A parish was originally a church district served by a priest, centred on a parish church and its congregation. By the 1600s it was also used for many civil purposes such as recording baptisms, marriages, burials, and collecting local taxes like tithes. Parishes were the everyday units people identified with, often made up of a cluster of townlands. A barony was a larger civil division, created after the Anglo-Norman invasion and based loosely on earlier Gaelic lordships or territories.

⁵ Lewis, S. (1837). 'County of Limerick' in *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. S. Lewis & Co., London.

⁶ Murphy, J.A. (ed.). (2013). *The Desmond Survey* (electronic edition compiled and edited by Emer Purcell), CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork, Text ID E580000-001. The *Desmond Survey* was a commission undertaken by the English Crown in 1584 to survey the lands of the Earl of Desmond, which were forfeited after the Earl's rebellion in Ireland. This detailed survey documented the lands, their occupiers, and resources like woods and fisheries, and included maps. The survey is a valuable source for understanding land ownership, social structure, and economic activity in the region.

⁷ *Tithe Applotment Books*, *op. cit.*

⁸ Limerick Local Studies. *Drumcullaher*.

⁹ A townland was the smallest traditional unit of rural land division, typically comprising a defined area of farmland and often only a handful of dwellings used for local identification, tenancy organisation, taxation, and record-keeping within a parish and barony system.

¹⁰ Placenames database of Ireland. *Lisfarran, Lisfarron, Lisfaran, and Lisfaron*.

¹¹ Pender, S. (ed.). (1939). *A Census of Ireland, circa 1659: with supplementary material from the poll money ordinances (1660–1661)*. Stationery Office, Dublin. Irish Manuscripts Commission Digital Edition. *A Census of Ireland, circa 1659*, often called Pender's Census, was a population survey compiled under William Petty during the Cromwellian administration to record householders, landholders, and the number of English and Irish inhabitants in each barony and parish. Its purpose was to assist the English Crown in assessing the demographic and economic conditions of Ireland following the Cromwellian conquest, serving as a basis for taxation, land redistribution, and control of the transplanted Irish population.

¹² Connolly, S. J. (1992). *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

¹³ McBride, I. (2009). *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.

¹⁴ An Act for Banishing All Papists Exercising Any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and All Regulars of the Popish Clergy out of This Kingdom. (1697). Dublin: Printed by Andrew Crook. Coverpage.

¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Williamite victory, the Banishment Act of 1697 (*An Act for banishing all Papists exercising any ecclesiastical jurisdiction and all regulars of the Popish clergy out of this kingdom*) ordered all Catholic archbishops, bishops, vicars-general, deans, monks, friars, and other regular clergy to leave Ireland by 1 May 1698. This law, part of the wider Penal Laws, was enacted by the English-backed Irish Parliament and sought to dismantle the Catholic Church hierarchy in Ireland. While secular priests were permitted to stay if they registered and posted bonds, the Act made it illegal for Catholic bishops to remain in the country, and those who returned faced imprisonment, transportation, or death under subsequent legislation.

¹⁶ Ó Buachalla, B. (1988). *Aisling Ghéar: Na Stiobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn, 1603–1788* [*Sharp Vision: The Stuarts and the Learned Class, 1603–1788*]. Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Indreabhán.

- ¹⁷ The American Revolution (1775–1783) was a colonial revolt in which the thirteen American colonies successfully fought for independence from British rule, leading to the creation of the United States of America.
- ¹⁸ The French Revolution (1789–1799) was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France during which the monarchy was overthrown, feudal privileges were abolished, and revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity reshaped the nation and inspired movements worldwide.
- ¹⁹ Bartlett, T. (1992). *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question, 1690–1830*. Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.
- ²⁰ Bartlett, T. (1998). *Rebellion: Ireland in 1798*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- ²¹ Foran, E. The 1798 Irish Rebellion. Fr. Edward Foran (1861-1938). Public Domain.
- ²² Find a Grave. *Echuca Cemetery*. Patrick O'Connor
- ²³ Ancestry (2010). *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA. Original data: Compiled from publicly available sources.
- ²⁴ Common variations for Ellen at the time included Eleanor, Honorah, and Norah.
- ²⁵ At this time across Ireland the only instances where children are born to a father and mother named William Connors (O'Connor) and Ellen Hogan respectively occur in the Parish of Newcastle.
- ²⁶ Newcastle Parish sits within west County Limerick. Originally referred to simply as *Newcastle*, derived from the Anglo-Norman castle built by the FitzGerald, the addition of **West** was adopted to distinguish it from other places of the same name in Ireland. By the 1830s *Newcastle West* was in regular official and cartographic use, and the name subsequently became standard. **For the purposes of this work Newcastle West will be referred to as Newcastle.**
- ²⁷ National Library of Ireland. *Catholic Parish Registers* [online database]. Limerick Newcastle West. Dublin.
- ²⁸ *Tithe Applotment Books*, op. cit.
- ²⁹ National Library of Ireland, op. cit.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*. The sponsors present at Margaret's baptism in 1823 at Newcastle were Patt Connors and Catherine Connors. William's son Patrick was only 12 years old at this time, so the sponsor Patrick is likely William's brother and neighbour.
- ³¹ *Tithe Applotment Books*, op. cit. The O'Connors in the townland Glenastar are simply noted as *Messrs* simply meaning the names of two or more related men involved in leasing the farmland.
- ³² The Irish Famine (1845–1852), caused primarily by successive potato crop failures and compounded by poverty and British policy, led to mass starvation, disease, and emigration across Ireland. County Limerick suffered heavily as tenant farmers were evicted, workhouses overflowed, and thousands fled or perished, leaving deep demographic and social scars.
- ³³ National Archives of Ireland. *Valuation Office House, Field, Tenure and Quarto Books, 1824–1856*. Dublin: National Archives of Ireland.
- ³⁴ Ask About Ireland. *Griffith's Valuation (Primary Valuation of Ireland): County Limerick* [online database].
- ³⁵ National Archives of Ireland. *Census of Ireland, 1901* [online database]. Dublin: National Archives of Ireland.
- ³⁶ Genealogists Forum. O'Connors from Glenastar, Ardagh, Limerick, Ireland.
- ³⁷ The 1798 Rebellion, inspired by the ideals of the French and American revolutions, was led by the United Irishmen to unite Catholics and Protestants to overthrow British rule, but it was brutally suppressed with mass killings and widespread destruction. For Catholic Ireland, the failure was a bitter disappointment, as hopes for emancipation and equality were crushed, leaving repression and mistrust in its wake.
- ³⁸ Geoghegan, P.M. (1999). *The Irish Act of Union: A Study in High Politics, 1798–1801*. St. Martin's Press, New York.
- ³⁹ Irish Cottier Cabin. (c1840). Mary Evans Picture Library. Public Domain.
- ⁴⁰ McNamara Cob (mud) House in Tullaroe. Public Domain.
- ⁴¹ Clarkson, L.A. and Crawford, E.M. (2001). *Feast and Famine: Food and Nutrition in Ireland 1500–1920*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- ⁴² Ó Gráda, C. (1995). *The Great Irish Famine*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- ⁴³ Donnelly, J. S. (2001). *The Great Irish Potato Famine*. Sutton Publishing, Stroud.
- ⁴⁴ Connell, K. H. (1950). *The Population of Ireland, 1750–1845*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ⁴⁵ Foster, R. F. (1988). *Modern Ireland 1600–1972*. Penguin, London.
- ⁴⁶ Bartlett, T. (2010). *Ireland: A History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- ⁴⁷ Foster, op. cit.
- ⁴⁸ Donnelly (2001), op. cit.
- ⁴⁹ Bartlett, op. cit.
- ⁵⁰ University of Galway. *Landed Estates: Ireland's Landed Estates and Historic Houses* [online database]. Galway.
- ⁵¹ Westropp, T. J. (1983). *The Desmond Castle, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick*. The Castle Committee, Newcastle West.
- ⁵² University of Galway, op. cit.
- ⁵³ An abatement in renting property is a temporary reduction, suspension, or waiver of rent, usually because the tenant can't use all or part of the premises for reasons beyond their control.
- ⁵⁴ The Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) were a series of conflicts across Europe, primarily between England and France. For Ireland, the wars created both opportunities and hardships: demand for agricultural produce rose to feed armies and cities, but so did prices and taxes, leaving small tenant farmers under pressure. Also, British blockades drove up food prices, leading to high profits for grain and livestock exports that encouraged increased tillage and expansion of agricultural production. When the wars ended, falling grain prices, reduced demand, and continuing high rents led to severe economic distress in rural Ireland, worsening poverty and dependency on the potato crop.
- ⁵⁵ Donnelly, J. S. (2007). Captain Rock: The Origins of the Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821–24. *New Hibernia Review*, Volume 11, Number 4.
- ⁵⁶ The *Rockite* movement of the 1820s was a secret agrarian insurgency across Ireland, driven by rural poverty, high rents, tithes, and resentment of landlords and middlemen. Supporters, often calling themselves followers of *Captain Rock*, engaged in threatening letters, attacks, and protests to defend tenant rights and resist eviction.
- ⁵⁷ The British Museum. *Captain Rock's banditti swearing in a new member*. Public Domain.
- ⁵⁸ Conacre was a short-term and "off the books" system of land letting in Ireland, usually for 11 months, where cottiers or landless labourers were given a small patch of ground by a tenant farmer to grow a potato crop and erect a rudimentary dwelling for himself and his family in exchange for labour and a fee.
- ⁵⁹ Donnelly (2007), op. cit.

⁶⁰ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Anonymous. (1822). *Old Bailey Solicitor*. The only known surviving copy of this pamphlet is that in the possession of a notable man called John Cussen, who had a deep interest in the history of Newcastle West and its vicinity. Cited in Donnelly (2007), *Ibid.*

⁶² Dore, M. (1983). The Murder of Thomas Hoskins. *Annual Observer*, Volume 40, Number 1. *Annual Observer* was a publication of the Newcastle West Historical Society.

⁶³ Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847), known as "The Liberator," was an Irish lawyer and political leader who campaigned for Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Act of Union. In the Parish of Newcastle, County Limerick, he acted as counsel for local defendants linked to the Rockite disturbances, vigorously challenging landlord testimony and securing acquittals that boosted his reputation among the rural poor.

⁶⁴ Smyth, J. (1982). The Rockite Movement, 1821–1824. *Irish Historical Studies*, Volume 23, Number 92, pp. 377–397.

⁶⁵ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Dublin Evening Post*, Wednesday 23 October 1822

⁶⁸ *Westmorland Gazette*, Saturday 27 October 1821

⁶⁹ Donnelly (2007), *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ *London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post*, Friday 15 February 1822

⁷¹ *Sun (London)*, Monday 11 March 1822

⁷² *Dublin Weekly Register*, Saturday 10 August 1822

⁷³ *Dublin Evening Post*, Thursday 17 October 1822

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Sun (London)*, Wednesday 18 September 1822

⁷⁶ *Sanders's News-Letter*, Tuesday 4 June 1822

⁷⁷ Find Your Convict Ancestors.

⁷⁸ The Whiteboy Acts were eighteenth-century Irish statutes (from 1775 onward) aimed at crushing agrarian secret societies: they criminalised night-time assemblies, disguises, unlawful oaths, and attacks on property, and gave magistrates sweeping powers including curfews, house searches, military support, and severe penalties up to transportation or death. The Whiteboys were mostly Irish Catholic farmers who mustered at night in white shirts for recognition, swore mutual oaths, issued threatening notices, and targeted enclosures, tithe-proctors, rack-renting landlords, and middlemen by levelling hedges, seizing or houghing cattle, and obstructing seizures.

⁷⁹ Connolly, S. J. (2008). *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630–1800*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ State Library of New South Wales. *Correspondence relative to the collection of tithes payable to the Rev. Thomas Locke, Rector of Newcastle, County of Limerick* [electronic resource].

⁸² *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, Saturday 9 May 1835

⁸³ *Dublin Morning Register*, Monday 30 November 1835

⁸⁴ Distraintment refers to the legal process where a creditor, typically a landlord, seizes and sells a debtor's personal property (like stock or chattels) to satisfy a debt, most commonly for unpaid rent.

⁸⁵ Museums of History New South Wales. *Assisted immigrants digitised shipping lists 1828-1896*. The manifest for the *Westminster* lists Ballingarry, County Limerick as the place of origin for both Patrick and Margaret O'Connor.

⁸⁶ Find a Grave, *op. cit.* Margaret O'Connor.

Chapter 2

A New Horizon 1838 – 1839

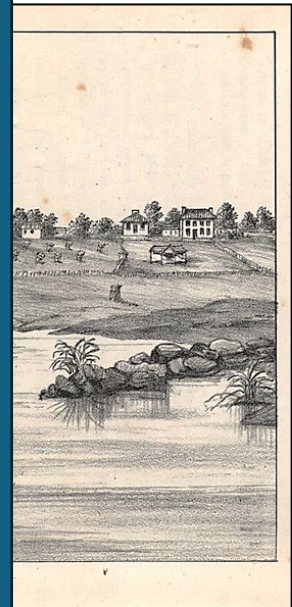
In 1838, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, along with their infant son Michael, lived in the Parish of Ballingarry in County Limerick, Ireland, where Patrick worked as a farm labourer and Margaret as a dairywoman.¹ As described in **Chapter 1 – County Limerick 1700 – 1838**, Patrick and Margaret lived in appalling and miserable conditions. As Irish Catholics from the small-acre tenant farming, cottier, and labouring classes, there were little to no prospects for them in their beloved Ireland, where the wealth and power sat with a ruling British minority. Patrick and Margaret O'Connor were determined to make the most of their lives, and, like over 600,000 of their contemporaries between 1831 and the *Great Hunger* beginning in 1845, they sought a future elsewhere.² While many left their homes to work in factories, mills, or mines in England, Scotland, and Wales, others looked to emigrate to Canada or the United States, where some had relatives who had previously emigrated. The O'Connors, though, saw their future half a world away in a fledgling colony most Irish knew as *New Holland*.³ **Chapter 2 – A New Horizon 1838 – 1839** explores the circumstances under which Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, along with their infant son Michael, and Patrick's 14-year-old sister Norah, made the heartbreaking decision to emigrate to Australia, and provides an account of their voyage on the *Westminster*.

Australia – Half a World Away

The British settlement of Australia began in 1788 when the First Fleet arrived at Port Jackson near the modern-day city of Sydney. The aim of the First Fleet was two-fold: to relieve overcrowded prisons in Britain, including those in Ireland, and expand British territorial claims in the southern hemisphere. Approximately 162,000 convicts were transported to Australia by Britain between 1788 and 1868, of whom about one-fifth were Irish, who served their sentences while labouring on farms and helping to build the colonial infrastructure. As the colony grew, a workforce beyond convict labour was necessary. The crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813, part of the Great Dividing Range that separated the coastline of eastern Australia from the interior, precipitated further colonial expansion, as new farming and

commercial enterprises required significantly more labour.^{4 5 6} To meet the demand, the British government initiated an assisted emigration scheme in 1831.⁷ In addition to providing a much-needed workforce, the British viewed assisted emigration as an opportunity to reduce the unwanted flood of Irish into England, Scotland, and Wales. The great irony here is that the influx was the product of centuries of British occupation that had denied the Irish an economic

part of the Colony of
 abundant, fertile land
 1835, quickly
).⁸ In 1838, the
 Phillip district,
 development.



ed:

district of Port Phillip, near
 recently returned from
 of labour, wages being 15s. a
 fact are decidedly distressed

*for it...in a district comprised within a line drawn from Geelong on the west to Mount Macedon, thence to the River Goulburn, and along that river and the Yarra Yarra, so as to terminate at Western Port, from 1000 to 1500 shepherds and labourers might find employment immediately.*⁹

The Legislative Council Report found its way to London, where newspapers across Britain were quick to advise prospective emigrants about the virtues of Port Phillip:

*Port Philip is apparently one of the most prosperous of the new settlements, though the public have heard very little of it. It is at the south extremity of New Holland, 300 miles south-west from the nearest settlement of New South Wales, and 600 miles south-east from Adelaide, in South Australia. Melbourne, the chief town...stands on a magnificent bay, measuring 20 miles each way, and land locked on all sides. A despatch of Sir George Gipps, dated October, 1838, informs us that it had more than 3000 inhabitants.*¹⁰

A follow-up communiqué between Sir George Gipps and Lord Glenelg in October 1838 read:

*I beg leave to recommend to your Lordship, that a Government emigrant ship should, as soon as possible, be sent to Port Phillip, and that another should follow after a lapse of four or five months.*¹¹

The second ship recommended by Gipps was the *Westminster* with Patrick, Margaret, Michael, and Norah O'Connor on board in 1839. A picture of the *Westminster* was captured on a 1999 British stamp (**below**).^{12 13}



The 610-ton, three-masted barque Westminster was built in 1837 and registered in London in March 1838.

The Australian Dream

Aside from their abysmal living circumstances and a free ticket, what prompted Patrick and Margaret O'Connor to look to Australia for a new life? Maybe the piece (**next page**), which

appeared in a November 1836 edition of *The Limerick Chronicle*, caught their eye.¹⁴

Competition for a berth on an assisted emigrant ship bound for Australia during the 1830s was intense, with newspapers across Ireland carrying advertisements and editorials about assisted emigration to Australia.

...ther make in all, 284 souls.—
 from a vast number of appli-
 respected emigration agent
 end, R. N. and also by as
 officer in Limerick, Lieut.
 appears to have been made
 criminatingly, and it was
 all the arrangements made
 icers have received from
 Agent-general for emigra-
 val. Upon the whole it
 ss so many happy counte-
 lves on board the vessel
 en were all life and good
 patrons were enjoying the
 change of diet they were
 ere almost forgetting the
 d roof, and the fetid slough
 rld.
 (e) annex to this gratifying
 ies of the Ship Lady Mac-
 for New South Wales, as
 ck, the Commander.
 ndependent of the supply
 oat meal; 100 barrels of
 ley; 1 ton of rice; 300
 India. pork and new beef;
 vinegar; 6 cwt. suet; 8
 10 chests Raisins; 6 dozen
 300 Gallons lemon juice;
 en wine; 8 cwt. cheese; 1
 mustard; a quantity of salt;
 pots; 20 ditto plates; 20
 pewter spoons; 20 ditto
 20 ditto knives and forks;
 e; 1 large slipper bath; a
 king; medicine chest com-
 of every thing required, as
 Dr. Hawkins, the surgeon,
 wash tubs, iron bound;
 blankets, &c. all new and
 in number 345 berths; 25
 f preserved provisions, and
 3 cwt. of soap; 10 quarters
 f bread.

on to Australia.

During the first half of 1839, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor underwent the challenging selection process for Australian Packet Ships to become assisted emigrants to Australia. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, in their *Instructions to Emigration Agents* (1838), made it very clear the regulations for the recruitment, embarkation, and supervision of assisted emigrants to Australia.¹⁵ Emigrants had to be free of any criminal conviction, healthy, of good moral character, and capable of earning a living in the colonies, with a preference for agricultural labourers and female domestic servants. Married couples (men under 40 and women under 35) with children were encouraged, with single women particularly sought to balance the sexes. Single men were only approved if they had trade skills. Irish Catholics required a testimonial from their parish priest to attest to their character, sobriety, and baptism. Lastly, agents needed to affirm that prospective assisted emigrants were unable to afford their own passage but not destitute. Aside from meeting the eligibility requirements, assisted emigrants needed to secure goods and provisions for the lengthy voyage, as well as the initial funds required to establish themselves in a foreign land.

On 17 July 1839, *The Limerick Chronicle* ran two advertisements about free passage for assisted emigrants, including the scheduled departure of the *Westminster* from Gravesend on Sunday, 18 August 1839 (below).¹⁶

PASSAGE TO AUSTRALIA.
SHIPS for Port Phillip and Sydney are despatched regularly every month from London and Plymouth. They are all of the first class, of large tonnage, carry experienced Surgeons, have Poops, and the best arrangements for Cabin, Intermediate, and Stowage Passengers, and sail with undeviating punctuality on fixed days. Agricultural Servants and Mechanics, of suitable age and character, are conveyed in these Ships nearly free.—All particulars may be known on application to Mr. JOHN MARSHALL, Australian Emigration Agent, 26, Birch Lane, Cornhill, London.
 N. B.—Post-paid letters only will be answered.
 June 15.

**Free emigrant passage to
Australia. Apply now!**

AUSTRALIAN
 PACKET  SHIPS.
EMIGRATION TO NEW SOUTH WALES.
Free Passage.
THE Ship "WILLIAM METCALFE," of 550 Tons, will sail from Gravesend on the 10th July, and from Plymouth on the 22nd July, direct for PORT PHILLIP and SYDNEY; the ship "MARY," of 680 Tons register, will leave Gravesend on the 28th of July, and Plymouth on the 5th. August, for SYDNEY; the Ship "WESTMINSTER," of 610 Tons register, will leave Gravesend on the 18th. and Plymouth, on the 26th August, for PORT PHILLIP and SYDNEY, and the Ships "JOHN BULL," 705 Tons register, and "ALFRED," of 716 Tons register, will sail from Gravesend on the 8th, and Plymouth on the 16th of September, for SYDNEY.
 These Ships are all First Class, have Poops and first order of Accommodations; will carry experienced Surgeons, and sail with strict punctuality.
 MARRIED MECHANICS, LABOURERS, and SINGLE FEMALE SERVANTS, are much wanted in the Colony, and can proceed by the above Ships "Free." Such persons as may apply will please state their age and occupation, and by whom they can be recommended. SINGLE FARM LABOURERS, wishing to go out on special agreement can do so on most encouraging terms, and free of any cost.
 All particulars known on application to
JOHN BERNARD, Jun.
 Australian Emigration Agent,
 19, Church-Street, Cork.
 N. B.—First Class Ships will be despatched every three weeks, with strict punctuality.
 Post-paid letters only will be answered.

Shortly after this time, the O'Connors would have received notice that their applications had been successful, with an expectation that they would need to be ready to board a packet steamer at Cobh, County Cork, probably on 12 August, for transfer to Gravesend. British emigration ships bound for Australia left from a handful of ports, including Cobh and Dublin (Ireland), Leith (Scotland), Liverpool, Portsmouth, and Gravesend (England).

Unfortunately, the O'Connors did not leave from Gravesend, London, as expected, but from County Limerick.

The O'Connors were not alone. In 1838, John Marshall. He was a man who had come to Australia. He was involved with the British emigration system, which was designed to select emigrants, fit out their journey, and ensure the health of emigrants. Marshall was one of the agents, primarily responsible for the mass migration of Irish people to Australia. He provided domestic service and was paid a fee of £1 and £5 for each emigrant. Marshall was also responsible for servants, with the British emigration system. In 1838, Marshall was at Australian ports, the County Limerick, and children. He had hundreds from in either Patrick or their departure.^{20 21}

Marshall was in Cork, on or about 12 August, and was likely to have been in County Cork, and the River Lee. He was down the River Lee, where Patrick O'Connor was also in the emigration, where Patrick

and his family met many fellow emigrants and officers from Australian Packet Ships, who had arranged their passage to Gravesend on a paddle steamer.

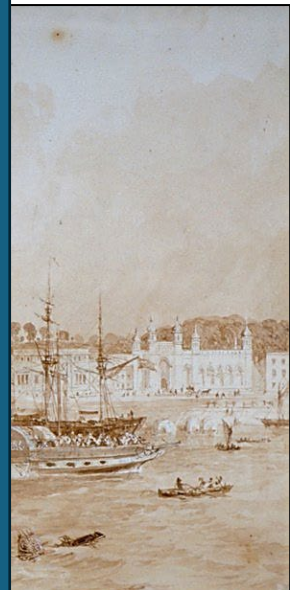
The day of leaving would have been devastating for both the O'Connor and Kennedy families and their friends. While Patrick, Margaret, and Norah were excited, if not a little anxious, they felt a pervading sorrow as they bid their final goodbyes to those they loved and would never see again. It was common for the parish priest to bless the group before their departure **(below)**.²² With a small cart drawn by a single donkey or horse and stacked with three wooden trunks, Margaret climbed aboard with Michael in her arms while Norah gave her siblings a final embrace. Patrick stepped to the front, took hold of the reins, and as the traces tightened, the cart jolted forward, beginning the journey that would shape all their lives. Some family and friends, overcome with emotion, would have walked with them for some distance, sobbing and crying, eventually leaving one or two who took the full journey to bring the cart back. Farmer Nicholas Hennessy, his wife Anne and their 15-year-old daughter Margaret, as well as two single house servants, Bridget Collins and Bridget Doughan, all from the Parish of Newcastle, were also passengers on the *Westminster* and, in all likelihood, they joined the O'Connors for the walk to Cork.²³



**Irish
Emigrants
– The
Priest's
Blessing.**

Gravesend, County Kent, England

Gravesend, some 40km downstream from London on the River Thames, was a busy riverside town, with wharves and piers bustling with maritime activity (**below**).²⁴ Patrick and his family would have arrived one or two days before their departure, staying in one of the many lodging houses adjacent to the newly built Thames Pier. How anxious yet excited they must have been, standing on the pier, watching the ship, newly arriving, freshly built vessel, sailing down the river. The ship was a small, three-masted vessel, sailing down the River Thames. They were to be met by a small boat, and the task of loading the ship was a quite a complex task. The ship was to be loaded with the wooden travel supplies necessary for the journey. The supplies included salted pork, dried peas, mustard, pepper, and a small consignment of a few other items. Unfortunately, the rams died



Baynes. A ship similar to the one used by the

On Board the Westminster

Friday, 16 August 1839, was an important day for the O'Connors. Patrick, Margaret, and Norah met with officers from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, along with the ship's Surgeon-Superintendent, to have their documents checked and to undergo a medical assessment. The commission immediately cancelled passage for anyone who failed to meet the eligibility requirements, or those presenting with a fever, infectious disease, deformity, debility, or females more than six months pregnant. How pleased the intrepid O'Connor travellers must have felt the following morning as they showed their *Ticket of Embarkation* to board a small rowboat that ferried them to the *Westminster*. Once on board, they were promptly assigned their berths and, with their luggage already stowed, waited until the evening muster, when the Surgeon-Superintendent and Matron reiterated the Code of Shipboard Regulations. These required the compartments to be swept daily and scrubbed with vinegar twice weekly, hatchways to remain open whenever weather permitted, and strict obedience to the ship's officers at all times. Morning and evening prayers were expected each day, while rations were issued in fixed quantities, including flour, oatmeal, beef or pork, peas, tea, sugar, and three quarts of water per person daily.²⁶

How fortunate the O'Connors must have felt boarding a new ship, one untainted by the death, blood, stench, and tears of years of transferring convicts, as many emigrant ships were. The *Westminster* had a crew of about 30, including Captain S. A. Mollison, Surgeon-Superintendent Mr Davis, a first mate, a second mate, a boatswain, a carpenter, cooks, stewards, and a team of able and ordinary seamen, and lastly, the formidable matron who supervised the single women, including Norah O'Connor.

The manifest for the voyage included 216 passengers. The number included 157 assisted emigrants (73 people across 30 families), 43 single men, and 41 single women. Fifty-nine passengers paid for their passage, including 14 men, five women, and five children in first-class cabins; 12 men and five women in intermediate class; and 18 men in steerage. The assisted emigrants comprised farm labourers, servants, dairywomen, cooks, carpenters, masons, bricklayers, cabinetmakers, tailors, sawyers, reapers, shearers, gardeners, ploughmen, shepherds, weavers, housemaids, dressmakers, and seamstresses. Sadly, the surviving manifest for the *Westminster* is woefully incomplete and does not include the names of any infants, such as Michael O'Connor, who travelled in the care of their mother.

Most assisted emigrant ship manifests included this detail, including the names of those youngsters who died in transit, which, regrettably, was quite common.

Following the evening muster, Captain Mollison, satisfied the ship was ready to sail, ordered all passengers to their quarters. The ship was to depart at dawn, on the ebbing tide.²⁷ Imagine the

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29

worldly goods for
our feet (120cm) and
utensils, toiletries,
the males travelled in
to no privacy. The
heaved, swayed, and
hip, below deck,
privacy.

Mollison arranged for Margaret, and Michael to travel to Slough, Galway, where Margaret separated from her family for

much of the voyage in a closed-off section at the rear of the ship. The O'Connors took their meals in a communal galley running between their bunks (**below**).³⁰



Emigrant families preparing and taking their evening meals. Their bunks can be seen to the left and right.

The passengers in first class enjoyed private cabins on the upper rear part of the ship, well away from the animals, noises, and smells. They joined Mr Mollison and Mr Davis in enjoying a dedicated steward service, a saloon space for socialising, a private dining area, and fresh meat, milk, and eggs courtesy of the goats, cows, chickens, and pigs on board. Predictably, all 24 of these elite souls spent time under the care of Mr Davis in the ship's hospital cabin.

Despite the heartache and anxiety associated with leaving their families, Patrick and Margaret would have felt a deep relief as they were leaving extreme hardship for what they hoped and prayed would be a better life. The *Illustrated London News* reported that it was common to see Irish emigrants singing and dancing merrily on board, with those skilled in the flute or fiddle in constant demand throughout the voyage.³¹ It is easy to imagine Patrick O'Connor on the right of the picture, gleefully playing his fiddle (**next page**).³²

Although arduous, the voyage would have been an incredible experience for Patrick and his family. The *Westminster* first crossed the Atlantic Ocean, passing the Cape Verde Islands off the west coast of Africa and then Rio de Janeiro off the east coast of South America. It crossed the Atlantic once more to the southern tip of Africa, rounding the Cape of Good Hope. From

the Cape, her sails filled generously with the winds of the *roaring forties*, quickly making her way across the Indian Ocean and southern Australia to the Bass Strait and Port Phillip Bay.^{33 34}

On 13 December 1839, Captain Mollison carefully directed the *Westminster* from Bass Strait through the surging rip current between Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean, and into the tranquil waters of Port Phillip Bay, where the ship arrived on 15 December. The passengers, most frail and elderly, had arrived in Port Phillip Bay after a journey that had ended, their



passengers and their baggage were landed at Port Phillip Bay, and for five kilometres to

the banks of the Yarra Yarra River, where over 50 tents awaited them as temporary accommodation. Eager for their arrival, the authorities in Melbourne ensured the immigrants were well-fed and comfortable before each met with a Colonial Immigration Agent at Marshall's Immigration Office, where their health and bounty eligibility was assessed.³⁶ Details registered for each immigrant included their name, age, trade, native place, religion, ability to read or write, sponsor agent, the amount of bounty payable to the agent, the name and location of the employer, and the agreed-upon wage and terms of employment.³⁷

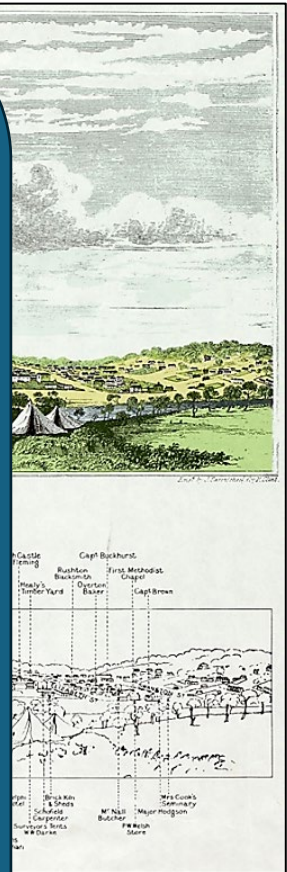
*List of Immigrants British subjects who have been
by Mr John Marshall of London per ship Westminster from
610 TONS, master, MOLISON*

No.	Name	Age	Trade	Native place	Religion	
19	John D ^o	30	Genl. Servant	"	"	
20	Patrick Connor	28	Barman	Ballingary Co. Limerick	R Catholic	
21	Marg ^t D ^o	24	Daughterman	"	"	
22	Chas Dixon	24	Taylor	London	Protestant	
3	Elizabeth Cole	18	Housemaid	Co. Limerick	R Catholic	
4	Nora Connor	16	Daughterman	Co. Limerick	R Catholic	
60	Margaret Collins	Housemaid	21	"	"	Gone up the Country
61	Margaret Connor	Housemaid	24	"	"	Gone up the Country
62	Nora D ^o	Housemaid	16	"	"	Gone up the Country
63	Patrick Connor	Agricultural Labourer	28	"	"	do
64	Catherine Dixon	General Servant	26	"	"	Not engaged

Extracts from the Westminster manifest record their travel details and assignments in Melbourne.

Employers in Melbourne, like the wealthy squatter C. H. Ebdon, quickly negotiated employment terms with many immigrants. His Melbourne office, as well as Marshall's Immigration Office, are pictured (**next page**).³⁸ The assignment notes for about a third of the Westminster passengers, chiefly the Irish, including Patrick, Margaret, and Norah O'Connor, stated simply, *gone up country*, meaning they were hired by agents representing squatters and

settlers some distance from Melbourne, with the Mount Macedon region the most common destination (**previous page**). Unsurprisingly, the agreed annual wage for all the Irish was just £10, the lowest among those on the ship.



in Australia. They particularly assisted centuries, the English *was wasted*, bringing defined as ignorant, sentiments were fuelled and the anti-Irish opinion. In 1841, Lang

published an influential pamphlet titled *The Question of Questions!* He argued that the political dominance of the colony by Protestants was threatened by Catholics, who, despite being a minority, were much more united. Lang feared the association between the inflow of Irish Catholic immigrants and the existing Irish convict class, with whom many were related.^{39 40}

It was further argued that Australia was a pastoral sheep-farming country and that the Irish were ill-suited because all they knew was how to grow potatoes and farm pigs!⁴¹ Paradoxically, it was the Irish, among them the O'Connors, who provided the labour, endurance, and determination that sustained and expanded pastoral Australia.

Patrick and Margaret O'Connor were as Irish as they come, being first-language Irish speakers. Unable to read and write in English, they sadly experienced the same racial, cultural, and religious discrimination they hoped to have put behind them. Despite settling among substantial Irish immigrant communities in the Macedon Ranges, the O'Connors lived largely within Irish social enclaves, where opportunities remained constrained by the British hegemony, and advancement remained elusive for much of their lives.

Macedon Ranges

The land journey from Melbourne to Mount Macedon and the Macedon Ranges was approximately 90 kilometres. Imagine how the Irish O'Connors would have felt upon arriving in Melbourne during an Australian summer, when temperatures could reach well over 40 °C (104 °F). Imagine again their journey and settlement in the Macedon Ranges, where they encountered the planet's deadliest spiders and snakes, as well as screeching galahs, laughing kookaburras, lizards, large goannas, koalas, echidnas, wombats, emus, kangaroos, and wallabies. They must have thought they were in another world, and indeed they were! Though strange and unsettling, it was also a land of striking beauty and potential, as noted by the editor of the *Port Phillip Gazette* in his advice to new immigrants in 1840:

Mount Macedon, in the Port Phillip district, is a fine bold mass, the commencement of a wooded range, extending for the greater part easterly; its height is estimated at above three thousand feet, but clothed with trees to the very summit. It may be crossed by a traveller on horseback, and commands a beautiful view to the south of Port Phillip—to the north of an expanse of country diversified with hill and plain—in the distance the sheen of a riverline or body of water, backed by ranges of blue hills—at hand a forest of noble timber, opening in its deepest recesses plains of rich herbage, and watered by running

*streams... These rivers, including their tributaries, of which the largest is the Campaspee, rising at the foot of Mount Macedon, water a considerable tract of fertile country.*⁴²

Conclusion

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We low Mount Macedon.
The familiar and

One can only imagine
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red Port Phillip, 15 Dec 1839).
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tralia and other Parts of the Empire.

Charles Wentworth was pivotal
rough enabled rapid pastoral
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ment-sponsored program that help populate the colonies and meet right settlers, often favouring single beds of thousands of migrants, throughout the 19th century.

Territory

1

13

14 *Line*

15 Column

16 *Limerick Cms*

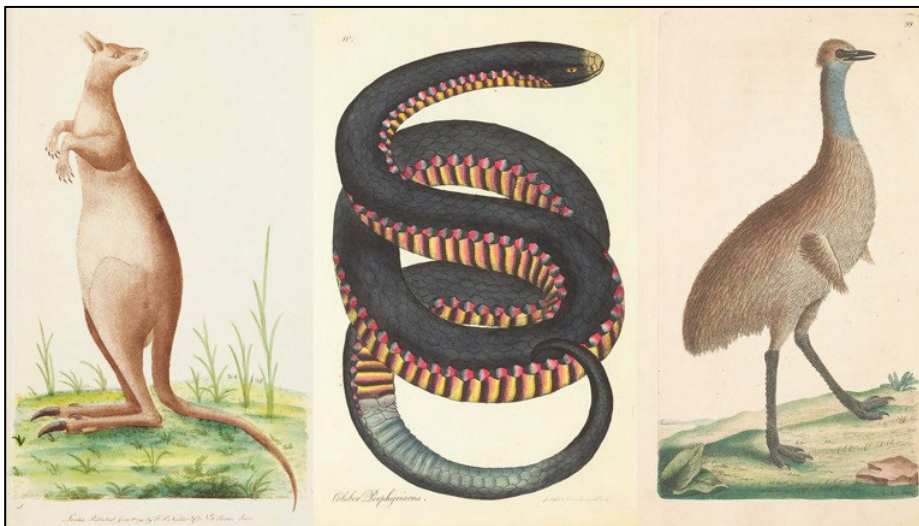
Board Emigrant Ships. London: HMSO.

- ¹⁷ Haines, R. (1997). *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831–60*. Macmillan, London.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ McDonald, J. and Richards, E. (1997). The Great Emigration of 1841: Recruitment for New South Wales in British Emigration Fields. *Population Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 3.
- ²⁰ Ancestry. (2007). *New South Wales, Australia, Assisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1828-1896* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc.
- ²¹ Ancestry. (2009). *Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1839-1923* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc.
- ²² *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 10 May 1851
- ²³ The emigration authorities encouraged assisted emigrants from the same location to travel in a group.
- ²⁴ Baynes, T. M. (1830). Public Domain.
- ²⁵ *Port Phillip Gazette*, Wednesday 18 December 1839
- ²⁶ Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, *op. cit.*
- ²⁷ *Times (London)*, Monday 19 August 1839
- ²⁸ Oakum is a coarse, tarred fibre traditionally made by loosening and unpicking old ropes that had been used aboard ships. The fibres were then impregnated with tar or pitch to make them waterproof. Oakum was packed into the seams between wooden planks on ships' hulls and decks to make them watertight.
- ²⁹ Haines, R. (1994). *Life and Death in the Age of Sail: The Passage to Australia*. UNSW Press, Sydney.
- ³⁰ *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 13 April 1844
- ³¹ *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 6 July 1850
- ³² It is highly likely that Patrick O'Connor played the fiddle as his grandchildren played the fiddle, presumably taught by their father William, who intern was almost certainly tutored in the instrument by his father Patrick.
- ³³ The *roaring forties* refer to a powerful and constant system of westerly winds that blow in the Southern Hemisphere, roughly between the latitudes of 40 and 50 degrees. These winds are known for their strength and consistency, often reaching gale force and creating turbulent conditions at sea. The name *roaring forties* was coined due to the fierce howling sound produced by these winds as they whip through the region. These winds have historically posed challenges to sailors, as they generate large swells and unpredictable weather patterns. However, the Roaring Forties have also been utilized by seafarers for faster sailing routes, particularly during the age of sail when ships could harness their power to facilitate quicker voyages.
- ³⁴ Richards, E. (2008). *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia since 1901*. UNSW Press, Sydney.
- ³⁵ *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, Monday 16 December 1839
- ³⁶ Based on the account of the arrival of the *David Clarke* in the *Port Phillip Gazette*, Wednesday 6 November 1839. The *David Clarke* was the first assisted immigrant ship to arrive in Melbourne directly from Great Britain. The *Westminster* was the second.
- ³⁷ New South Wales State Archives and Records, *op. cit.*
- ³⁸ State Library of Victoria. Public Domain.
- ³⁹ In early colonial New South Wales, prominent religious leaders such as the Anglican clergyman Samuel Marsden and the Scottish Presbyterian minister John Dunmore Lang expressed deep hostility toward the Irish, particularly Irish Catholics, reflecting broader British sectarian and ethnic prejudices of the period. Marsden, a powerful magistrate as well as a minister, regarded Irish convicts as inherently rebellious and morally suspect, attitudes shaped by fears of Irish resistance following events such as the 1798 rebellion and reinforced after the Castle Hill uprising of 1804, which he interpreted as evidence of Catholic disloyalty. Lang, though later an advocate for free immigration, frequently portrayed the Irish as socially backward and politically dangerous, arguing that Catholic influence threatened the moral and Protestant character he envisioned for the colony. Such rhetoric helped legitimise discriminatory policies and social exclusion, fostering an environment in which Irish settlers often faced suspicion, limited opportunity, and entrenched sectarian division well into the 1900s.
- ⁴⁰ O'Farrell, P. (1993). *The Irish in Australia*. Revised Edition. UNSW Press, Sydney.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Port Phillip Gazette*. (1840). Latest information about Australia Felix, the Finest Province of the Great Territory of New South Wales; including The History, geography, natural resources, Government, Commerce, and Finances of Port Phillip; Sketches of the Aboriginal Population and Advice to Immigrants; by The Editor of the Port Phillip Gazette, Melbourne. Arden and Strode, Printers, Gazette Office, Australia Felix.

Chapter 3

Pioneers 1840 – 1877

There was little resemblance between Patrick and Margaret O'Connor's new lives in Australia and their past in Ireland. The landscape, climate, agriculture, plants, people, animals, and the sheer expanse and newness of their adopted country precipitated a whole new way of life—an Australian pioneering life. The knowledge, skills and dispositions they learned as pioneers were to be passed from father and mother to sons and daughters, laying the foundation for generations of successful Australian dryland wheat and sheep farmers.

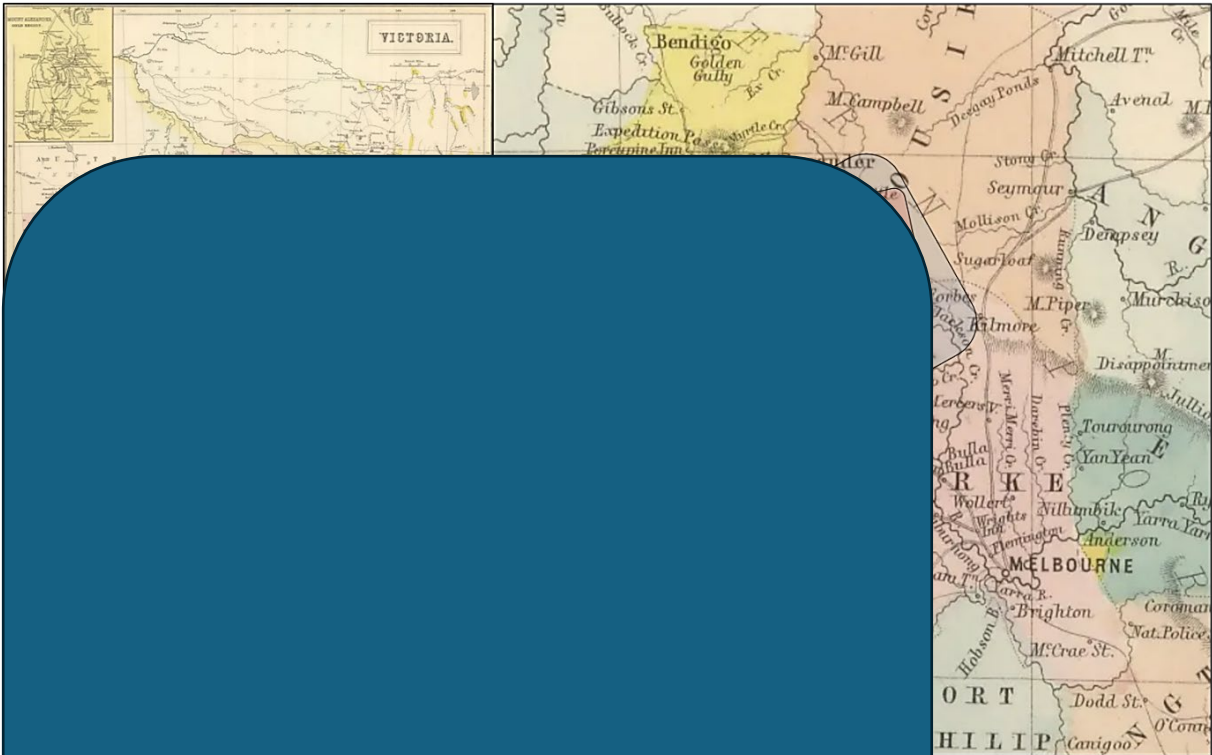


There were no snakes in Ireland!

The O'Connors must have thought they were in a different world when they arrived in the Macedon Ranges.

Chapter 3 – Pioneers 1840 – 1877 tracks the extraordinary *Balboora O'Connors* from their early days on a squatter's run in the Macedon Ranges, through to their first farm in the Parish of Carlsruhe, near the new township of Kyneton, then to more substantial leaseholds in the nearby Parishes of Langley and Baynton. The chapter concludes with the auction of their holdings in the Parish of Langley and the decision by Patrick and Margaret, along with their adult children William, James, Margaret, and Catherine, to relocate to new leaseholds at Terrick Terrick East, near Echuca in the Northern Plains of Victoria.

The Macedon Ranges

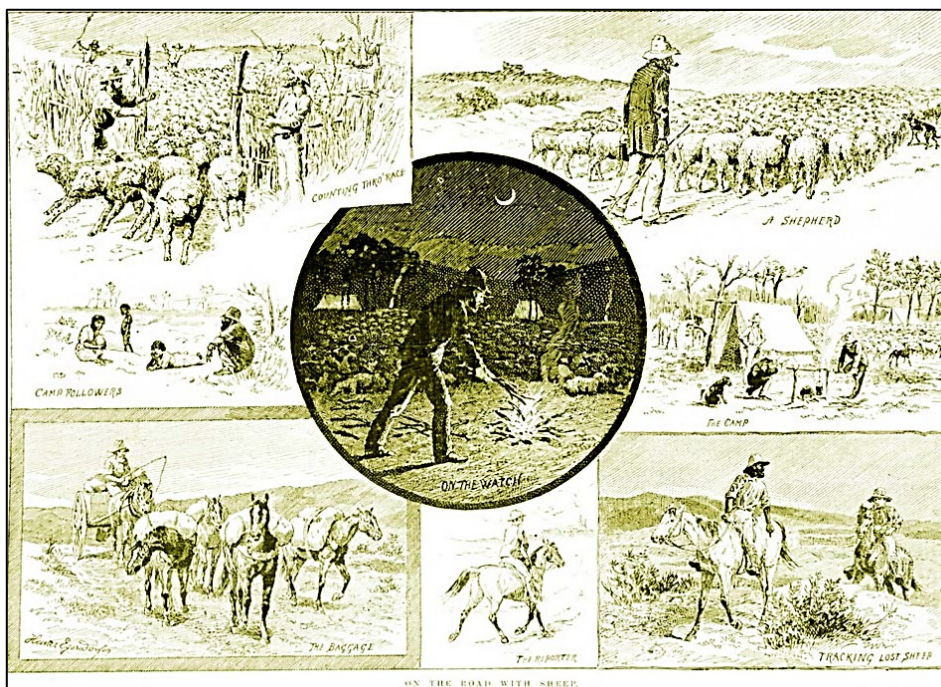


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the Balboora

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built their wealth on
early 1800s in
sheep from the
from India and Cape

sheep from South Africa, to selectively breed with fine-wool Spanish Merino sheep. The resulting Australian Merino adapted well to dry conditions and became the basis for high-quality wool production during the colonial pastoral boom.

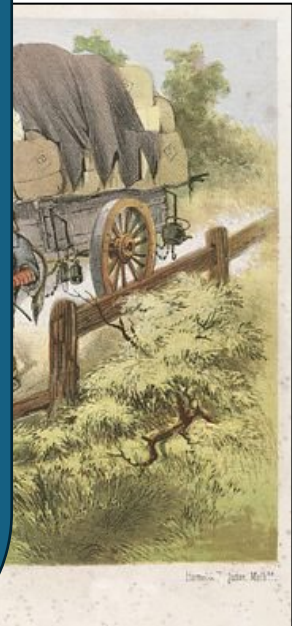
Prominent squatters in the Macedon Ranges included Charles Ebden and Alexander Mollison. In 1837, Ebden led one of the earliest overland pastoral expeditions, driving 9,000 sheep, 30 horses, and nine bullock drays from his Murray River station in New South Wales into the Macedon Ranges. By May that year, he had established the Carlsruhe run on the Campaspe River west of Mount Macedon. Following his lead, Alexander Mollison drove his livestock from the Murrumbidgee River and took up the Coliban run in January 1838, stocking it with 5,000 sheep, 634 cattle, 28 bullocks, and 22 horses.² Both men relied heavily on the assisted immigration scheme to augment their labour needs, with Patrick, Margaret and Norah probably secured by one of them, most likely Ebden.³ They would have initially agreed to a 12-month employment term, with wages, duties, and provisions, including accommodation and food, negotiated with the squatter's agent upon disembarking from the *Westminster* in Melbourne. Patrick, Margaret and Norah each earned £10 in their first year in Australia. The image **(below)** depicts life on a squatter's run.



The work of a station hand on a squatter's run.

Ebden's run was a major enterprise with a homestead and cottages for the many station workers, servants and their families, stockyards, a shearing shed, a milking yard and bails, storehouses, a forge, and a steam-powered flour mill on the Campaspe River. In addition to thousands of sheep, the run kept beef and dairy cattle, pigs, bullocks, horses, and poultry, and had fields for cultivating wheat, oats, and barley.

On the 1st of January 1841, the first sheep were sent to the station. The sheep were to maintain the station and to move forward. In the first year, the station was to be built on turf (peat), and the station was to be built at reaping, and the station was to be built at Patrick, though, and the station was to be built at hand, he quickly and the station was to be built at sheep (previous page).⁴ The station was to be built at shearing, and packing and the station was to be built at starting the wool clip and the station was to be built at wool bales, each and the station was to be built at red ramps, block- and the station was to be built at ly (below).⁵



In County Limerick, Norah O'Connor had received a basic education and was a valuable support to Patrick and Margaret. Not only did she help with the care of their children, but Norah also assisted Patrick and Margaret in navigating the many English literacy challenges they faced as native Irish speakers who were unable to read or write in English.

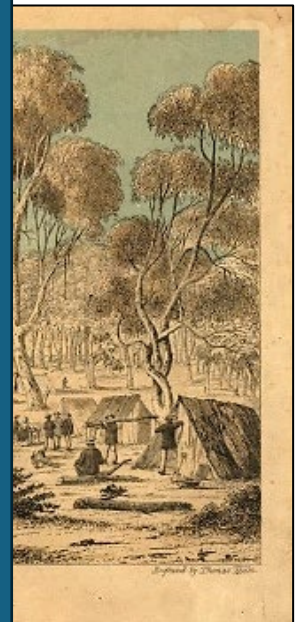
Over the next decade or so, Patrick O'Connor and his family consolidated an Australian pioneering life, and despite not having the means to purchase land, they had guaranteed employment and lived in circumstances far better than they had experienced in Ireland. Within three years of their arrival, the young Michael had two little sisters: Mary, born in 1840, and Ellen, born in 1843. Two brothers followed, William in 1847 and James in 1850, and by the time Michael was a young man, two more sisters had joined the family, Margaret in 1853 and Catherine in 1857.

Their life in Australia was often touched by moments of melancholy, as memories of those left behind in Ireland resurfaced, especially when working and socialising with fellow Irish immigrants or on hearing news from newly arrived countrymen. The O'Connors would have been acutely aware of the devastation of the *Great Hunger* between 1845 and 1852, and likely feared that many of their family, relatives and friends had not survived. Until 1854, communication between the O'Connors in Australia and their kin in Ireland was effectively impossible. The introduction of the British Australian Postal Convention, though, brought cheaper, more reliable mail services and enabled correspondence to flow freely between the two worlds.⁶ Records show that at least one letter was sent from Ireland to the *Balboora* O'Connors. For most of 1856, a letter addressed jointly to Margaret and Norah O'Connor lay among numerous unclaimed letters at the Melbourne General Post Office.⁷ Newspapers, including the *Kyneton Observer*, regularly published lists of unclaimed letters, raising the hopeful possibility that Margaret and Norah eventually learned of its arrival and were able to read it and reply. The letter bearing Norah's name is the last time she appears in any record, and sadly, her life in Australia after 1856 remains untold. It is probable, though, that she stayed with Patrick and Margaret until Patrick approved a good nuptial match for his much-cherished sister.⁸

Gold Fever

The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 triggered a massive gold rush in nearby Ballarat, Bendigo, and Mount Alexander (Castlemaine). Thousands of Irish immigrants were drawn to

the diggings, including many who had recently arrived and others who were already living and working in the colony. Stations around the Kyneton area were left short-handed, with many, including shepherds, bullock drivers, and farmhands, downing tools to join the rush. It is anyone's guess whether Patrick O'Connor also caught gold fever. However, a man with that name was recorded in the Kyneton area, approximately 35 km from Kyneton.⁹ Presumably, it was a man who had come to the colony on crown lands without a

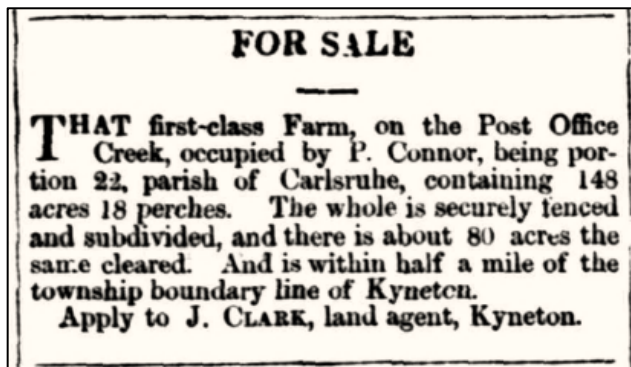


In 1857, the O'Connors were on a farm in the Parish of Kyneton, including the township of Kyneton. The township was divided into sections of 160 acres each. The government-sponsored land was sold at auction, and the district was opened to smaller settlers. The district produced abundant crops,

prompting Irish-born journalist William Kelly to laud the unexpected fine quality of the country:

*The sweet hamlet of Carlsruhe ... that assumed an air of an old agricultural settlement, subdivided into fields and agricultural enclosures far and wide, which I must say, perfectly surprised me on the high road to the most prolific gold-field. I rather expected to find farming operations suspended or paralysed.*¹⁵

The O'Connors leased their farm from a man named William Royle [Royal]. The Royal family would have a long association with the O'Connors, as two of Patrick and Margaret's children, William and Margaret, both married Royals, who were likely the niece and nephew of William Royle. Even though the O'Connor farm was listed for sale by Royle in 1860 (**below**), the land was in his possession in 1865, so presumably the O'Connors remained as his tenant until at least 1862, when they sought further farming opportunities in the nearby Parishes of Langley and Baynton.^{16 17 18}



Kyneton Observer, Saturday 21 April 1860.

The Post Office Creek ran through the Kyneton township.



A painting by A. H. Vickers of East Kyneton in the mid-1850s, very near the farm owned by William Royle and worked by the O'Connors. The building in the right foreground is Apperley's Hotel.

Like they had done on a squatter's run, the O'Connors, in exchange for a reasonable living, added significant value to the land they worked. One of the most demanding tasks was clearing land for cultivation, land which had been home to thousands of squatters' sheep for the previous twenty years. Not only was the land heavily wooded with white gum and stringy bark trees, but it was also littered with granular quartz and granite.¹⁹ Patrick and Michael lifted almost every granite stone on the property, using them to build the all-

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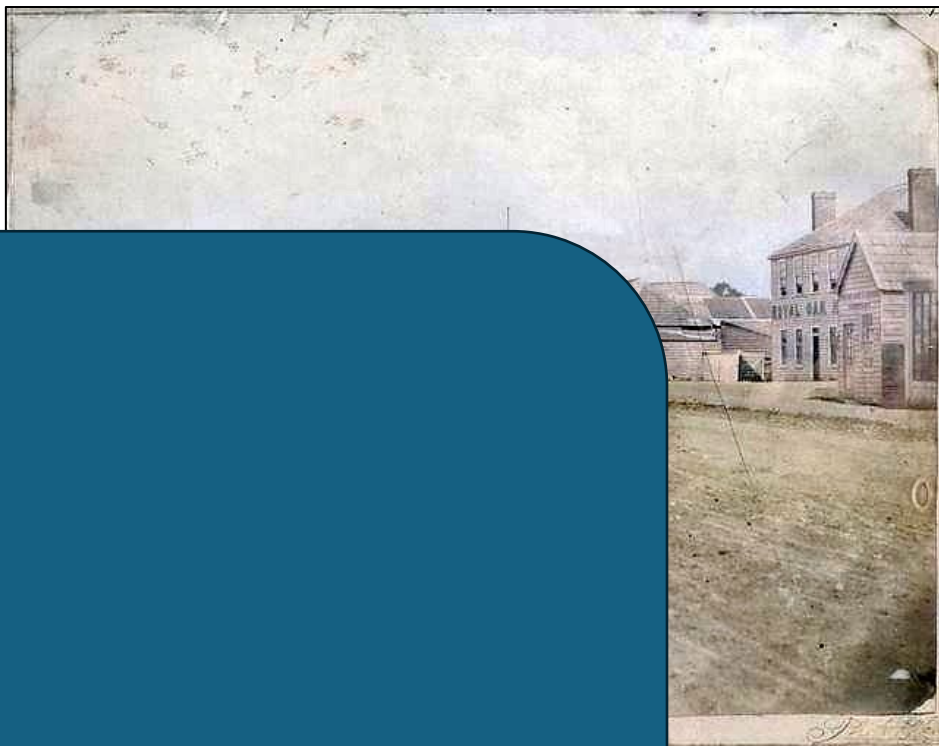
y imagination would fail



A timber slab cottage similar to that which Patrick O'Connor would have built at Carlsruhe.

With thousands of men on the goldfields, opportunities and wages for rural and domestic labour soared. This empowered working-class settlers, primarily Irish immigrants, to demand better working and living conditions and to seek broader opportunities. The now 50-year-old Patrick seized the opportunity and supplemented his farm income by contracting his services, along with those of the 25-year-old Michael and the 15-year-old William, to the shire council and other clients, providing contract labour and expertise for road works and repairing bridges.^{26 27}

By 1860, Kyneton had grown to a population of more than 2,000 and with its courthouse, police barracks, post office, banks, hotels, shops, churches, blacksmiths, and produce stores, the town had evolved from a frontier outpost into a thriving service centre for farming and labouring families. Its weekly markets provided Patrick with both an income and a reliable guide to crop and livestock prices, allowing him to sell his produce and purchase seeds, tools, and stock. It was also in Kyneton that the young O'Connors attended school and the family gathered for Mass. The photograph **(next page)** is a Kyneton street scene shot in 1861.²⁸ Situated on the routes to several goldfields, Kyneton became a busy stopover for diggers with their drays and for local farmers. Cobb & Co. coaches serviced the town, and the arrival of the railway in the mid-1860s provided ready access to Melbourne.



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1866.

Finally, in 1866, after 27 years in the colony, the middle-aged Patrick and the 29-year-old Michael had each secured three 20-acre blocks, under their own name, separated by the Jew's Harp Creek, in the adjoining Parishes of Langley and Baynton, northeast of Kyneton (**previous page**).²⁹ Even better news, though, was ahead for the O'Connors when the *Victorian Land Act (1869)* enabled them to lease up to 320 acres of unsurveyed Crown land in the same area. The O'Connors seized this opportunity, and by the early 1870s, Patrick, along with William and James, each leased 320 acres in Langley, while Michael had secured 320 acres at Baynton (**below**).^{30 31 32}



Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Surveys for Langley and Baynton, County of Dalhousie.

attracted membership of almost all the male Irish in the district, no matter their status, and had the express aims to:

*... firstly promote the social and moral advancement of its members; secondly, for the purpose of assisting any of the members or those depending upon them, from time to time who may be in trouble or tribulation; and thirdly, for the purpose of stimulating in the heart of every Irishman a loving and ever cherished memory for the noble generous, though oppressed land of his birth.*³⁶

In August 1875, the Australian-born 28-year-old William O'Connor pledged his fidelity to the society by agreeing to support fellow members and to uphold the principles of the Catholic Church while remaining a law-abiding subject within the colony (**below**).^{37 38}

**HIBERNIAN-AUSTRALASIAN
CATHOLIC BENEFIT SOCIETY.**
ST. MARY'S BRANCH, KYNETON.
The ordinary meeting of this branch was held on Wednesday evening, the 18th inst.; the president, Bro. J. Gorey, in the chair. Three members were reported off the sick funds, and sick pay to the amount of £8, was ordered to be paid. Messrs. W. O'Connor, W. L. White, and M. Hartigan were admitted as full benefit members, and Mr. J. Coman proposed for membership. A letter was read from District Secretary, forwarding £10, funeral allowance. Bro. Larton, P.S. of St. Mary's Branch, Malmsbury, attended the meeting, and was accorded a unanimous vote of thanks, to which he suitably replied. After other miscellaneous branch business being disposed of, the meeting closed in the usual form. Receipts, £12 5s. 6d.

**Advocate (Melbourne),
Saturday 28 August 1875.**

The Irish farmers around Kyneton took great pride in their work, readily showcasing the quality of their produce and stock at agricultural shows, testing their thoroughbreds at race meetings, and demonstrating their skill in cultivation through ploughing contests, a point noted by Irishman James Francis Hogan, who edited *The Advocate*, a Melbourne-based Catholic weekly:

*... the substantial town of Kyneton, is also largely peopled by settlers of Irish birth or parentage. Kyneton is beautifully situated on the River Campaspe, is connected by railway with the metropolis, and is the centre of a far-famed community of cultivators. Its agricultural show-day is only exceeded in splendour and popularity by the bright moving spectacle seen at its annual race-meeting on each St. Patrick's Day. On both these festive occasions Kyneton becomes crowded with visitors from far and near - friendly gatherings of the Irish clans, well-fed, well-dressed, and well-behaved.*³⁹

The O'Connors loved their thoroughbreds. The Kyneton St Patrick's Day meeting drew some of the finest horses in the colony and, in 1877, featured entries from W. S. Cox, a man whose

name was later honoured in one of Australia's premier races, the *W. S. Cox Plate*. Race meetings were also a highlight in surrounding townships such as Baynton, where, on St Patrick's Day in 1867, Patrick O'Connor ran his horse *Paddy* in both the first and third races (**below**). Fortune, however, did not favour him on the day, though he did protest the result in the third race, contesting that the owner of the winning horse, Mr Oliver, was not a bona fide farmer. Oliver was a professional breeder, and was disqualified for breeding, taking first prize with his yearling colt at the 1877

WORKERS DELIGHTED AT LUCKY BEAN'S WIN

LETON RACES EVENTFUL

BY "AUSTRAL"

prizes were given and hats thrown in the air when it was seen that Bean had won the Kyneton yesterday. The demonstration was a lucky one for Bean, the victor in the lead, and it was kept till A. Fitzsimmons, the rider, had led in, and disappeared into the room. No more popular wins were scored at a country meeting any year, and it may be added a horse has more deserved public than the Carbine of the bush. Bean is a remarkably consistent jockey, and Mr Paddy O'Connor, his trainer, has reason to be proud both of size and his own reputation as a light-going sportsman.

ky Bean won the Kentucky Cup in last year was beaten in it flunder by a narrow margin. But aving the radio that occasion p-country champion probably have captured the event three in succession. Lucky Bean has almost every important race deat Woodend, Kyneton, and Hauglock at least once. The Monchi-elding started at 10 to 1 yester-ay Kyneton to a man was on him. n are not supposed to bet, di- but few of the large number t were without an investment ky Bean. In handing Mr O'Con- e handsome silver cup, Cr Hogg stulated him on owning such a horse and running it to win on occasion. It was rather amu- nst that the only toast received uested honors was that of Lucky ean—Mr O'Connor is a mem- of the committee, and he gave them lip—and their winnings stimulated e vocal powers. "We may sang, "For a Jolly Good Fellow" with heart-

Ploughing matches were popular across the colony, including the Kyneton district, offering farmers an opportunity to showcase their cultivation skills. George and Frederick Royal were very accomplished with the plough, keenly contesting numerous ploughing matches, while the 17-year-old James O'Connor, in 1877, won £2 for his skills in wielding the family's locally made *Hutcheson and Walker* plough, finishing second in the Under 18 ploughing match in Kyneton.^{43 44} Pictured **(below)** is a ploughing match taken during the mid-1870s.

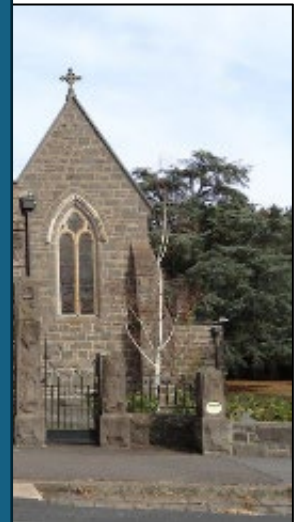


Ploughing matches were organised by agricultural societies, with competitors assigned marked plots to be ploughed within a set time using horse-drawn ploughs under specified conditions. Judging focused on workmanship rather than speed, assessing straightness, uniform depth, clean turning of the sod, neat finishing, and control of horses.

Patrick and his family, together with many Irish Catholic immigrants in the district, played a prominent role in the fundraising and construction of the impressive bluestone St Mary's Catholic Church, now Our Lady of the Rosary, completed in 1861 **(next page)**. Before the church was built, Mass had been celebrated in the Gold Diggers Arms Hotel. The arrival of the Christian Brothers in 1873 and the Sisters of Mercy in 1874 further strengthened Catholic education in Kyneton, with St Mary's Boys' and Girls' Schools, previously staffed by lay teachers, recast as Christian Brothers College and St Mary's Convent School.⁴⁵ There, the O'Connor children received a strong education in catechism, reading, writing, and arithmetic, together with elements of a classical curriculum, while Margaret and Catherine also studied music and needlework.⁴⁶

By the mid-1870s, Michael O'Connor had married Ellen Howe, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer from County Tipperary, and they had a young and growing family. As mentioned, a very close relationship had developed between the O'Connors and the Royal family, which also farmed land on Jew's Harp Creek in Langley.⁴⁷ Before taking up their land at Langley in the 1860s, Patrick, Margaret, and their family had leased land owned by

William for almost a decade. William and Margaret, the daughter of the Royal, with both children, moved to the new home in 1873 and Margaret in 1874. The family were the first to arrive and grooms were the first to arrive in the warmth of old Éire. The family came as the air filled with the smell of cabbage (next to the night stirred to the rafters in a called home.



tasmania, then known as Van Diemen's Land. In 1845, he came to the Port Phillip district. In 1846, he came to the Port Phillip district, and, at St. Francis

Catholic Church in Melbourne. Despite the somewhat curious surname, these Royals were Catholic and of Irish heritage, with the probable surname of Ryall, which had been anglicised as both Royal and Royle during their passage to, and life in Australia.⁴⁹



The Harp of Erin Hotel (right) in Piper Street, Kyneton in 1861.

The O'Connors Look to their Next Opportunity

The land Patrick and his family farmed in the Kyneton district was extraordinarily fertile, regarded as equal to the best in the colony, and ideal for small-scale mixed farming. For over twenty years, farmers had engaged in a profitable rotation of wheat, barley, and oats. Aside from the potato, no root crops were included in the rotation, and the ground never lay fallow until its fertility was exhausted. Once land became unproductive, farmers simply cleared more land for cultivation. The relentless cropping, though, began to affect yields, prompting many farmers to shift from mixed farming to a sole focus on grazing sheep and cattle. This shift required more land, with wealthier farmers eagerly seeking to acquire their neighbours' leaseholds and freeholds. By 1875, many smaller farmers, particularly those of Irish heritage, began leaving the district to take advantage of new, cheaper leasehold selections in the Northern Plains, particularly around Shepparton and Echuca.⁵⁰ In selling up, farmers could auction any freehold land held under Crown Grant, but leasehold land itself could not be sold. Improvements made by the lessee, however, could be auctioned, provided the Local Land Board agreed to transfer the lease to the successful bidder.⁵¹

Friday, 28th June.
To Farmers, Graziers, Investors, and Others.
960 ACRES OF PRIME PASTORAL LAND
By Auction.
CHARLES YOUNG
 Received instructions from
 (moving up country), to sell
 Market Hotel, Kyneton,
 three o'clock, the whole
OF LANGLEY,
 J—
 Allotments 63a, 64a,
 acres—in all 960 acres
 of Messrs H. and J
 63a is a Crown Grant;
 its are held by lease
 of the Land Act; all
 fenced and subdivided
 There are two home-
 comfortable house of four
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 miles; from Baynton
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 of a most fattening
 will be given.
 Terms at Sale.
CHARLES YOUNG,
 Auctioneer, Kyneton.

decided to move, with
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 Crown Grant at
 on their leaseholds
 old land at Terrick

Terrick East was much cheaper than the land at Langley, and this provided the O'Connors and the Royals a modest dividend, giving them the cash for a fresh start.

In 1873, George Royal senior had already sold his freehold farm at Glenhope near Baynton, including his draught horses, a dray, a four-horse wagon, a chaff cutter, a roller, and a plate plough. By 1875, most of the Royal holdings and improvements around Kyneton had been sold.⁵³ Frederick Royal had already established himself at Terrick Terrick East where he had married Mary Reilly, daughter of local farmer Michael Reilly, and operated a general store he hoped to develop into a hotel.⁵⁴

In 1876, the *Government Gazette* records that George and Margaret Royal (O'Connor) and George's brothers, Frederick and John, had each acquired 320-acre leaseholds at Terrick Terrick East, while the 19-year-old Catherine O'Connor also selected a 294-acre block adjacent to that of George and Margaret Royal. Less than a year later, Patrick and William O'Connor had each secured 320-acre selections near those of Margaret and Catherine. Interestingly, there was no block immediately available for James O'Connor. Sadly, John Royal lost his life in a horse fall in February 1878, and Frederick Royal transferred ownership of his block to James O'Connor in 1878, presumably because he had taken over John's holding.^{55 56}

Apart from their birth records, no records exist about the lives of Patrick and Margaret's eldest daughters, Mary and Ellen. Most likely, they married well and enjoyed long and happy lives in the Kyneton district.

Michael O'Connor, now over 40 years old, remained in the Kyneton area and acquired additional property nearby in Pastoria. Michael was to make Pastoria his family home, complete with a 1,300-acre (528-hectare) farm he named *Balboora*. Michael, the last of the Irish-born O'Connors, passed away in 1910, with *Balboora* remaining with his children until its sale in 1926 upon the death of his son, Patrick. At the time of the sale, *Balboora* was described as:

*a splendid grazing property...well watered by springs and creeks, and a good well at the house, subdivided into nine paddocks...improvements consist of a comfortable 6-roomed dwelling, woolshed, and all necessary outbuildings and yards. Both sheep and cattle do exceedingly well, and the land has a very good carrying capacity.*⁵⁷

It is unclear what happened to *Balboora* after 1926, but in 2025, *Balboora* at Pastoria was listed for sale as a *highly productive livestock grazing operation*.⁵⁸

Aside from the *Balboora* farm name and the gravestones of Michael O'Connor and his family in the Kyneton cemetery, the only physical reminder of the O'Connor presence in the Kyneton district is *O'Connor's Hill*, a landmark about 1500 metres west of the Jew's Harp Creek.



A map of the Kyneton district showing the location of the circled area.



**Photographs of
O'Connor's Hill
(above) and the
Balboora
property entry
(below) at
Pastoria.**



Conclusion

Patrick and Margaret O'Connor arrived in the Macedon Ranges in 1840, when it was a wild and open frontier at the edge of colonial settlement, and over the next 37 years, they came to exemplify the spirit, courage, and resilience of Australia's early pioneers. They witnessed their Kyneton community grow from fewer than forty European residents on a Karlsruhe

sheep station into a thriving commercial town of more than 2,500 people. Within their Irish immigrant enclave, they laboured through long, demanding days to raise their children, Michael, Mary, Ellen, William, James, Margaret, and Catherine, deeply mindful and appreciative of the opportunities afforded to them in Australia Felix.⁶⁰

Notes

¹ Roberts, S.H. (1935). *The Squatting Age in Australia, 1835–1847*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

² Macedon Ranges Shire. (2023). *Thematic Environmental History*. Prepared for Macedon Ranges Shire Council. GML Heritage Victoria.

³ State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales (NSW State Archives) 1839–1842, *Colonial Secretary: Correspondence*, NRS 5316. Noted that Ebdon and Mollison employed assisted immigrant shepherds and dairymen from ships arriving in Port Phillip.

⁴ State Library of Victoria. *Glimpses of moving sheep in the Australian bush*, from The Illustrated Australian News and Musical Times.

⁵ State Library of Victoria. *Wool-drays*. Depicts a procession of three heavily laden wool drays. The main dray is pulled by a team of bullocks, with a bullocky cracking his stockwhip, urging them down the slope towards the road. The wool bales are branded B in a rectangle. The load is partly covered by canvas, and a kettle and two kerosene lamps hang below the bottom of the dray. Author/Creator: Gill, ST, 1818-1880. Date: Hamel & Ferguson, Melbourne, [1864]. Public Domain.

⁶ The 1854 British Australian Postal Convention was an agreement between Britain and the Australian colonies that standardised and reduced postal rates, established regular mail routes via the Cape of Good Hope and Suez, and created a unified system for handling overseas correspondence between Australia and the United Kingdom.

⁷ *Argus*, Friday 11 April 1856; *Argus*, Friday 11 July 1856; *Argus*, Wednesday 23 July 1856; and *Argus*, Friday 12 December 1856

⁸ In the colony at this time a woman required the permission of a parent or guardian to marry before the age of 21.

⁹ *Argus*, Saturday 13 November 1852

¹⁰ *Mount Alexander Mail*, Friday 16 February 1855

¹¹ Victorian Collections. T. Ham. *Forest Creek, Mt Alexander*. Public Domain.

¹² National Library of Australia. 1856 *Electoral Rolls for Kyneton*. Patrick Connor was listed in East Kyneton, in the Parish of Carlsruhe as a farmer under occupation on freehold land.

¹³ *The Kyneton Observer*, Tuesday 15 May 1860. Patrick Connor listed as a registered elector in Carlsruhe Division of Kyneton.

¹⁴ Bick, D. (1990). *Shire of Kyneton Heritage Study*, Kyneton.

¹⁵ Kelly, W. (1859–60). *Life in Victoria*. Chapman & Hall, London.

William Kelly was an Irish traveller, writer, and keen observer who toured Victoria between 1853 and 1857, recording his experiences in a detailed account titled "Life in Victoria", published in 1859. Originally arriving during the height of the gold rush, Kelly travelled extensively through the colony—including towns like Kyneton, Castlemaine, Bendigo, and the pastoral districts—carefully noting the rapid transformations caused by gold discoveries, immigration, land disputes, and social changes. He had a sharp eye for detail and his writings provide one of the most vivid contemporary descriptions of colonial Victoria, touching on everything from squatter society and township development to the hardships of the goldfields and the tensions between the wealthy and working classes. Kelly was sympathetic to the Irish settlers and critical of the treatment of labourers, offering rare insight into the lives of the Irish Catholic immigrants working on squatter runs or digging for gold, particularly around areas like Mount Macedon, Kyneton, and the surrounding districts.

¹⁶ *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 21 Apr 1860

¹⁷ Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. *Royle's block at Carlsruhe in 1865*.

¹⁸ State Library of Victoria. A. H. Vickers 1853. *Apperley's Hotel Kyneton*. La Trobe Picture Collection. Public Domain.

¹⁹ Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. *Maps and physical geography of Carlsruhe*.

²⁰ Victorian Collections. *Photograph c 1850s from the collection of Halls Gap & Grampians Historical Society*. Public Domain.

²¹ Kelly, *op. cit.*

²² Cumming, D.A. & Graeme G. (1981). *The History of the Shire of Kyneton*. Lowden Publishing, Melbourne. This local history provides excellent material on the early Irish settlement in Carlsruhe, Post Office Creek, and Kyneton districts, describing building techniques, land clearing, and the establishment of Catholic communities.

²³ Public Record Office Victoria. *Land Selection Files, Parish of Carlsruhe, 1850s–1870s*. These include direct archival material showing land selections, stone fencing conditions, and simple farm descriptions from early settlers in the Carlsruhe area.

²⁴ Bick, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Garran, A.C. (ed.) (1886). *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*. Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, Sydney.

²⁶ Serle, G. (1963). *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851–1861*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. During the 1850s and 1860s, many Irish immigrants in country Victoria found employment as road and bridge repair contractors, supplying essential labour for the construction and maintenance of transport routes that connected goldfields, farming districts, and emerging townships, often working under government tenders or local road boards. Their work was critical to colonial expansion, enabling the movement of wool, agricultural produce, and people across rural districts, while also providing Irish families with one of the few reliable pathways to economic stability in the decades following the gold rushes.

- ²⁷ *Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 29 September 1864; *Kyneton Guardian*, Friday 16 December 1864; *Kyneton Observer*, Tuesday 7 March 1865; and *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 22 March 1865
- ²⁸ State Library of Victoria. J. H. Jones, c1861. *Photograph - Kyneton, High Street from Melbourne end*. Public Domain.
- ²⁹ *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 7 April 1866; and *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 14 April 1866
- ³⁰ *Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 21 September 1871; *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 23 September 1871; *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 7 June 1873; *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 19 August 1874; *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 29 August 1874; *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 29 August 1874; and *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 30 October 1875
- ³¹ Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. *Langley, County of Dalhousie* / photo-lithographed at the Department of Lands and Survey Melbourne by J. Noone.
- ³² Victoria Department of Crown Lands and Survey. *Baynton, County of Dalhousie* / photo-lithographed at the Department of Lands and Survey Melbourne by J. Noone.
- ³³ Ballantyne, J. (1880). *Hutchinson's Handbook of Victoria: Our Colony in 1880, International Exhibition 1880, Visitors' Guide to Melbourne, Pictorial & Descriptive*. M. L. Hutchinson, Glasgow Book Warehouse, 15 Collins Street West, Melbourne.
- ³⁴ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 21 March 1877
- ³⁵ Meitheal is the Irish word for a work team and denotes the co-operative labour system where groups of neighbours help each other with farming work, such as harvesting crops.
- ³⁶ *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 22 April 1876
- ³⁷ *Advocate (Melbourne)*, Saturday 28 August 1875
- ³⁸ O'Farrell, P. (1993). *The Irish in Australia*. Revised Edition. UNSW Press, Sydney.
- ³⁹ Hogan, J. F. (1887). *The Irish in Australia*. Ward & Downey, 12 York Street, Covent Garden, London. James Francis Hogan (1855–1924) was an Irish-born writer, journalist, and scholar who migrated to Australia in 1856, worked as a Catholic editor in Melbourne, and later returned to Britain, where he served as the Member of Parliament for Mid Tipperary from 1893 to 1900.
- ⁴⁰ *Kyneton Observer*, Tuesday 19 March 1867
- ⁴¹ *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 24 November 1877
- ⁴² *Melbourne Herald*, Saturday 18 March 1916
- ⁴³ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 27 August 1873; and *The Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 24 June 1875
- ⁴⁴ *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 30 July 1881. Hutcheson & Walker were local manufacturers of farm machinery.
- ⁴⁵ *Melbourne Advocate*, Saturday 5 March 1870 - *The Christian Brothers*
- ⁴⁶ Catechism refers to a summary or manual of religious doctrine, typically in the form of questions and answers, used for teaching in the Catholic Church.
- ⁴⁷ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 18 September 1867
- ⁴⁸ State Library of Victoria. J. H. Jones, c1861. *Photograph - Kyneton, Piper Street Kyneton with the Harp of Erin Hotel*. Public Domain.
- ⁴⁹ In the late 1700s, many Irish migrated to England seeking labouring work in an attempt to escape economic hardship and rural poverty. Liverpool and Bristol, which County Somerset just to the south, were common destinations. Many men also enlisted in the British Army and fought in the Napoleonic Wars. The Ryall surname is quite common in Ireland, particularly in Counties Tipperary and Cork. Irish Ryalls begin to appear from the late 1700s in Catholic parish registers and military records in County Somerset, particularly in the towns of Taunton, Bridgewater, Yeovil, and Bath primarily working as farm labourers and domestic servants.
- ⁵⁰ Bick, *op. cit.*
- ⁵¹ Bongiorno, F. (1992). Land, Labour and Politics: Victoria, 1860–1890. *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 94, pp. 84–101.
- ⁵² *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 22 June 1878
- ⁵³ *Kyneton Guardian*, Wednesday 12 March 1873; and *Kyneton Observer*, Saturday 1 May 1875
- ⁵⁴ *Riverine Herald*, Thursday 26 August 1875
- ⁵⁵ *Riverine Herald*, Wednesday 2 October 1878
- ⁵⁶ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 16 December 1878
- ⁵⁷ *Argus*, Saturday 16 October 1926
- ⁵⁸ Balboora at 1472 Baynton Road, Pastoria, was on the market for \$9,000,000 as a highly productive livestock grazing operation in 2025.
- ⁵⁹ North Central Catchment Management Authority. *Kyneton woodlands map*.
- ⁶⁰ Australia Felix was the name coined by explorer Thomas Mitchell in 1836 to describe the exceptionally fertile, grassy, and well-watered pastoral country of western and central Victoria that he viewed as a fortunate land.

Chapter 4

The Northern Plains & Riverina 1878 – 1901

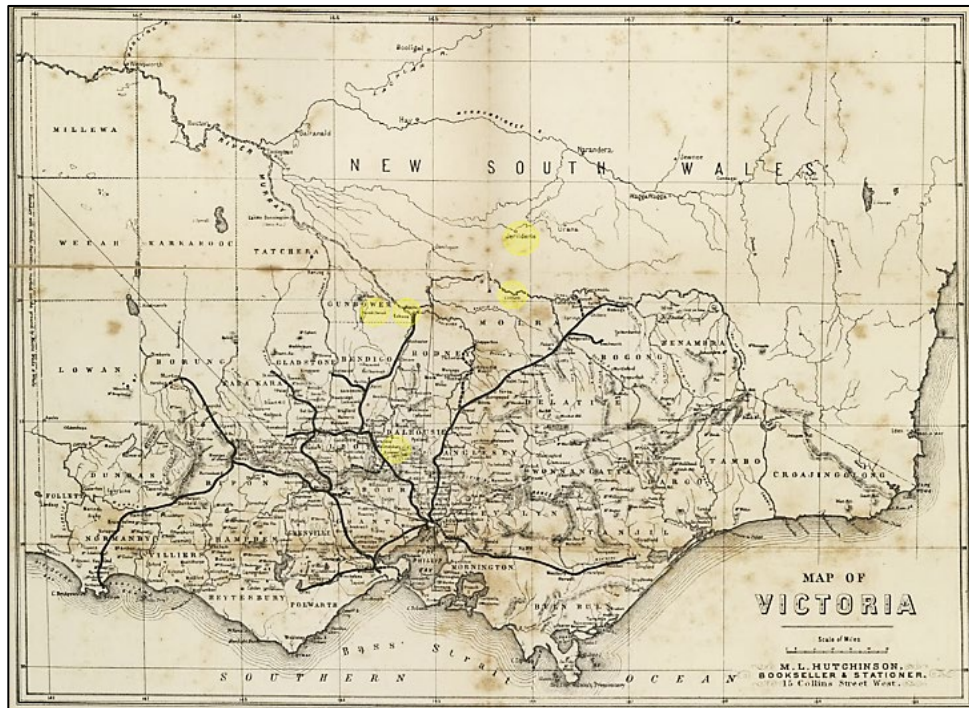
During the 19th century, the farmers in the
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**f the land farmed
O'Connor at Terrick**

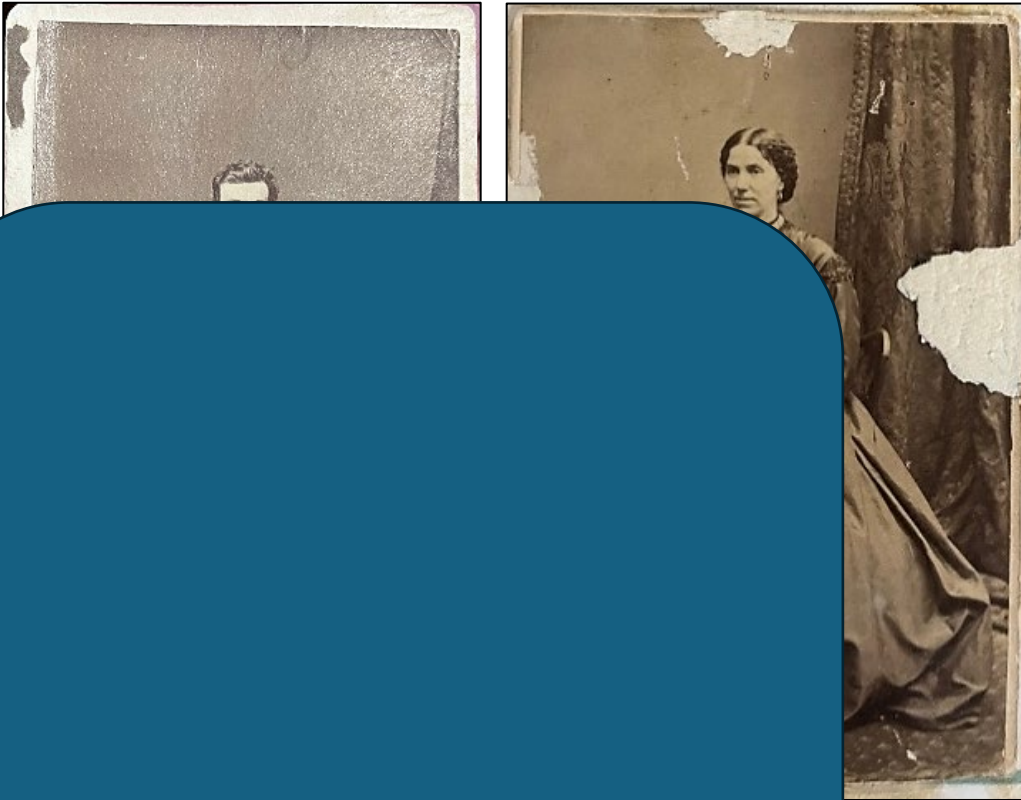
Chapter 4 – The Northern Plains and Riverina 1878 – 1901 begins with images of William, Caroline, and James O'Connor, around the time of their departure from Langley, Kyneton. The chapter then takes a deep dive into the *Balboora O'Connors'* nine years in Terrick Terrick East, followed by six or so years at Echuca, then seemingly a short stay at Cobram and ending with the six years they lived on a selection at Booroobanilly, just south of Jerilderie.

An 1880 map highlighting Kyneton, Terrick Terrick East, Echuca, Cobram and Jerilderie.



Faces of Yesteryear

Between 1860 and 1880, advances in photographic technology made portrait photography cheaper, quicker, and far more accessible to ordinary people. As a result, the French fashion of issuing *cartes de visite*, or visiting cards, became widely popular.³ In the mid-1870s, William, Caroline, and James O'Connor, at different times, donned their Sunday best and entered the Kyneton studio of renowned photographer John P. Carolin to sit for their own sets of visiting cards (**next page**).⁴ The Irishman Carolin had gained considerable local notoriety in 1870 when he photographed a fifteen-year-old Ned Kelly while he was held in the Kyneton lock-up. During the same period he took the O'Connor photographs, Carolin also produced visiting cards for Ned's younger brother, Dan Kelly.



James O'Connor

James O'Connor (standing)

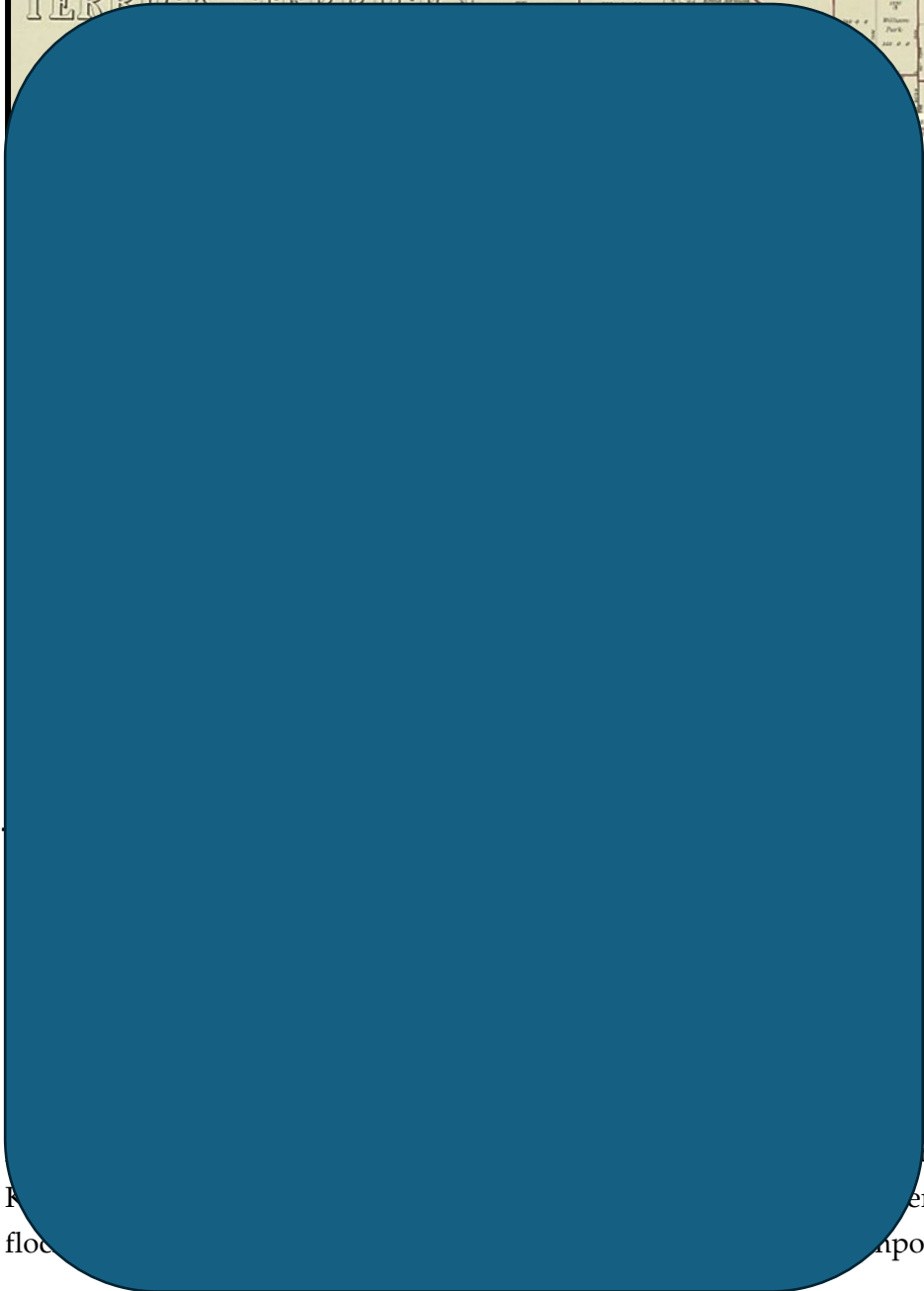
The Journey North

The 120-kilometre journey from Langley to Terrick Terrick East was a formidable undertaking, one the O'Connors and the Royals likely made together during the summer of 1877–78. By travelling in company they could pool resources, using bullock and horse drays to transport as much of their farming, household, and personal belongings as possible, including food and water supplies, clothing, bedding, cooking pots, butter churns, cots, chairs, tables, hand tools, seed grain, ploughs, scythes, spades, and hoes. Milking cows and working dogs were tethered to the drays, chickens were secured in cages, and a small flock of sheep was probably driven alongside the slow-moving convoy.



The picture above presents a scene very similar to the O'Connor move from Kyneton to Terrick Terrick East.

William and Caroline O'Connor journeyed with their newborn, Mary, and their one-year-old, Bridget. William's pregnant sister, Margaret Royal, also held her infant daughter Margaret at her breast. Caroline, Margaret, their infant children, and the aged Patrick and Margaret travelled perched amongst the goods in one of the drays. For most of the journey, the men walked, driving the bullock teams, leading the horses and scouting ahead for the best track. Their caravan would have followed a patchwork of rough bush tracks and established roads, notably crossing or skirting through Malmsbury, Redesdale, Heathcote, and stretches of the gold-fields country before descending toward the flat, grassy northern plains of Terrick Terrick East. Travel was slow, up to 20 kilometres a day depending on weather and track conditions. They camped overnight in the open, setting small fires for cooking and using tarpaulins or canvas to cover themselves and their belongings in case of rain. The most significant risk, though, was crossing creeks and rivers, especially if bridges on the Campaspe River, which snaked from Kyneton to Echuca, were damaged.



canvas tents before
ly, little more than a
ads at Langley, the
quired 320-acre
e routine, life in their
reliable climate of
er and pasture, while
ounded by the ever-

present menace of rabbit plagues. The land at least offered some advantage, being largely free of stone and only lightly timbered with gum and box. The O'Connor men quickly began cutting and splitting timber to erect slab huts, sheds, dairies, and boundary fences, before turning to the arduous work of clearing ground and ploughing virgin soil for the first planting season. With no permanent creeks available, deep wells, often reaching ten metres deep, were dug for household water, while dams and tanks were sunk to sustain livestock.

The O'Connors took up their selections at a very challenging time. Low winter rainfall in 1878 and 1879 brought crop failure and stock losses across the area, with many shallow dams and wells failing on the open sandy plains. The following excerpts from *The Riverine Herald*, published in March 1879, reveal the hardships faced by selectors:

*Terrick Terrick (From our own correspondent) ... The weather is beautifully cool, but we badly want rain. In about another week, if it does not rain, the water will be completely dried up here, and the greater part of selectors will then have to go from eight to ten miles for every drop of water they require. No wonder the "cockies" are turning insolvent in all directions.*⁶

...and a few weeks later

*Terrick Terrick (From our own correspondent) ... The farmers of this district met with another disappointment last week. On Monday the clouds looked as if about to discharge their contents, but they passed over, leaving only a sprinkling behind them. A good fall of rain is much needed to fill the dams, as most of the selectors are subjected to great hardships for the want of water, many of them having to drive their stock twenty miles to water...many farmers have finished sowing, some are busily employed putting the seed in and others are hard at work ploughing. Such an amount of perseverance must surely meet with its due reward. Numbers of others, however, do not intend putting in any crop this season, but will lie on their oats, doing, if possible, a little dealing in stock until things look a little brighter. Three hundred and twenty acres may be sufficient to make a living off in some localities, but I think it will be conceded that it will not do in a dry district like this. Supposing a selector, thinking to make "a rise," puts, say, one hundred and fifty acres under crop, trusting to the chance of a shower of rain now and again to bring it on, and the season fails, as the last three have done, what is he to do? He has nothing to fall back on, being swamped in the endeavour to "make a rise," he goes into debt to carry on for another year, with the result that not making the expected "rise," and being pressed for money, he cannot pay, he is either sold out or files his schedule. I do not think it is possible to find a dozen farmers in this whole district who are making a respectable living off one selection. The well-to-do men are those who, having selected themselves, have purchased other land adjoining, or where a family have obtained selections together.*⁷

Without the advantage of multiple blocks in proximity, it is doubtful the O'Connors would have lasted as long as they did on their Terrick Terrick East selections, a point noted in *Hutchinson's Handbook of Victoria: Our Colony in 1880*:

Selectors cleared land for cropping, but in reality, survived on little more than subsistence farming. Small acreages of wheat or oats were cultivated, a vegetable garden planted, and pigs and poultry raised for the sale of butter and cream. They had no access other land for grazing and no other means of support for their culture or family.⁸

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...always harmonious.
...iam took legal action
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was looking to sell six of his bullocks when William asked if he could include two of his bullocks in the sale to make a complete bullock team. Evidently, George agreed only to renege on giving William his cash.¹¹ No doubt, this made matters somewhat difficult between Caroline O'Connor and her father. The dispute exposed a financial strain and simmering family friction that accompanied the move from Kyneton.

The death of John Royal.

FATAL ACCIDENT.—On Friday a fatal accident occurred at Terrick Terrick East. A young man named John Royal was riding after some horses, when his horse stumbled, and falling, rolled upon him. He was picked up in an insensible state. Dr. Crossen, who was sent for, found him to be suffering from compression of the brain, and the case was hopeless from the first. Despite all treatment he gradually sank, and died on Saturday, twenty-four hours after the accident occurred. The funeral of the deceased, who was much respected, took place yesterday, the remains being interred in the Echuca cemetery.

To cap off a year to forget, not just for the O'Connors and the Royals but for everyone in Terrick Terrick East, on November 19, 1878, during a heatwave, the temperature reached 110 °F (44 °C). It was one of the hottest days the O'Connors had experienced in the colony, prompting the Terrick Terrick East newspaper correspondent to lament:

*O! Tennent,¹² Foster, and Guinness,
Of all the drinks, I love ye best.
When the weather's hot, and the throat is dry,
When to slake their thirst, the sufferers try.
What drinks like ye? What mortal hand,
Can o'er untie the loving hand,
That lulls me to each well-known brand.¹³*

It was surely a year to drive anybody to drink! One can only imagine how the O'Connors fared in these first few years at Terrick Terrick East. Though arriving at a challenging time, they were experienced mixed farmers, had some cash from their land and improvements

auctioned at Kyneton, and, with four 320-acre farms in proximity, some of the adversity was offset through collaboration across their farms.

The Death of James O'Connor

The O'Connors' farm. In 1879, little more than a year after the O'Connors' arrival in the Supreme Court, James O'Connor, a pioneer and local landowner, was ultimately killed while working with livestock, and the O'Connors' precise location of the farm from James to his death in 1907, when he was about 20 years old, is recorded that he fell while working beneath a wheel.

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with unpaid rates and leasehold arrears. Leaseholds were frequently suspended or relet, and in 1881, the 71-year-old Patrick O'Connor lost his holding when it reverted to the original lessee, Luke Daffey.^{18 19} Despite the challenges, William O'Connor made the most of the cards he had been dealt, working long days to build a better life for himself and his family. Located near the road to Echuca, William likely supplemented his farm income by carrying farm produce to markets in Echuca or Bendigo, and by labouring for others, building fences, digging wells, and sinking dams.²⁰



Echuca on the Murray River, circa 1870.

The mid-1880s witnessed a steady exodus of farming families from Terrick Terrick East, and the surrounding districts. Many, like the O'Connors and Royals, gravitated towards Echuca, where the bustling river port and expanding agricultural industries promised far greater opportunities for labouring work, trade, and commercial enterprise **(above)**.²¹

During 1886, both George and Margaret Royal and Catherine O'Connor each held clearing sales and sold the improvements on their leaseholds at Terrick Terrick East, with the result of Catherine's sale reported in *The Riverine Herald*:

On Tuesday, the 16th Feb., we sold on account of Miss O'Connor, of Terricks East, her farm of 293 acres, 1 rood 18 perches for £2 16s 6d per acre. We also sold about 20 milch cows and springers, ranging from £4 to £7 15s. We also sold a number of fat and half-fat steers and heifers at equally satisfactory prices.^{22 23}

William and Caroline O'Connor, too, had endured all they could of life at Terrick Terrick East. Determined to begin again, they both appear to have sought land selections nearer to Echuca, with Caroline successfully securing a 320-acre holding at Echuca East in 1886. Thus, in 1887, after eight demanding years on the Terrick Terrick East selection, William and Caroline auctioned the substantial improvements they had made to their leasehold, including

MONS
MARCH, 1887.
Terricks East.
E and Co. are favored
from Mr. William
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on Saturday, 19h
valuable farm —
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land, being the
ctions of F. Royal
Wickham in the
Terricks East.
which is surrounded by
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eld, A. Miller, M.
is most favorably
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were born at Terrick Terrick East. The O'Connors were fortunate to have both the Terrick Terrick East School, which opened in 1876 with 58 children, and St Luke's Catholic Church, built in 1874 and served by priests from St Mary's Echuca, operating very near their homestead.²⁵ Both the school and the church offered a vital opportunity for the Terricks' community to gather. One of the most celebrated gatherings, though, was the annual Terrick Terrick East race meeting, where in 1887 William served as the *Clerk of the Course* and returned from Echuca in 1888 to fill the role again (**below**).²⁶

Racing TERRICKS EAST RACING CLUB. WEDNESDAY, 28th MARCH, 1888. ANNUAL MEETING. President: Topham Forge, Esq. Judge: J. Ferguson, Esq. Starter: Mr P. Murphy. Clerk of Scales: Mr T. A. McIntyre. Clerk of Course: Mr W. O'Connor. Handicapper: Mr G. Vewlea. Stewards—Messrs. Pratt, Hynes Monahan, Perrignon, Burns, Lyons, Hornell, Roehford, Crowe, Carey, and Shanahan. PROGRAMME. 1. TRIAL STAKES—Of 8 sovs, 1½ miles, weight for age. For all horses that have not won an advertised race exceeding 8 sovs. Entrance, 8s. 2. TERRICKS EAST HANDICAP—Of 20 sovs, with a sweep of 7s 6d each to the second horse. One mile and a half. Nomination, 1 sov. 3. HANDICAP TROT—Of 7 sovs., with a sweep of 5s to the second horse. Nomination, 7s. Three miles. Weight 11 stone. Ponies under 14 hands, 9 stone. 4. HANDICAP HURDLES—Of 15 sovs., with a sweepstakes of 5s to the second horse. Two miles. Nomination, 15s.		5. TWO YEAR OLD STAKES—Of 7 sovs. Six furlongs, weight 8st 7lb. Nomination, 7s. 6. MAIDEN TROT—Of 4 guineas, the gift of Pratt Bros. For all mares that have never won public money, and which have been served by the Trotting Stallion "John Brown." Distance 2 miles. Nomination, 4s 6d. 7. SELLING RACE—Of 6 sovs., 1 mile. Winner to be sold for 10 sovs., any surplus to go to the race fund. Weight not less than 8 stone. Nomination 6s. Post entry. V.R.C. Rules strictly adhered to. The decision of the stewards in all cases to be final. Nominations for Terricks East Handicap, Handicap Hurdles and Handicap Trot, with names, ages, pedigree, colors and past performances, to be lodged with the secretary, at Terricks East not later than 8 p.m. Monday, 19th March. Entries for Trial Stakes, Maiden Trot, and Two-year old Stakes not later than 11 a.m., morning of the races. Protests to be lodged with the Secretary within a quarter of an hour of each race, accompanied by 1 sov., same to be forfeited if declared frivolous. First race to start at 12.30 p.m. Weights to appear in the <i>Argus</i> 22nd March and <i>Riverine Herald</i> 24th March. All sweepstakes payable at scale. P. M. MONAHAN, Hon Sec. 1888
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The Riverine Herald,
Saturday 17 March
1888.

Echuca

The O'Connors and the Royals had each acquired new leaseholds near each other in East Echuca and Kanyappela, respectively. Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, now in their mid-70s, lived with Margaret and George Royal at Kanyappela. Catherine O'Connor may have had her own leasehold, though she may have also with her sister, Margaret.²⁷ At East Echuca, William and Caroline welcomed four more children: Michael born in 1888, Margaret in 1892, Catherine in 1894, and Thomas in 1896. Tragically, both girls died in July 1894. In a striking coincidence, they were the same ages and bore the same Christian names as the daughters

lost by William's sister Margaret in 1878. Margaret Mary and Catherine Ellen were buried together in the same plot, seemingly at the same time, suggesting they died, through either illness or accident, in sudden and tragic circumstances. The precise details have not survived in the historical record. All the *Balboora O'Connors* interred in the Echuca cemetery are buried together in the same section.²⁸

In 1878, a horse-drawn cart was overturned in Echuca that also

29

SENT--On Saturday after-
noon, at about half past
four o'clock, an accident took
place which was a very painful one,
and far more seriously, hap-
pened at the Hotel. It appears
from what we could glean, that
a horse attached, and in
the cart, Miss O'Connor and her
brother being sons of Mr
O'Connor, who resides near the Goul-
burn, driven along Pakenham-
street, at the level-crossing the
horse's saddle broke, and
the cart bolted. He turned
the corner into Annesley-
street, in front of Hansen's
Hotel, the cart collided with
a horse-drawn cart, and threw the occupants
out, when picked up, ap-
parently injured, and was con-
veyed to the hotel, and Dr Eakin's
office. That gentleman arriving
found the young lady had sustained
serious wounds on the head
and necessitated the insertion of
stitches. She had also
wounds in the chest. The
young man had received two or
three on the head and face,
and was injured. The cart had
been thrown off, and the sides were
crushed, but the horse was
not hurt.

care for her parents,
Michael and his family.
Michael, ten kilometres
from his farm at Pastoria.³⁰
Catherine was at the Kyneton guesthouse

run by her niece, Catherine Donaldson, bringing to a close a remarkable life. Catherine, who never married, worked the land her entire existence and embodied the pluck, guts and grit required to succeed as a pioneering woman. Her many nieces and nephews cherished her, especially the children of her brother, Michael, and sister, Margaret, all mentioned in her obituary:

On the 30th May, at Victoria House, Kyneton, Catherine O'Connor, beloved aunt of Mary, Margaret, Catherine (Mrs. Donaldson), William, Michael and Patrick (deceased); also Frederick and Parick Royal, Vera (Mrs. R. Power), Mona (Mrs. T. Power). Angela (Mrs J. Hart), and Mary (Mrs Feegan), aged 74 years. R.I.P. ³¹

Catherine's body was returned to Echuca, where she was buried with her parents.

Rest in Peace, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor

Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, the patriarch and matriarch of the *Balboora O'Connors*, spent their final years living with their daughter Margaret Royal at Kanyappela. Margaret died aged 80 in 1895, while the old Irishman, Patrick, passed away at 91 in 1902 (**below**).^{32 33} They arrived in Melbourne, when it was part of the Colony of New South Wales, and little more than dirt tracks and scattered timber buildings. They witnessed first-hand the infant colony grow into nationhood, with Patrick living long enough to see their adopted land become the Commonwealth of Australia.³⁴

DEATHS. O'CONNOR.—Died at the residence of his son-in-law, George Royal, Kanyappela, near Echuca, on July 14, Patrick O'Connor, aged 91 years. Patrick O'Connor was born in the year 1811, on the 17th of March, in the parish of Newcastle, Limerick, Ireland, and came to Melbourne in the ship West Minister, landing on the 15th of August, 1839. R.I.P.
FUNERAL NOTICES. THE friends of Mr. and Mrs. Royal and Miss O'Connor are respectfully invited to follow the remains of their late father, Mr. Patrick O'Connor to his last resting place the Echuca Cemetery, the funeral to leave his late residence, Kanyappela WEDNESDAY, 16th at 11 a.m. 11

**The Melbourne Advocate,
Saturday 26 July 1902.**

**The Riverine Herald,
Wednesday 16 July 1902.**

The deaths of both Margaret and Patrick were almost certainly observed according to long-established Irish Catholic mourning customs. Family, neighbours, and fellow Irish settlers likely assembled at the Royal home to keep watch through the night, praying the Rosary beside their bodies and sharing stories, food, grief, and remembrance in the communal ritual of the Irish wake. Older traditions also endured, with memories of *caoineadh*, the rhythmic lamentation, still lingering among many of the Irish community. The funeral procession to the cemetery was a solemn affair, with the priest leading the cortege. The priest's words, "Ar dheis Dé go raibh an áine," were a poignant reminder of the faith that sustained Patrick and Margaret in their final days.

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accident (**next page**).³⁶
(e).³⁷ The sadness for

Margaret continued when her daughter, Catherine, who had married Thomas Power in 1906, was accidentally shot dead in 1918! The incident, widely reported across Victoria, was sensational because of Mr Power's community standing. The piece from *The Ararat Chronicle* captured the scene (**below**).³⁸ The following year, Thomas Power married his late wife's younger sister, Caroline. The unfortunate Catherine lies at rest with her grandparents, Patrick and Margaret O'Connor, and her namesake, her Aunt Catherine, at Echuca. To cap off these devastating events, Margaret's eldest son, John, who had spent some time as a mining engineer in Western Australia, lost his left hand in almost identical circumstances to his father. Sadly, John's hand was so severely injured that he died from blood loss (**below**).³⁹

SERIOUS ACCIDENT AT KANYAPELLA.

Yesterday morning a man named George William Royal, in the employ of Mr Robert Chambers, farmer of Kanyapella, met with a very serious accident, by which he lost the fingers of his left hand. He was engaged in feeding the chaff-cutting machine, when, by some means his hand got drawn by the rollers under the knives, when, in an instant the whole of the fingers of the left hand, close to the palm and the thumb from the first joint were cut off. So soon as Mr Chambers became aware of the accident he, with great promptitude tied a ligature across the wrist, and at once arrested the flow of blood. He then harnessed up the horse, and brought the unfortunate man to Echuca, a distance of over nine miles, arriving here within an hour, and took him to Mr Geo. Miller's Farmers' Arms Hotel. Dr Eakins was at once sent for, and, in conjunction with Dr Osborne, put the patient under chloroform. In this state he remained from 11 o'clock until 1 o'clock, during which time they amputated the injured limb, taking away the fingers completely. Up to a late hour last night the patient was progressing as favorably as could be expected. Mr Royal is well known and respected in the district, where he has been a resident for about 11 years; he is a married man, having a family of six children. His brother is a well known farmer, residing at Kanyapella.

FARMER'S WIFE SHOT.

Mrs. Power, wife of Mr. T. M. Power, J.P., farmer, of Cornelia Creek, Kyabram, was accidentally shot dead last Wednesday afternoon. Mrs. Power and her husband were having afternoon tea about 4 o'clock. She complained that crows were worrying her young turkeys. Mr. Power got his gun and went out. His wife said she thought one of the turkeys had flown into the windmill tank. Mr. Power climbed to the tank, and while there heard a shot, followed by a moan. On scrambling down off the tank he found his wife lying dead alongside the dog kennel; she had been shot under the arm. It is surmised that she picked up the gun, and with it in her possession, was tying up the dog when the gun went off. Mrs. Power was about 35 years of age. She leaves no family.

FATALITIES AND ACCIDENTS.

DROWNED IN A DAM.

Koondrook, 12th February.
George Royal, aged about 60 years, was found drowned in a dam on Gunbower Creek yesterday by a girl named Adeline Smith. Deceased had been about the district for some years working on a threshing machine. A bottle of brandy was discovered on the bank of the dam, and deceased's dog was keeping watch. Mr. G. Vane, J.P., conducted an inquiry, and recorded a verdict of death by drowning. The remains were interred in the local cemetery to-day.

OBITUARY.

Mr John Royal.

The death is reported from Echuca of Mr John Royal, formerly of Kyabram. During the last three years deceased had resided at Echuca East, whence he operated a chaff-cutting plant. On Tuesday last he was engaged cutting chaff at Mr H. L. Baillieu's property, Torumbarry, when his left hand was severely mangled, having been caught in the cutting section of the machinery. He was taken to the Echuca Hospital. There was a great loss of blood. An operation was performed, but deceased did not regain consciousness. Deceased, who was 47 years of age, leaves a widow and four children. Mrs Royal was a daughter of Mrs Ryan, of Lancaster. Deceased lived some years in Kyabram, and his death will be regretted by a large circle of friends. The funeral took place at Kyabram cemetery yesterday afternoon. The cortege was a lengthy one. A number of wreaths were placed upon the coffin.

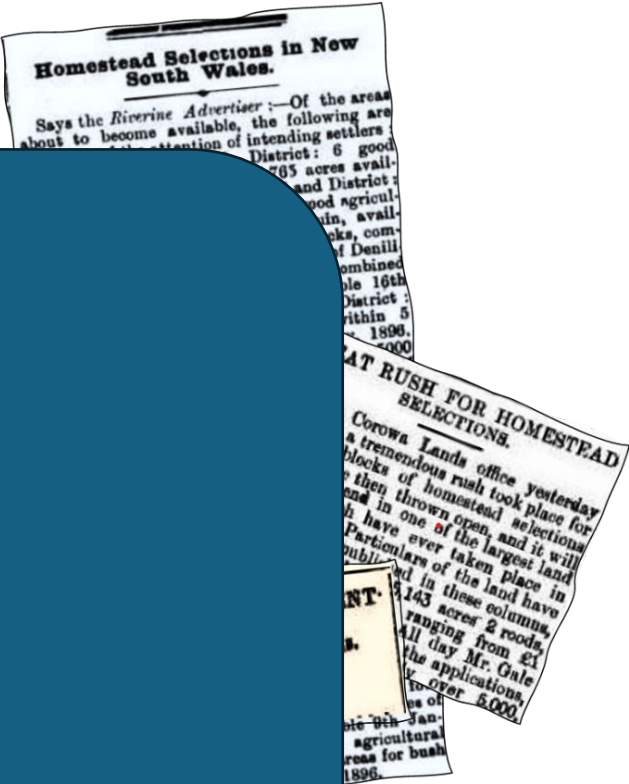
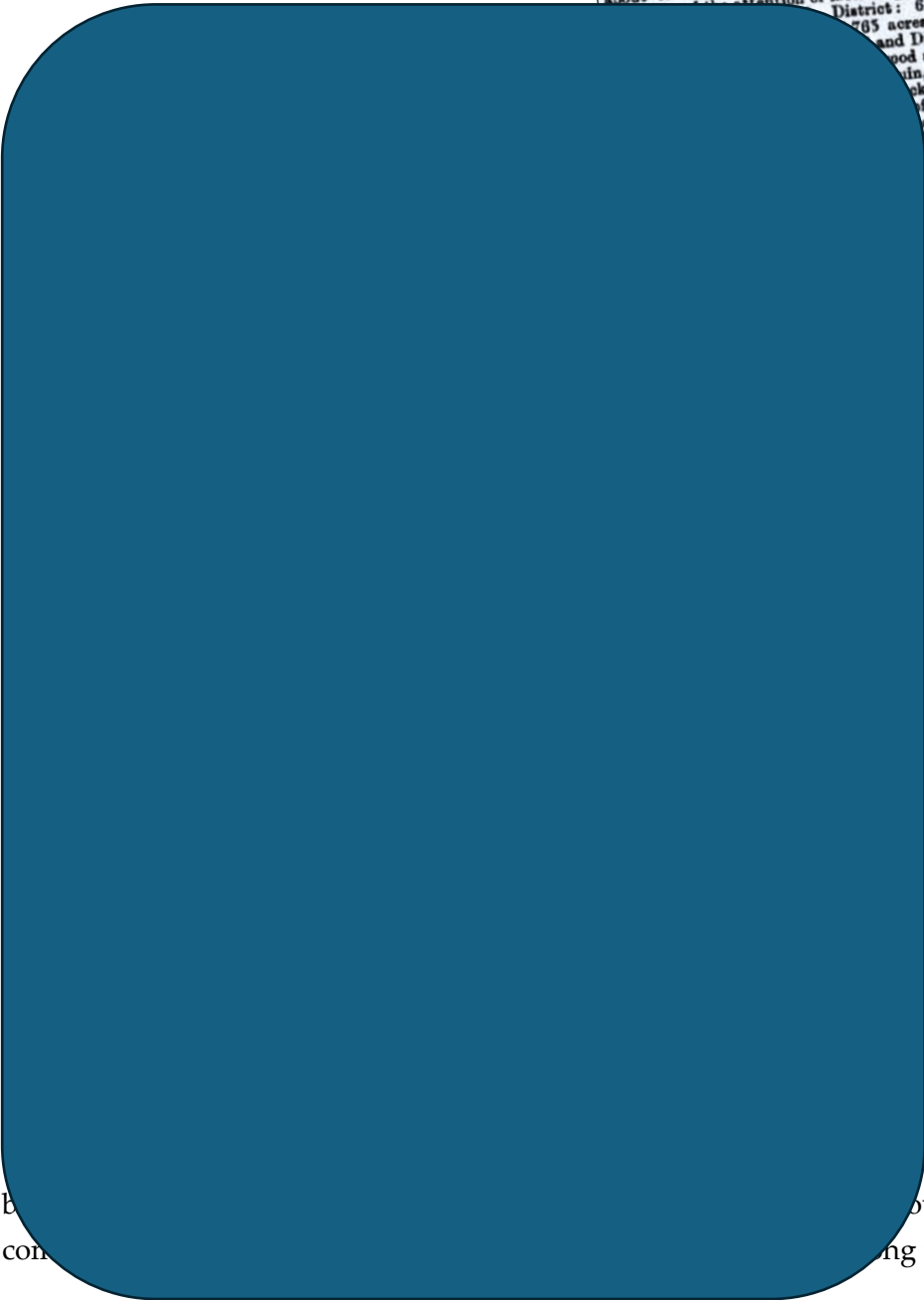
The Riverine Herald,
Wednesday 13 October
1886.

Bendigo Advertiser,
Tuesday 13 February
1912.

Ararat Chronicle,
Tuesday 17 September
1918.

Kyabram Free Press,
Friday 27 March 1925.

The Great Land Rush



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This frenetic period of land selection laid the foundation for the Riverina's rise as one of Australia's most productive agricultural regions.⁴² After meeting their selection obligations at East Echuca, William and Caroline, along with their adult children, Bridget, Mary, and James, applied for new selections in earnest. It is also likely that George and Margaret Royal's eldest children were also making applications.



The Urana Land District with the Parish of Booroobanilly (blue). William O'Connor's 576-acre block was in the top right corner of the parish.

In 1896, the government opened over 26,000 acres in the Urana Land District for homestead selections (**above**). On 18 June, a ballot for a 576-acre block in the Parish of Booroobanilly, immediately south of Jerilderie, attracted 22 applicants, including William O'Connor, who was recorded as living at Cobram about 60km south of Jerilderie. As agents were not permitted to represent applicants at ballots, all aspirant selectors, some of whom had journeyed hundreds of kilometres, were on hand at the Jerilderie Land Office to witness William's name drawn as the successful applicant! While no doubt ebullient with his success, one of William's old neighbours from Terrick Terrick East left very disconsolate, bemoaning to all and sundry that he had travelled vast distances in recent months only to be unsuccessful at selection ballots in Moama, Hay, Albury and now Urana!⁴³

Jerilderie

In the mid-1890s, Jerilderie was a small town of about 600 people on the Billabong Creek, serving a rapidly growing farming community on newly opened selections, including William O'Connor's block at Booroobanilly.⁴⁴ It was a time described as:

...the most progressive and busy period of Jerilderie's history. The annual show was a big thing in those days and extending over three days in duration. The Yanko and Jerilderie and St Patrick's Race Clubs were founded and flourished. The Town Bank and Caledonian Society were born, and active associations like the Farmers and Settlers' body came into being. The rash of settlers and the busy, populous stations made Jerilderie a hive of activity.⁴⁵

JERILDERIE, Tuesday.

meeting of residents of the
the Mechanics' Institute here
William O'Connor, of
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BRANCH.

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te on SATURDAY,

President.

M. O'CONNOR,
Secretary.

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Jerilderie Federation League.

On Saturday afternoon last there was a fair gathering in the Jerilderie Mechanics' Institute for the purpose of forming a branch of the Federation League in this town. Mr. Wm. O'Connor, Booroobanilly, presided.

Mr. Alexander McArthur moved that a league be formed here, not so much to stem the current of opposition in this party, as there was a general feeling of unanimity regarding this great question all round, it was more to urge those who were entitled to the franchise to be ready with their rights on the 20th prox. to go to some polling centre and record their vote. He urged all present to do their utmost in seeing that nothing was neglected in that respect on polling day. It was a duty devolving on all the members to bring as many as they could to the poll. Every vote given would be one more to make the majority greater in favor of it. He moved that a branch be formed here.

Mr. Curtin seconded the motion. He said he agreed with the mover in all he had said. Everyone should give all the assistance they could to the cause.

The motion was carried.

Mr. A. McArthur was elected President, Mr. Wm. O'Connor hon. Secretary, and Mr. Wm. Elliott, Treasurer of the league.

Mr. Wise, after explaining the procedure of those eligible to obtain their rights, advised those present to urge on those who had not rights, but were qualified to vote, to go personally to the Deputy Registrar of their district and ask for them. It would save the delay in sending through the post. He moved that a circular be sent to all employers throughout the district, pastoralists, farmers, and others advising action. Mr. Curtin seconded the motion, which was carried.

Mr. Elliott moved, and Mr. Miller seconded, that Messrs. McArthur, Wise, and the Secretary be appointed to draw out the circular.—Carried.

The meeting then terminated.

The Sub-committee met and drew out the following, which is to be sent to residents in the district :—

Jerilderie, 25th May, 1899

DEAR SIR,—

As a very strenuous effort is being made in Sydney and the metropolitan districts to defeat the acceptance of Federation by this colony, it is felt that some effort is necessary to counteract this action, hence the forming of the above League.

As some misapprehension exists as to the manner of applying for Electors' Rights, we would point out that all is necessary for any adult male who has resided in the colony for one year, or in the district for which he wishes the Right issued one month, is to apply personally to the Registrar, or any Deputy Registrar, and ask for, and there and then obtain his Right. This may be done on any day up to, and including, the 20th June (Referendum Day). The Postmasters in all the principal towns are Deputy Registrars.

As this circular is principally directed to station-owners and managers, farmers, and other employers, they are especially invited to use their best efforts to see that all who are eligible get their rights and come in and vote on the 20th. Those who have lost their original Right, by applying in time, can get a substituted one.

The League considers it unnecessary to point out the great and many advantages of Federation, both to this district and the colony at large.

As the fight for Federation is over the whole colony, it behooves all who can do so to assist those districts where the feeling against the Bill is strong.

With this view, we appeal to you with confidence for any financial support you may be disposed to give. Subscriptions sent to the Honorary Treasurer will be acknowledged in the *Jerilderie Herald*, unless otherwise wished.

As the time is so short, an early response will much oblige.

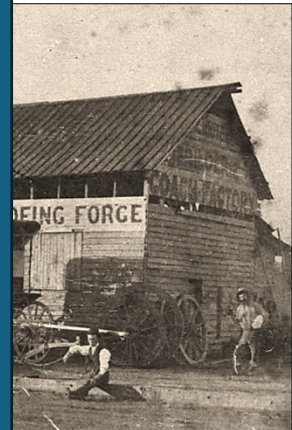
Yours, etc.,
WM. O'CONNOR, Hon. Secretary.
WM. ELLIOTT, Hon. Treasurer.

**Jerilderie Herald and
Urana Advertiser,
Friday 26 May 1899.**

From the 1880s onward, momentum for *Federation* steadily gathered across the Australian colonies, driven by calls for uniform trade laws, stronger defence, closer intercolonial cooperation, and a growing belief that the colonies should unite as one Australian nation. Influential leadership, particularly Sir Henry Parkes' 1889 Tenterfield Speech and the Corowa Conference of 1893, helped spark a grassroots political movement that culminated in the successful *Federation* referendums of 1898–1900 and the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901.⁴⁹ Across the colonies, *Federation Leagues* emerged in towns and cities alike, organising public meetings, distributing pamphlets, lobbying politicians, and rallying popular support for the union. William O'Connor, who likely attended the Corowa

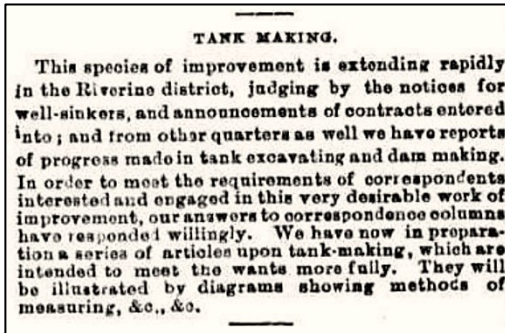
Conference, was a committed *Federalist* and played a leading role in establishing the *Jerilderie Federation League* (**previous page**). The leagues encouraged farmers, townspeople, merchants, labourers, and civic leaders alike to embrace *Federation* as a pathway to economic unity, stronger defence, and a shared national identity.^{50 51}

The last of William and Caroline's 12 children, Edward Joseph O'Connor, was born in April 1890. Edward lived and died as William. He married Bernard Victoria. William and Bridget passed away in the Narrandera district



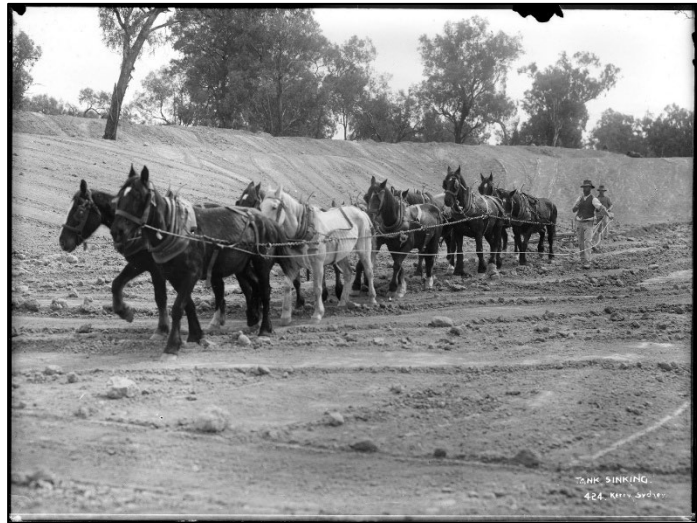
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own sons to put their shoulders to the wheel and earn an income beyond the farm gate. Contract work demanded endurance, bushcraft, and familiarity with horses and heavy labour rather than formal training, making it well-suited to the Irish and their sons.⁵⁸



**Australian Town and Country Journal,
Saturday 9 July 1881.**

Tank sinking in the Riverina.



Among the harshest, yet most essential, forms of rural contract labour was tank and dam sinking.⁵⁹ Before modern irrigation transformed inland Australia, water conservation often determined whether farms and grazing runs survived the long summer months, and contractors equipped with horse teams, scoops, ploughs, and drays travelled the plains, excavating tanks and dams for selectors desperate to drought-proof their holdings. Although no definitive record has survived, it has long been preserved in the memories of the *Balboora O'Connors* that, during their move from Echuca to Collie, William O'Connor and his sons supplemented their farming income by working as contract tank and dam sinkers, spending long periods away from home labouring beneath the fierce Australian sun. The picture (above) depicts a typical tank sinking scene of the time from the Riverina.⁶⁰

Conclusion

In 1901, fresh from his successful *Federation* campaign, William O'Connor once again turned to the homestead selection system to find prospects beyond Jerilderie. With his eldest sons, James, John, and George, now young men eager to secure futures of their own, they, too,

looked to select land. By August, their course was set when William and George successfully secured adjoining selections in the Parish of Collie, County of Ewenmar, some 60 kilometres northwest of Dubbo.

The move to Collie marked the close of William and Caroline's twenty-two years of farming across the Riverina, a period defined by hard work, determination, and steadfast character. William, John, George, and Caroline's character needed to be strong for advocacy until they were seen as a respected and influential community.

Carara Burke to cross Australia from the west coast, poor leadership, and a lack of support. He wrote a card to announce a visit, express

Department of Lands and Survey

Guide to Melbourne, Pictorial &

Margaret O'Connor. The timber wharf, stored briefly in large quantities, movement of river-borne cargo to the wharf, and loaded onto international sailing ships. The wharf was between the pastoral interior of the

in Hill Gazette, Tuesday 14

from their fathers that prior to their migration. The migration was led by William and Caroline, and their sons, John, George, and Matt. The migration was led by William and Caroline, and their sons, John, George, and Matt. The migration was led by William and Caroline, and their sons, John, George, and Matt.

²¹ Nation

²² Riverine News

- ²³ Roods (1 rood = ¼ acre), Perches (1 perch = 1/40 of a rood = 1/160 of an acre), Steer (male cow that has been castrated before reaching sexual maturity), Heifer (young female cow that has not yet had a calf), Milch cow (a cow that is currently producing milk), and Springer (pregnant cow that is close to calving).
- ²⁴ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 25 July 1887
- ²⁵ Ballinger, R., with Andrew Ward & Associates & TBA Planners. (1999). *Loddon Shire Heritage Study: Stage 1, Thematic Environmental History*. Loddon Shire Council.
- ²⁶ *Riverine Herald*, Saturday 17 March 1888
- ²⁷ *Riverine Herald*, Fri 31 May 1889. An advertisement notes Catherine O'Connor seeking compensation for a steer that wandered into her paddock at Kanyapella.
- ²⁸ Echuca Cemetery, Catholic Portion, B Section 15.
- ²⁹ *Riverine Herald*, Monday 4 September 1893
- ³⁰ *Kyneton Observer*, Thursday 28 October 1897; and *Kyneton Guardian*, Saturday 28 April 1917
- ³¹ *Melbourne Age*, Tuesday 2 June 1931
- ³² *Melbourne Advocate*, Saturday 26 July 1902; and *Riverine Herald*, Wednesday 16 July 1902
- ³³ There is an error in the death notice. The Westminster did not land in August 1839, it left Gravesend, England in August 1839.
- ³⁴ *Australian Federation* refers to the process by which the six British colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania united to form the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901.
- ³⁵ *Riverine Herald*, Tuesday 16 September 1930
- ³⁶ *Riverine Herald*, Wednesday 13 October 1886
- ³⁷ *Bendigo Advertiser*, Tuesday 13 February 1912
- ³⁸ *Ararat Chronicle*, Tuesday 17 September 1918
- ³⁹ *Kyabram Free Press*, Friday 27 March 1925
- ⁴⁰ The Acts aimed to break up large pastoral estates and support genuine small-scale farmers. It did this by introducing conditional leases and purchases, stricter residency and improvement requirements, homestead and grazing blocks, and the creation of Local Land Boards.
- ⁴¹ *Corowa Free Press*, Friday 10 April 1896; *Pastoral Times*, Saturday 14 August 1897; *Riverine Herald*, Friday 6 December 1895; and *Daily Telegraph*, Friday 11 September 1896.
- ⁴² Clark, C.M.H. (1978). *A History of Australia. Vol. 4: The Earth Abideth For Ever, 1851–1888*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- ⁴³ *Nathalia Herald*, Friday 26 June 1896
- ⁴⁴ New South Wales Bureau of Statistics. 1897, *New South Wales Statistical Register, 1897*, Government Printer, Sydney.
- ⁴⁵ Lundy, H.C. (1956). *Jerilderie: 100 Years*, Jerilderie Shire Council, Jerilderie.
- ⁴⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 17 November 1897
- ⁴⁷ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 4 May 1900
- ⁴⁸ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 13 April 1900; *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 2 Mar 1900; *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 17 November 1897; *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 10 March 1889; *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 14 September 1900; and *Berrigan Advocate*, Friday 26 October 1900.
- ⁴⁹ The Corowa Conference of 1893, attended by delegates from community groups, political organisations, and *Federation* Leagues across New South Wales and Victoria, met to revive the stalled movement for uniting the Australian colonies. At the conference, Dr John Quick proposed that the people directly elect delegates to a new constitutional convention and vote on the resulting draft constitution—an idea that became known as the “Corowa Plan” and ultimately reshaped the path to *Federation*.
- ⁵⁰ *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, Friday 26 May 1899
- ⁵¹ Hirst, J. (2000). *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- ⁵² All family documentation such as obituaries and the *Great War Attestation Papers* note that Edward Joseph O'Connor was the son of William and Caroline O'Connor.
- ⁵³ Ancestry. (2010). Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc.. Birth record for Edward O'Connor lists no father and Mary O'Connor as his mother.
- ⁵⁴ *Catholic Press*, Saturday 3 November 1900
- ⁵⁵ *Daily Advertiser Wagga Wagga*, Friday 5 May 1944
- ⁵⁶ The *Riverine Herald* 1880–1900, various articles relating to tank sinking, water conservation, fencing contracts, shearing labour, drought conditions, and rural employment in the Riverina district, published at Echuca.
- ⁵⁷ In the inland districts of colonial Australia, tank sinking usually involved digging broad clay-lined excavations on flat country to trap and store rainwater, whereas dam sinking referred more commonly to enlarging or deepening natural waterholes or constructing banks to impound water along creeks and drainage lines.
- ⁵⁸ Lee, J. (2007). *The Irish in the Bush: Rural Life and Settlement in Colonial Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- ⁵⁹ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, Saturday 9 July 1881
- ⁶⁰ Powerhouse Museum. (2026). *Tank sinking at Lockhart, New South Wales, c. 1900*, collection record.

Chapter 5

Balboora, Collie 1902 – 1923



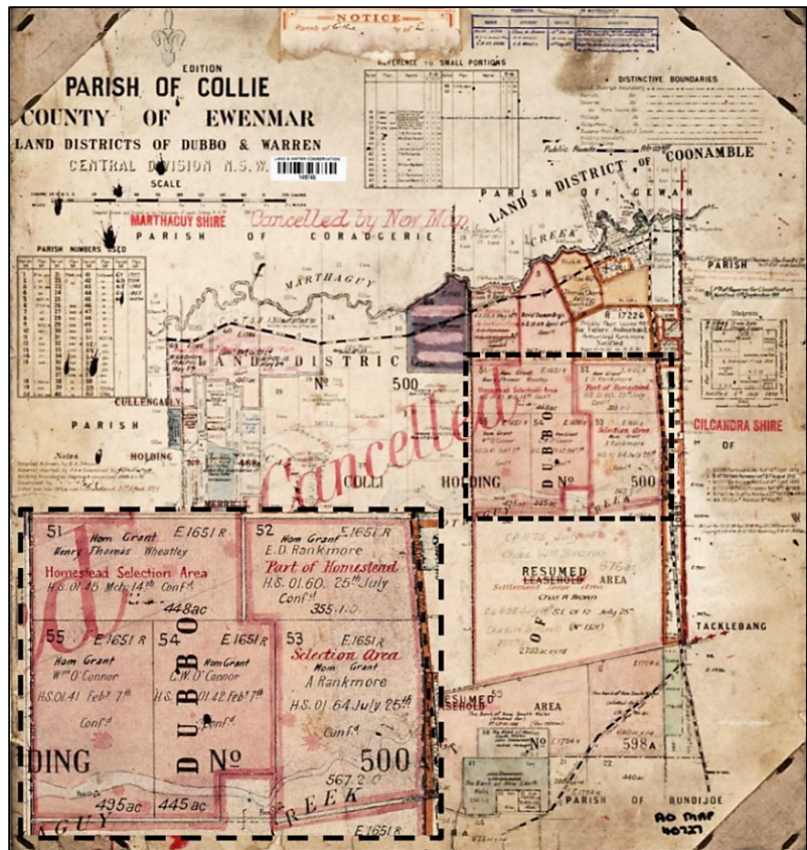
At the time of the 1902-1903 season, John and George, the two sons of the late John, had been making selections across the district, joining blocks at Balboora and Lisfarran and other places.

In the first two decades in the district, to their rise as a community. Yet their progress was overshadowed by a sombre shadow of the war, the sons to serve, and the loss of the family and the loss of the district during hostilities, and Lisfarran.

The homestead at Balboora, and G.W. Rankmore, the individual parcels of land, and the *Evening Herald* and the

familiar task of the district at Kyneton in 1873. The district of Victoria and New South Wales, Echuca,

The dashed area on the map is enlarged to show the selections of William and George O'Connor.



As with their earlier relocation to Terrick Terrick East, the O'Connor family's move from Boorobanilly in 1901 was ill-timed, coinciding with the Federation drought, which saw Collie and its surrounding districts record the lowest rainfall in their history. The drought ravaged pastoral and agricultural holdings, causing numerous small selectors to walk off their land.⁴

The hardships endured by the O'Connors in these initial years were undoubtedly severe. At *Balboora* and *Lisfarran*, the men undertook the laborious tasks of land clearing, sinking wells and dams, constructing essential buildings, erecting fences, and preparing land for cropping. Behind the men's labour stood Caroline, whose tireless efforts kept the household functioning. She fed, clothed, and cared for her husband and sons, while also overseeing the vegetable garden, dairy, and poultry that provided much of the family's food and security. Most of all, she kept their spirits high at such a demanding time.

APPLICATION FOR LAND AT DUBBO.

DUBBO, Friday.

The following applications were lodged at the Dubbo Lands Office yesterday : - P. O'Keefe, conditional purchase 80 acres, conditional lease 240 acres, county Lincoln, parish Terramungamine ; E. G. Grogan, conditional lease 81 acres, county Narromine, parish Mingelo ; G. F. Nott, settlement lease 5520 acres, county Lincoln, parish Adelyne. The following

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nal Patrick Francis
Australia, lamenting
him and their mother,
O'Connor:

Balboora Collie Oct 4/1904

To your Eminence Cardinal Moran

I am forwarding postal note for Book of tickets we are taking them all ourselves as there is no Catholics - very few about here - you will see I have 7 sons the youngest is 14 years and the oldest 25 years and all taught in the cursed State schools - they have been taught Catholicism and I have done all I could there Mother also - but they are not what I would wish - Manners and respect to parents is the most deficient points they are short of - I would like if you could send them a good Book or two on those 2 things - Direct them to O'Connor Boys as they will take more notice of them - We came here in the drought and has been battling ever since and this season is going to be bad here I can ill afford to send you this but we must keep our colours Flying at any cost - Father Curran has been here only twice since I come here and that not one of us male folks has been to confession - Father Geoghagan of Kyneton Victoria was the little Priest that taught me and I do not forget him I saw him some years after I was married and he told me keep your children at home teach them what you can yourself do not send them to the State School and now I find he was more than right - I might tell you that my Father died aged 92 Mother died aged 80 both from County Limerick Ireland - God rest their souls

I will now conclude I remain your Faithful Child

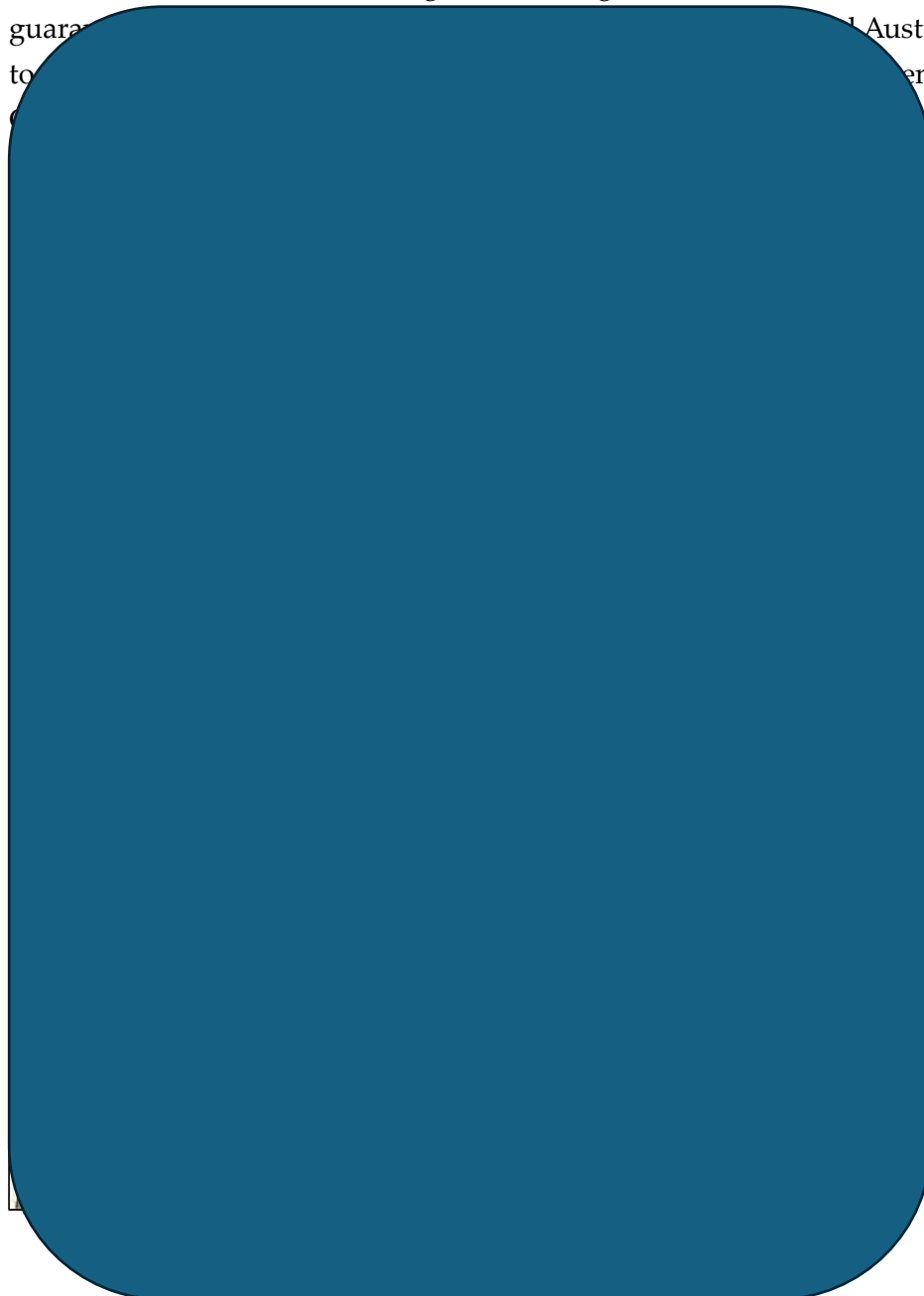
William O'Connor⁵

Despite standing at opposite ends of Irish Catholic Australia, Cardinal Moran within the ecclesiastical and political world of Sydney, and William O'Connor farming on the distant plains of Collie, it is very likely that William venerated Moran as a kindred spirit. Through the pages of *The Freeman's Journal*, Sydney's leading Irish-Catholic newspaper, which circulated widely among Irish settlers across Australia, William eagerly followed Moran's pastoral letters and public addresses. Moran was not only a spiritual leader but also a tireless defender of Catholic rights, strongly championing Catholic education while urging Irish Catholics to remain active, loyal participants in Australian civic life. Like William, Cardinal Moran was also a strong supporter of *Federation*. Proud of his Irish heritage yet deeply committed to Australia's future, Moran promoted the belief that Catholics could be both faithful Australians and faithful Catholics, preserving their religion and identity within a predominantly Protestant colonial society.⁶ These beliefs likely drew William into public life in Jerilderie, where he advocated passionately for settlers' rights and the cause of *Federation*.

Though the outcome of William O'Connor's letter is unknown, it likely had some impact as it remained a talking point amongst his grandchildren over sixty years later.⁷ William's letter is particularly illuminating because it exposes the hardships of both drought and faith faced by

the O'Connor family after they arrived at Collie. Unlike Kyneton, Terrick Terrick East, and Jerilderie, where they had lived within rich Irish Catholic enclaves, Collie and the surrounding district were dominated by Protestant denominations, especially Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists. To ensure they *kept the colours flying*, William and his sons were instrumental in establishing and building the Collie Catholic Church in 1911,

guaranteeing that the Catholic presence in Western Australia, would continue to flourish. This commitment with the Collie Catholic community continued until his death in **1924–1964**.



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e O'Connor.

The drought had eased by 1905, and it wasn't long before the O'Connor family were producing fine crops and quality sheep. With approximately 60 per cent of their land under cultivation, their wheat yields consistently fell within the range of four to five bags per acre, an above-average output for farms in the Collie district during that time.⁹ In an excellent season, their yield could triple these numbers. Further dry years of 1905, 1907, and 1911, though, tested their resilience.

Still, sometimes adversity brings opportunity, and in August 1906, both William and George acquired additional land on the other side of the Collie-Trangie Road, in the Parish of Tacklebang (**previous page**), less than two kilometres due west of their existing leaseholds. These leaseholds increased William's total holding to 1,384 acres (560 hectares), while George's total holding was 1,454 acres (588 hectares).^{10 11}

William and Caroline's Children

The move northward to Collie was made without Bridget and Mary, who remained in Narrandera with their new husbands, John Hennessy and Bernard Gannon, respectively. Bridget and John had three children, Mary, Eileen, and John. Bridget passed away in 1944 (**below**).¹²

Daily Advertiser
Wagga Wagga,
Friday 5 May
1944.

Dubbo Dispatch,
Monday 15 June
1942.

OBITUARY

MRS MARY TURNER

The death took place at Warren recently of Mrs. Mary Turner, an old and respected resident of the West, at the age of 88 years. She was a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. W. O'Connor, of "Balboora," Collie. Born in Victoria, she had resided at Warren for the past 30 years.

A family of one son and five daughters survive. One sister and and three brothers also survive—Mrs. J. Hennessy, Narrandera; Messrs. Frederick O'Connor, "Lisferran," Collie; John O'Connor, "Glenwood," Collie; Michael O'Connor, "Franklands," Eumungerie; and Edward O'Connor, Newcastle.

Interment took place in the Catholic portion of the Warren cemetery.

OBITUARY

MRS. J. HENNESSY

The death occurred on Saturday last of Mrs. Bridget Hennessy, wife of Mr. J. Hennessy, of Narrandera, at the age of 67 years. Mrs. Hennessy was an old and esteemed resident of Narrandera, having come to the town over 40 years ago. She was a native of Kyneton (Vic.), and came to the district from Jerilderie. She was possessed of an amiable disposition, and had many friends among young and old, who will regret to learn of her death. She is survived by her husband and one son and one daughter. The son is Constable Jack Hennessy, of Hurstville, Sydney, and the daughter is Mary (Mrs F. Kelly), Auburn, Sydney. She is also survived by four brothers, Messrs Frederick O'Connor, Edward, John (Collie) and Michael (Balladonia). The funeral moved from the St. Mel's Church for the Catholic portion of the Narrandera cemetery. The bearers were Messrs P. J. Kane, J. Groutsch, J. Pearson and M. Bourke. Mrs F. Lindley carried out the funeral arrangements.

The marriage of Mary and Bernard, though, was cut short by Bernard's untimely death in 1906. Mary had two children with Bernard: Caroline and Michael, known as Clive. In 1923, the 21-year-old Clive Gannon was riding trackwork for his uncle Patrick O'Connor when his racehorse, *Lisfarren*, threw Clive from the saddle, breaking his collarbone and several ribs.¹³ In 1907, Mary moved to the Collie district and married James Bullen. They lived in nearby Warren and Margaret. James died in 1923 and was buried at Warren.

deceased was the eldest son of a family of four girls and eight boys, of whom answered the call during the Great War, one paying the same sacrifice. He is survived by his widow (who prior to her marriage at Dubbo was Mrs Jane McRobb, of Collie), six daughters and sons, viz.: Margaret (Mrs. P. Waker, Leura), Mary (Coonamble), Nora (Mrs. J. Quilkey, Bonnamble), Catherine (Mrs. J. Men, Moore Park), Eileen (Collie), John (Killara), and George and Rick (Collie). Brothers and sisters are: Mrs. Turner (Warren), Mrs. Hennessy (Narrandera), Jack (Collie), Fred (Collie), Pat (Sydney), Michael (Balladonia), and Edward Joseph (Newcastle). Two sisters and two brothers predeceased their brother.

The funeral took place at 10 a.m. Saturday, after a service at St. Joseph's Church had been conducted by Rev. Father Eviston, who also officiated at the graveside service in the Catholic portion of the Gilgandra cemetery. The funeral was largely attended, especially by residents of the Collie district. Funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. A. H. Ross.

When the family arrived in the most of the heavy rain into a productive farm. George had married Eliza McNabb at

Dubbo in 1909. He farmed with his father until about 1915, before moving with Eliza and their daughters, Margaret, Mary, Norah, Catherine, and newborn Eileen, to a homestead selection near the Pilliga scrub, northwest of Coonamble. He remained there until about 1927, before returning to Collie, where he helped farm *Balboora*. James and Jane, who had stayed in Coonamble, had three more children, Ellen, George, and Patrick. James died suddenly from a cerebral haemorrhage in 1939 **(previous page)**.^{16 17} Eliza O'Connor died at St Peters, Sydney, in 1955.

John, or Jack O'Connor, as he was known, appears to have been a somewhat enigmatic character. In 1900, while the family was living and working in the Riverina, the 20-year-old was in Sydney with a Belgian, Josephine Korsten, registering the birth of a girl named Yvonne Josephine O'Connor. John and Josephine subsequently married in Sydney in 1906 **(below)**.¹⁸ In 1910, John and Josephine travelled to Belgium with the ten-year-old Yvonne, who remained in the care of one of Josephine's sisters.¹⁹ It is unclear when John and Josephine made Collie their home; however, by 1911, they had a modest 430-acre (174-hectare) farm just south of the Collie village, which, in part, surrounded the old showground and horse racetrack.²⁰ John and Josephine had a second daughter, Josephine, in 1912. Over the ensuing years, they sold their original holding and acquired other farmland in Collie, which they named *Woodlands*, where they remained for the rest of their lives.

**John and Josephine
O'Connor, 1906.**



The O'Connor family quickly established itself as a prominent farming family in Collie and the surrounding districts. William passed on his zeal for civic and farming matters to his sons, especially George, Patrick and Frederick, who all involved themselves in the *Collie Farmers and Settlers' Association*, with George elected, along with S. K. Murray, in 1910 to represent Collie farmers at the *NSW Farmers and Settlers' Annual Conference* and the *NSW Wheat* and in the Collie push for a *George O'Connor* met with the *NSW*

for the O'Connors, as support, and card a local committee to d picnic races, with Frederick, committee on as singers and his sons to become d of ballads, tunes, on events at Collie, the church (**next** and at these events, r boys were in the

themselves into local annual carnival where tic events. The *Dubbo* al, which attracted boys did d third off a five-yard and first in the carry- el won the potato d 100-yard, 200-yard, unger brothers, Fred winter of the day.³² The

following year, Michael again won the potato race, while Patrick went two better, winning the 100-yard handicap dash. He also won the sack race, beating his brother Michael, and the carry-your-chum race with Michael. Showing his versatility, Patrick also cleaned up all comers, winning the throw at the wicket contest, knocking the middle stump out of the ground.³³ Six years later, at the same carnival, Fred showed his prowess with the axe, placing second in the woodchopping contest.³⁴

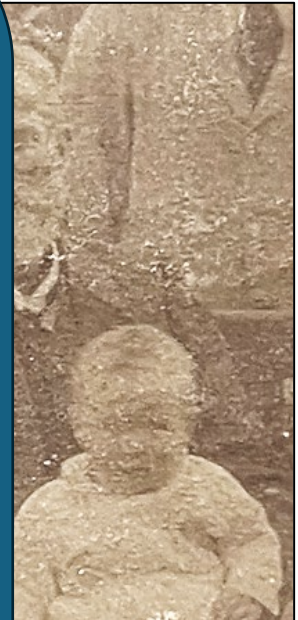
COLLIE SOCIAL. Fully 50 couples attended the social in aid of the Collie R.C. Church. The music was supplied by Messrs. G. and M. O'Connor, J. Mitchell and J. Donnelly. Mr. S. Murray was the M.C. The refreshments were provided on a lavish scale, and served up in great style by the ladies. COLLIE HOSPITAL BALL. The ball organised by the residents of Collie in aid of the Gilgandra Hospital funds was a pronounced success. Thirty couples were present, and had a most enjoyable time. The hall was prettily decorated for the occasion, and the arrangements were satisfactorily carried out. Music was gratuitously supplied by Messrs. O'Connor Bros., J. Mitchell and T. Chapman, extras being played by Miss Munro and others. The secretarial duties were in the capable hands of Mr. J. C. Brophy. The net result of the ball will amount to about £23. COLLIE ODDFELLOWS. The annual Oddfellows' social at Collie was a most enjoyable function. The attendance was satisfactory, and the arrangements left nothing to be desired, reflecting great credit on Mr. H. E. Murray, who had the secretarial duties in hand. The music was supplied by Mr. A. E. Perkins and Messrs. O'Connor and E. Meers played extras.	SOCIAL AT COLLIE. A euchre party and dance at Collie, in aid of the Belgian Fund, was attended by about 50 couples. The prize-winners were Miss Clara Smith and Messrs. J. Mitchell and C. Rankmore—a tie. Mr. Fred O'Connor was the musician, and the refreshments were provided by Mesdames C. O'Connor, J. J. O'Connor, Christie, Mitchell, Stewart, McNab, and the Misses Munro. The use of the hall was gratuitously given by Mr. Pearce. COLLIE NEWS On Thursday evening, 25th, at the newly erected residence of Mr. Chas. Monk, a farewell was tendered to Mrs. H. Edwards, of 'Bandy Joe,' prior to her departure from the district. The evening was a most enjoyable one, dancing and card playing being indulged in until the early hours of last Friday morning. Splendid music was supplied by the Messrs. O'Connor Bros. and H. McIntyre (all violinists). At 12 o'clock sharp all present were requested to come to luncheon provided by Mr. Monk and lady friends, which was highly appreciated. Among the visitors present were Jim McKeown (Coo-ee) and Mrs. McKeown.
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The party didn't start until the O'Connor boys were in the house.

In the evenings, after a hard day's work, or following a sporting match, a dance, or a community gathering, it was common for the O'Connors to settle in for a game of cards. Most often, the game was cribbage, or simply crib, a pastime that had become deeply embedded in working-class Irish culture by the late 1700s and which Patrick and Margaret O'Connor almost certainly carried with them from County Limerick.^{35 36} Played around kitchen tables, campfires, shearing sheds, and homestead verandahs, crib helped ease the isolation of country life while strengthening friendships and community ties. The children of

Patrick and Margaret, and the generations that followed them, inherited the same zeal for the game. For the *Balboora O'Connors*, crib was more than a pastime. It was a small but enduring connection to home, family, and their Irish heritage.

Tran



Francis O'Connor, or
while working with
3 when their beloved
ears. The 65-year-old
y adept at farming
ng, dry-land
d the advocacy work
coming an influential

W...er **(above)**.³⁸ He was
born in... the Macedon Ranges north of

Melbourne, before the Colony of Victoria even existed, and experienced *Federation*, which led to the Commonwealth of Australia, of which he played an active role! At the time of his death, William, along with his wife, Caroline Royal, had met every challenge of a pioneering life with determination, resilience, and a strength of character that ensured their children were well-equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to succeed.

The following obituary appeared in the *Catholic Press*, Sydney.³⁹

DEATH OF MR. WILLIAM O'CONNOR

The death occurred recently at the Dubbo District Hospital of Mr. William O'Connor, of "Balboora," Collie, at the age of 65 years. Deceased had been a patient at the hospital at intervals, and bore his long and trying illness with great fortitude. He was a native of Melbourne, and after following farming pursuits in Victoria for a number of years, came to New South Wales some 12 years back, and had been engaged in farming and grazing in the Collie area ever since. During his illness he was attended by the Very Rev. Dr. Brophy and died fortified by the rites of the Church. He leaves a widow, seven sons and two daughters to mourn their loss. The remains were conveyed to Gilgandra by train for interment there. Very Rev. Dr. Brophy officiated at the graveside, R.I.P.

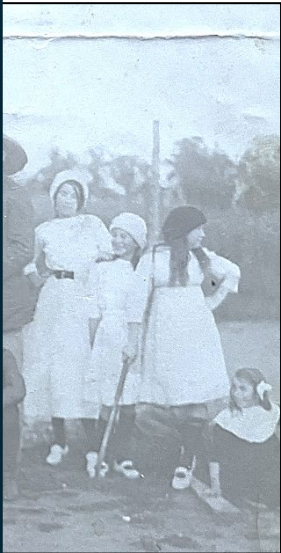
Little detail exists about the lives of William O'Connor's elder sisters, Mary and Ellen. His older brother Michael, who died in 1910, remained in Kyneton, raising his family on a farm he named *Balboora*. Michael's son, Patrick, later earned much public recognition as a successful racehorse owner and breeder. William's younger sister, Margaret, married George William Royal, brother of Caroline O'Connor, and they had twelve children, ten of whom survived to adulthood, with two, John and Catherine, dying in tragic circumstances. William also lost his brother James to a dreadful wool carting accident near Walgett in 1907, while his youngest sister, Catherine, died unmarried at Kyneton in 1931 at the age of 74.

Several of the children and grandchildren of George and Margaret Royal (O'Connor), William's sister and brother-in-law, settled in the Riverina, most notably their daughter Letitia (**next page**), who married Finley farmer Thomas Healy in 1919. They established a 1,060-acre (429-hectare) farm west of Finley, which they named *Balboora*. Although Letitia passed away in 1930, the property remained with the Healy family for many years, and in 2017, *Balboora* sold for \$8 million. The farm had doubled in size and was considered prime dairying country, with the sellers noting the *Balboora property ... is considered the best farm in the district*.⁴⁰

**William O'Connor's niece,
Letitia Royal, who with her
husband Thomas Healy**



's holdings and
he photograph
nnor family enjoying
with friends.



his left are Frederick,
. George O'Connor is at
on the middle front

Yet forces far beyond their control were gathering, which soon would dramatically alter the lives of everyone pictured. By mid-1914, drought conditions had tightened their grip on Collie, while on the far side of the world, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria set in motion events that would reshape the course of world history. The murder of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne unleashed an unstable chain of alliances, nationalism, imperial rivalry, and militarism that rapidly transformed a regional crisis into a global war. When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, Australia, as part of the British Empire, was automatically drawn into the conflict.

Australia was at war, Collie was in a drought, and many lives were about to be shattered.

The declaration of war drew immediate, intense media coverage and stirred deep nationalistic emotion across the fledgling nation, uniting Australians in a mix of anxiety, pride, and patriotic resolve. Australians volunteered in large numbers, with the first significant engagement being the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, followed by combat on the Western Front and in the Middle East.

From the outset of hostilities, many young men from Collie, particularly those struggling to find work in the drought-stricken district, joined the fight to defend their country. With 3,000 acres to manage, the O'Connor brothers waited until the drought had broken before joining the fight. George, Patrick, and Michael enlisted in 1916, while the youngest, Edward, joined in 1917. Of the remaining O'Connor brothers, James and John were in their mid-to-late 30s, married with young children, while Frederick shouldered the responsibility of ensuring the continuity of their farming operations.

Many who enlisted in the early months of the war saw service as an exciting adventure. When the O'Connor brothers answered the call, though, the danger and peril of the war were well exposed, and they left Collie under no illusion that they might never see their loved ones again. On Monday, 10 January 1916, the Collie community assembled to farewell seven of their finest, including Michael and Patrick O'Connor, who were just days away from enlisting with the *Kookaburras* at Mendooran on 12 January **(next page)**.^{41 42} The *Kookaburras* marched from Tooraweenah to Bathurst, rallying support and enlisting men on their way.⁴³ While marching with the *Kookaburras*, Arthur (Gundy) Mills wrote to his mother saying, in part:

Well mother, we are having a bosker time going along, plenty to eat and drink and smoke, it don't cost us much. I hope you are not fretting about me, as I am having the time of my life. Every night the people along the road have a spread for us, and a dance, so you can guess what a time we are having. I hope all the people are well. Remember me to all and give them my love. Tell "Vic" to drop me a line, I wish he was here, as there are some characters amongst us who would just suit him. Von would not know me now, as I got my hair clipped right off as short as I could. We have about 50 Kookaburras now and expect to be 100 in a few days. I like it here, I like the Bush at Camp. All the boys here are well. I hope you are well. We got promoted the first time, we are not doing too bad.⁴⁴



son, Michael, next to
y Mills and his mother.
the two women who

With other Collie mates,
February 1916 (**next**
popularly known as

Mick, Paddy, and Geordie, were a shade over the average age of enlistees, who were mostly in their early to mid-20s. In March 1916, Michael, Patrick, George, and Gundy Mills received one week's leave from their training camp at Bathurst. The young men spent the time catching up with friends and family, including a large gathering at the Collie Hotel (**below**).⁴⁶ George, while not in this picture, was spoken to by the Collie correspondent for the *Gilgandra Weekly*, who said to him, *Believe the people out there gave you a social evening*, to which George replied, *You're wrong, they gave us a social week!*⁴⁷



Back Row (L-R): 1 Charlie Monk, 2 Bill Bogie, 3 Ted Bogie, 6 Vic Meers, 8 Eileen Chisholm, 9 Mrs John Brophy, 10 Ted Manus. **Third Row:** 3 Paddy McGrane. **Second Row:** 4 John Brophy, 7 Billy Pearse, 8 Dan Kilby. **Front Row:** 2 Frederick O'Connor, 3 Michael O'Connor, 4 Gundy Mills, 5 Edward O'Connor, 6 Patrick O'Connor, 7 Vic Munro, 8 Alf Mills.

The send-off for Michael O'Connor, Patrick O'Connor, and Gundy Mills at the Collie Hotel.

COLLIE NEWS
(From Our Correspondent.)

To those who visited Collie Hall on Monday afternoon, if they were not informed of what was going to take place, they might well ask, is King George or Lord Kitchener was going to give this town a visit. For there laid out in beautiful array was one long table, and on each side of it were other tables, and on these were too many to count, and all the

turn, as there was not sufficient room at the tables for all present to sit down at one sitting. "Good Save the King" was sang and then the health of the soldier sons of Collie was proposed and drank. The next toast was in honor of the wives, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts of the soldier. Mr Chas Brown who was in the chair spoke in a glowing manner of the good cause the young men had offered their services. Other

day

On Monday night there was a social gathering tendered Mr. O'Connor and Mr. E. Chisholm. There was a large attendance, and the proceedings were of an enjoyable character, dancing being the chief enjoyment. Mr. Trophy occupied the chair, and eulogistic speeches were delivered by Messrs. Christie, Pearse, McGraw and Bogie. The popular teacher at Collie presented each of the recruits with a wristlet watch, and they each made an effective reply. Songs and recitations were rendered during the evening. During the evening's proceedings it was announced that Mr. and Mrs. Pearse would give between them £40 to the first Collie boy at the front who wins a V.C.

**Gilgandra
Weekly,
Friday 14
January
1916.**

After an orientation and basic training at Bathurst, the O'Connor men, along with the rest of Company B of the 45th Battalion of the Australian Infantry Force (AIF), boarded a train for Sydney. Michael and Patrick must have impressed their superiors during initial training, as both received promotions to Acting Corporal on 29 March 1916.

The Calm Before the Storm

On 14 April, George, Patrick, and Michael O'Connor, along with a handful of their Collie mates, assembled at the Garden Island Wharf, Darling Harbour, Sydney, now as members of the 12th Training Battalion, to embark on the *HMAT A40 Ceramic* bound for Alexandria, Egypt **(next pages)**.⁴⁸ Diaries kept by Private Edward Lynch from Bathurst, who also served with the O'Connors in the 45th Battalion, provide a fascinating insight into the departure of soldiers for the *Great War*.⁴⁹ Lynch described in vivid detail the rousing, and often tearful send-off received by soldiers as they marched through Sydney to the Garden Island Wharf, where a crowd of relatives and an adoring mob of anonymous well-wishers, primarily young women, awaited:

Through flag-bedecked streets we go ever onward. The windows and roofs of shops are gay with bright flags and pretty, laughing girls. The crowds line the footpaths are happy in the bon camaraderie of their farewell to us. Here and there are silent women in black, mute testimony to what has befallen others who have marched before. We swing cheerfully on. ^{50 51}

Soldiers walking along Macquarie Street, Sydney, on their way to their transport ship.



Once the soldiers had boarded (**below**):

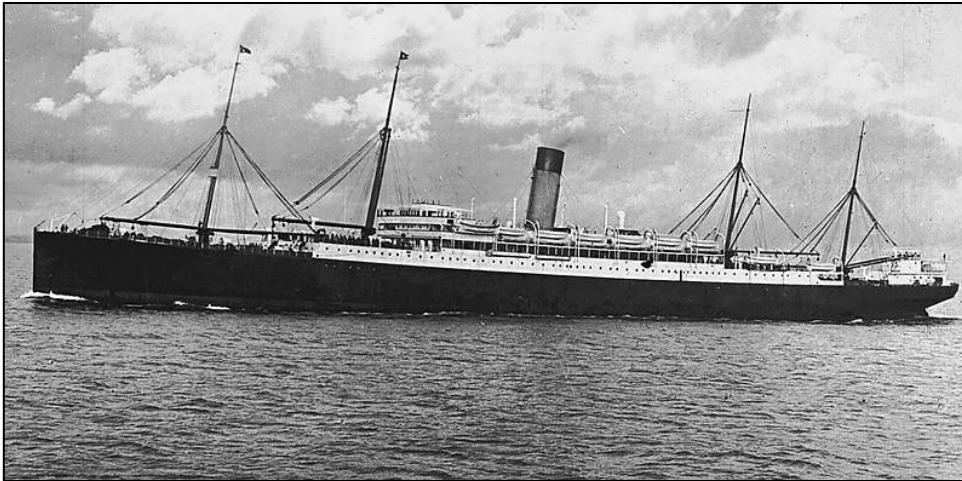
...suddenly the gates swing open and the crowd charges onto the wharf. We coo-ee and call and they answer. Streamers are thrown from the wharf and we catch them. We're a happy-go-lucky, carefree lot...we see two older women with eyes ever searching, searching for the last glimpse of a loved face. They're the mothers and wives, the silent sufferers amongst the seemingly carefree throng. Men are

...ly erect and calm. ^{52 53}

**An AIF
transport
ship ready
to leave.**

The Boys of the
with their name and
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unites in a last song of



The HMAT
A40 Ceramic.

How strange it must have felt for the Collie lads, not only as they waved farewell to their family, friends, and sweethearts, but as they sailed around the southern half of Australia stopping at Freemantle in Western Australia, then to Columbo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Bombay (now Mumbai) in India, through to the Red Sea, navigating the Suez Canal and then a short hop in the Mediterranean to the seaport of Alexandria, near Cairo, Egypt!

The poem (**below**), written by 17-year-old Eileen Chisholm to her sister, just hours after their brother, Donald Chisholm, enlisted, captures well the heartbreak felt by those close to these brave young men.⁵⁵

Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 6 April 1917.

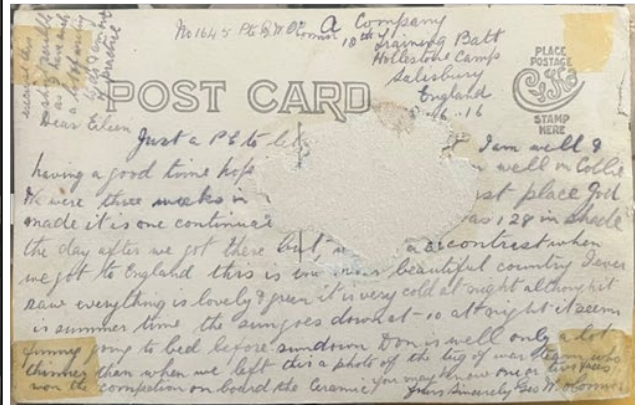
THE VOLUNTEER	
These lines were composed by Miss Eileen Chisholm, of "Pine Lodge," Collie, during the first half-hour after her brother had responded to the call to the colours. They will doubtless touch a responsive chord in the hearts of many who cannot be at the war, sisters, mothers, aye, fathers and brothers, too, but: We can but work and pray For those who uphold our honor So many miles away. Your face looks sad to-day Nell, With a look of recent care. What sorrow has crossed your path- way And left its shadow there? It is indeed as you say dear, That my heart with sorrow swells; For to-day my brother sails For the distant Dardanelles. I thought perhaps to have kept him At least till he had to go, For how many young lives have fallen Before the cruel foe?	Your sorrow, Nell, is a sore one, But perhaps may pass away. For many fond sisters and mothers Are mourning their dead to-day. When our men are sorely needed To help across the foam, And when duty calls, our boys, Nell, Can't stay with their friends at home. Just think! when they come back home Nell, Of the honor that waits the day; And when it makes us sad, Nell. Then think the other way. We sisters must stay at home, Nell, We can but work and pray For those who uphold our honor So many miles away. Then look at the added glory That awaits a volunteer; It shows a loyal soldier Who holds his country dear. When the scourge of war is ended And the world is blessed with peace, Australia's name will ever shine Within a golden wreath.

In Egypt, the 45th Battalion, whose ranks were filled mainly by New South Wales recruits and experienced Gallipoli men from the 13th Battalion travelled to Tel-el-Kebir. At Tel-el-Kebir, a vast Australian base camp in the desert, the O'Connor boys received additional military training with the 12th Training Battalion. The training involved specific instruction in musketry, bayonet use, route marching, trench construction and tactics, and, importantly, the use of the machine gun.

From Egypt, the 45th Battalion sailed for further training at the 12th Training Battalion camp in France. The camp served as a key training ground for the battalion before being deployed to the Western Front. The focus on live-fire training was a key element of the battalion's preparation for the encounter in France.

...nds, sweethearts, and
...ed a picture of the
...team won a tug-of-
...ard read:

*...well in Collie. We were
...28 in shade the day after
...autiful country I ever
...time the sun goes down
...lot thinner than when we
...e Ceramic. You may
...g to do and I am out of*



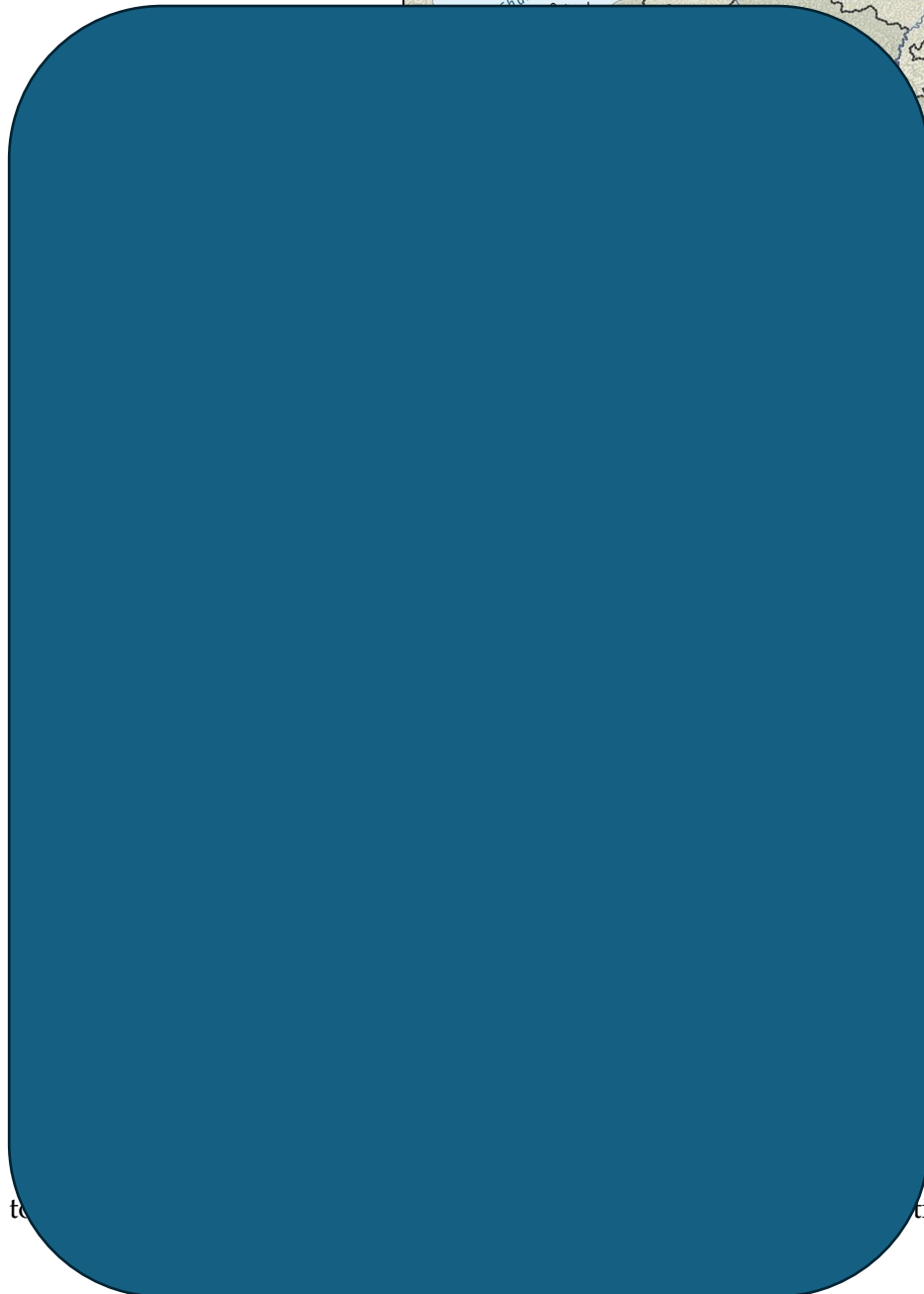
Postcard from George O'Connor to Eileen Chisholm showing (Front L-R – Michael, George, Patrick, and Don) deckside on the Ceramic.

Michael O'Connor also kept a diary during his service, and in it he described how he and his brothers, while at Bathurst, played cricket against St Stanislaus, where he noted they got *beat by 26 runs*. He spoke fondly of his send-off in Collie and had a *bonser march* through Bathurst before embarking on the *Ceramic*. Michael recounted a stop at Columbo, Ceylon, where he noted ...*a very pretty sight...had a real good time...plenty of beer*. Michael enjoyed the trip up the Suez Canal, where he ...*passed by some big camps, thousands of troops and camels, splendid sights, and saw a seaplane*. He was, though, less favourable in his comments about Egypt, where he lamented ...*had a pretty rough time, hot winds had to cart our stuff on vans and pull them ourselves*.⁶⁰

The Western Front

On 5 September 1916, the O'Connor brothers crossed the English Channel and arrived at Étaples, Pas-de-Calais, France, which was home to the largest British Army base and training camp on the Western Front. Here they remained until 22 September 1916, when they were *taken on strength* and rushed into battle in the Somme region, at Gueudecourt, a village in northern France.⁶¹ As both Michael and Patrick held the rank of Acting Corporal, their ranks

reverted to Private upon entering France. In contrast, on 3 January 1917, George received a substantive promotion in the field to the rank of Lance Corporal.^{62 63 64 65}



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s.⁶⁶ Evacuated to
22 June 1917, only to
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pleurisy.⁶⁷ Declared unfit for further active service, he was repatriated to Sydney aboard the hospital ship *Medic*, arriving home on 9 October 1918.⁶⁸ ⁶⁹ Michael, on the other hand, was extremely fortunate to survive the Western Front. On 22 December 1916, he was struck down with spinal meningitis and admitted to a field hospital, prompting military authorities to notify his mother, Caroline, that his condition was critical and life-threatening.⁷⁰ He was quickly evacuated to England and transferred to Beaufort Military Hospital in Bristol, where he was declared medically unfit for further service. Returning to Australia aboard the hospital ship *Barambah*, Michael arrived in Sydney on 8 April 1917 and, after a lengthy period of convalescence, he was formally discharged on 26 July 1917.⁷¹ George too suffered during this period of the campaign, spending a week in a field hospital recovering from influenza after being admitted on 5 May 1917.⁷²

COLLIE NEWS (From our Representative) REGRETTABLE NEWS. Early last week a cablegram was received in Collie, intimating that Corporal Mick O'Connor was very ill. Corporal O'Connor left here about twelve months ago, and has been on active service in the famous Somme battle. We all wish him a speedy recovery.	INVALIDED HOME. During last week Mrs. O'Connor, of "Balboora," Collie, went to Sydney to meet her son, Private Mick O'Connor, who was invalided home after an attack of meningitis. Mrs. O'Connor has returned, but her son is at present in an isolation ward at Randwick. It is thought he will be able to return to Collie in a week or two.
Lately letters have been received from quite a number of our boys at the front. Private Tom Brophy, writing to a friend, vividly describes the life of a soldier on the other side. No one can realise, he says, what the soldier has to content himself with. On one occasion he and a pal set to work to drain their trench of the mud and slush, using an old spade for the task. The first thing they struck when they thrust the spade into the mud, was the dead body of a German, who had been lying under the mud for some time. The Murray boys are still in the thick of it over in France. Private George O'Connor is still hard at it, too; his brothers, Mick and Paddy, have been ill in a London hospital.	SOLDIER'S LETTER Following is a copy of a letter recently received by E. Bogie, from Sgt. Don Chisholm, who enlisted from "Pine Lodge," Collie, Under date 31-7-17. Just a line trusting you are well, since last writing you I have been wounded. My wound was not very serious, a piece of shrapnel through the calf of my right leg, and I am nearly healed up now. I got my wound on 7th June, at the famous Messines Ridge. Poor old Geordie O'Connor was less lucky than I, as he has been posted missing ever since, but he is believed to be killed and I am afraid this is most likely as we got into a pretty warm corner on that morning, and our death roll was a heavy one. Pat had not joined the battalion up when I got wounded, but I believe he has since done so as I had a letter from him a few days ago he says he is now quite well, and in the best of spirits. We have had terrible wet weather here this last few days, and it is very miserable having to stay indoors all the time. Mick O'Connor should be home now, he left England in April, poor old Mick is unlucky to be so seriously ill, but if he gets alright again he is well "out of it."
COLLIE NEWS (From our Representative.) Mrs. O'Connor, of "Balboora," received word during the week that her son, Private Mick O'Connor, who enlisted with the "Kookaburras," will be due to arrive in Australia at the end of the month, being invalided home after an attack of meningitis, contracted while in the trenches in France.	

Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 19 January 1917.

Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 9 March 1917.

Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 22 June 1917.

Aside from military communication to the next of kin, *The Gilgandra Weekly* kept the residents of Collie well informed about the war with regular updates in their *Collie News* section, and news of Michael and Patrick's ill health spread quickly to the people of Collie, as well as the likelihood that Michael would be returning home sometime in July 1917. It was also revealed that George O'Connor was missing, and likely killed in action (**previous page**).⁷³

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W. Pearce also made similar
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speaker's remarks were endorsed
r O. J. Bayne, of "Bon Ao-
" Gilgandra.
response, Private O'Connor
red those present for the splen-
arewell they had given him. He
he had spent many happy
ents with them, and hoped to go
e war and return, and spend
y more of them. Again he wish-
thank them.
as Kathleen Ohlholm favoured
company with a recitation and it
Australia's Heroes," which was
received. Later Master Ken
balm recited "Lays of Ancient
" with great credit.
Vic Fenton acted as M.C., and
ably assisted with excellent
e music by Miss E. Ohlholm,
rs J. Wheatley, Ray Munro, H
y, and O'Connor Bros.

**Gilgandra
Weekly, Friday
10 August 1917.**

B

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August 1917, and was
Training Battalion at
ers on the *HMAT A38*
a convoy led by the
Arramatta and *HMAS*

Yarra providing escorts for sections of the journey. During this time, German submarines called *U-boats* were actively targeting troop ships in the North Atlantic Ocean. Rather than steering a course directly for England, the *HMAT A38 Ulysses* first arrived at Suez, Egypt, on 16 January 1918. After a short stay, the ship then embarked on a brief sea journey to Port Said, Egypt, where the *HMAT A38 Ulysses* crossed the Mediterranean Sea and disembarked the 1st Pioneers at Taranto, Italy. The 1st Pioneers then took a lengthy train journey to Cherbourg, France, where they boarded another troop ship for a short voyage across the heavily guarded English Channel, arriving at Southampton, England, on 13 February 1918. Following his convoluted journey across the world, Edward O'Connor found himself in intensive training at the Sutton Veny camp in Wiltshire, where he remained until 24 January 1919. Edward then crossed the English Channel once more, where he was *taken on strength* with the 14th Reinforcements in France. Edward, though, saw minimal action on the Western Front. From birth, Edward had suffered from infantile paralysis, which caused significant atrophy of the muscles of his left thigh, an impairment that his commanding officers believed would expose him on the frontlines. Edward argued that he was fit to fight, but to no avail, and he was transferred to non-active duties in the Graves Registration Detachment, a deployment he held until the end of the war (**below**).^{79 80}

Members of the Graves Registration Detachment, Australian section, of the Imperial War Graves unit loading bodies from a mass grave to be put in single graves.



The Marthaguy Shire Council decreed that every local man returning from the war would be honoured with a gold medal. When Michael O'Connor returned home, the Collie community gathered for a celebratory banquet, during which local dignitaries paid tribute to his service. Amid warm applause, Mr Brophy awarded Michael with his medal on behalf of the shire council. In presenting the medal, Mr Brophy told the gathering:

*It was a source of great pleasure to be present to welcome Mick O'Connor home again. After being in France for some time the young soldier had the misfortune to be stricken down with the awful disease, meningitis. However, Private O'Connor had done his duty – a fact on which he might well feel proud!*⁸¹

While overjoyed at Michael's return, Caroline O'Connor knew in her heart of hearts that George would not again set foot on *Balboora*. Just days after Edward's enlistment, Caroline received word that George William O'Connor, or "Geordie", had been killed in action near the Rige, Belgium, on 7

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DUTY DONE!

[From our Collie Representative.]

A few weeks ago word was received in Collie stating that Lance-Corporal George O'Connor had been posted as missing "Somewhere in France." During those weeks what an anxious time it has been for the O'Connor family! During all the intervening weeks hope was entertained for Lance-Corporal O'Connor's safety. All this anxiety has come to an end. Alas! A sad one, too! The last mail contained letters from his friends (late brothers in arms) giving an account of George's death. Nothing definite as to how he met his death is known, other than the 7th June was the fatal day—the day on which he made the supreme sacrifice for the love of country, his people, and the traditions of the British Empire.

Our hero was familiarly known as "Geordie"—beloved by all who knew him (and they were many, and not confined to this district alone). Possessing a most jovial disposition, coupled with straight-forwardness and a keen sport, his name was associated in every branch of sport locally, and in any movement which was for the welfare of the town and district. He always took an active part in everything, and the old sports club, formed here some years ago, known as the Collie Amateur Sports Club, has lost its leader, for "Geordie" was nearly always its secretary, always carrying out his duties to the satisfaction of all. A sport amongst us, he died a hero's death, still holding the title of a sport. We all remember when, on his departure from Collie, he said he was going away to do his duty. This he has done—he has kept his word—as he always did! Duty done, and done nobly.

Should our dear boys who are on the other side at present have the good fortune to return (and we pray that they will), how sad we will feel when our eyes are cast on those gaps—the vacant places of Privates W. Smith, J. Miller, and our late hero, Geordie. There are others I could mention whose whereabouts are uncertain, but hope bids us wait for good news of them.

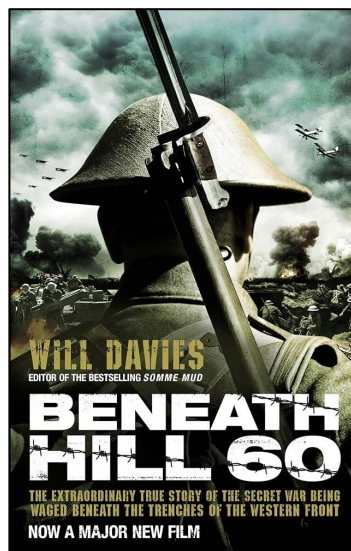
The deepest sympathy is expressed for the O'Connor family. It is a sad blow, but at least they have the consolation of knowing that George did his duty. All that is left for us to say is "Thy will be done!"

8 August 1917.

Messines Ridge, Belgium

By 20 January 1917, German forces had begun withdrawing to the fortified Hindenburg Line (**see earlier map**). The next objective for the 45th Battalion, including George O'Connor, was the capture of Messines Ridge in West Flanders, Belgium, a position of immense strategic importance. In preparation, the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company had secretly placed nearly one million pounds (450,000 kilograms) of explosives within 24 mines, some up to 30 metres beneath the ridge. At 3:10 a.m. on 7 June, the mines were detonated. Nineteen colossal explosions destroyed the German front-line positions, killing an estimated 10,000 soldiers and creating, what was then, the largest man-made explosion in history, reportedly heard as far away as London and Dublin. Lance Corporal George O'Connor witnessed the overwhelming force of the blasts, which shattered German defences and morale. Infantry of the 13th and 14th Battalions advanced swiftly to secure the ridge, while the 45th Battalion followed in support, tasked with clearing the surviving German resistance. Many German troops had taken refuge in ruined farmhouses and reinforced concrete shelters, known as pillboxes, from which they continued to fire upon advancing Australians. It was amid this deadly crossfire that Lance Corporal George William O'Connor lost his life.^{87 88 89 90} The remarkable achievements of the Australian tunnellers and infantry at Messines were later documented by military historian Will Davies and helped inspire the Australian feature film *Beneath Hill 60* (**below**).⁹¹

**Beneath Hill 60 –
Messines Ridge,
Belgium, Western
Front, 7 June 1917.**



A Brotherly Farewell

During the *Great War*, the Red Cross played a vital role in examining the circumstances leading to the injury and death of many soldiers, a task too time-consuming to be undertaken by the military leadership. A Red Cross investigation of George's death revealed that despite the fact that he was only to be felled by a shot to the chest, the bullet had struck where it fell, in the presence of his brother Patrick, who, in the ground he had

O'Connor, Pte.G.W. 1645
(M. June 7/17)
O'Connor wounded in the arm
go on. I was hit a few minutes
and was shortly after joined
me then he had just seen O'Connor
had his thumb blown off and when
Hospital (58th Scottish General)
book(No..not known) C.Co. XI.Pl.
5th A.I.F.

Society Wounded and
Files, 1914-18: 1645
William O'Connor, 45th

O'CONNOR. G.W. 1645.
DETS.
died on June 7th by shell
out and not buried as far
He left Aust. with the
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Dubbo and sent with
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family laid it at the
Corporal George



George O'Connor's Marble Plaque.

The Belgian Collie Girl

**Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 2 February
1917.**

BELGIAN GIRL ARRIVES AT COLLIE — DAUGHTER OF MRS. J. O'CONNOR — DESCRIBES GERMAN ATROCITIES — BEEN IN FIVE BOMBARDMENTS — From our Collie Correspondent After many months of anxious waiting the Belgian daughter of Mrs Jack O'Connor has at last arrived. It will be remembered that close on seven years ago Mrs O'Connor, accompanied by Mr O'Connor, took a trip home to Belgium, where Mrs O'Connor left her daughter in the care of her sisters to be educated in her own native tongue. At the time she was only ten years of age. When war broke out this young girl was in the midst of the shot and shell from the brutal German army. Although not a fluent speaker of English, our young friend vividly describes some frightful atrocities perpetrated by the Germans, of which she was an eye-witness. On one occasion she saw a group of men huddled together near a large hole in the ground. Around each one of the group barbed wire was fixed, and then the torture commenced.	The Germans twitched the wire with twitch sticks, drawing the unfortunate group of men into a tortured heap. Imagine the frightfulness of this! Still the twitching of the wire went on, until the last breath of life had almost departed from each. To end their sufferings the man nearest the grave was shot down, his weight pulling the next victim on to the brink; and he in turn met the same fate, and so on until the last unfortunate found relief in death. Another instance of barbarity witnessed by this young girl was in the case of an old man and his little son. They were taken out into the open, where a grave was in readiness for the boy. He was made stand with his back to the grave, and a firing party was then called on to shoot him. When shot, the boy fell backwards into his last resting place, and the old heart-broken father was made fill in the grave! Think of this for a few moments, and one has the utmost sympathy for this girl, who was in no less than five bombardments. On one occasion she and a young lady friend walked to Antwerp, a distance of 24 miles, fleeing from the danger zone. What an experience all this must have been! Apart from this, she has also been in the trenches, and amongst wounded soldiers. The voyage out was one of excitement, too! On one occasion the ship in which she was voyaging was stationary for five days, owing to a submarine being in the near vicinity.
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In early 1917, Caroline O'Connor had three sons serving on the Western Front and another impatient to join them. Such circumstances would have tested any mother, yet amid these anxieties, another son, John, known as Jack, became involved in a remarkable wartime story

that attracted attention well beyond the Collie district. Jack had married Antwerp-born Josephine Alida Therese Korsten in 1906, and together they were raising a family in Australia. However, when the couple travelled to Belgium in 1910, Josephine's young daughter, Yvonne, remained in Antwerp in the care of her aunt.⁹⁴ Just six years later, with Belgium under German occupation and the *Great War* raging across Europe, Yvonne was effectively

Detained in Belgium. Yvonne's relatives in Australia. The (previous page).⁹⁵

Belgium became the *the Battle of Messines*.

a Weekly,
er 1917.

The Collie community, whose families had already sacrificed much for the war effort, rallied on the home front to pack boxes, knit socks, and raise funds for those serving overseas. Few embodied this spirit more than Caroline O'Connor. Widely admired for her stoicism, patriotism, generosity, and tireless service to others, she had become one of the district's most respected women. This standing was reinforced in the 1917 *Collie Community War Chest*, which raised £752 (approximately \$150,000 in today's money).⁹⁶ One of the fundraising activities was a ballot to determine Collie's most popular woman, in which Caroline was narrowly defeated by just 50 votes, polling 19,022 to the winner's 19,072 **(previous page)**.⁹⁷

Post War Blues

As the welcome-home celebrations faded and medals were quietly placed away in drawers, a silent heartache settled over Collie. Families mourned those who would never return, while the men who came home were no longer the carefree and cheerful lads who had marched away with the *Cooees* and the *Kookaburras*.⁹⁸ For the O'Connor family, George's death left a wound that cut deeply. A highly valued and respected community leader and an inspiration to his brothers, his absence was profoundly felt. Patrick, Michael, and Edward returned bearing the unseen scars of war, with the lingering illnesses suffered by Patrick and Michael casting long shadows over their remaining years.

With the war an unspoken memory, Patrick, Michael, and Edward O'Connor all married, acquired land through the Soldier Settlement Scheme and settled back into farming life to rebuild their lives.⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ Patrick married Olive Pearl Paton in Gilgandra in 1920 **(next page)**, a match made at least six years earlier when Olive's sister Eva married Patrick's good mate Joe Mitchell in her hometown of Burrendong.¹⁰¹ As Joe's best man, Patrick presented both Eva and her bridesmaid, Olive, with gold brooches.¹⁰² No doubt Olive held this gift close to her heart during the war years, praying for Patrick's safe return.

Patrick and Olive had eight children: Owen, Elizabeth, Colleen, William, Clare, Thomas, Patricia, and Michael. Patrick farmed *Glenwood* until 1930, when his deteriorating health forced the family to move to a more favourable climate at Waitara, a northern suburb of Sydney. In 1934, Patrick wrote to the *Gilgandra Weekly*:

LIKES WAITARA. NEWS FROM MR. P. O'CONNOR

We are in receipt of the following letter from Mr. "Paddy" O'Connor, a former well-known identity of the Collie district, who some short time ago took his departure for Waitara, in the Newcastle district, in the hope that the change of climate would prove beneficial to his health, which has been impaired as the result of war injuries. We note with pleasure that he is contented in his new surroundings, a view that will be shared by his legion of friends, especially at Collie. "We are settled down here now in our own home. It doesn't seem to be homely. I like the spot to live in—the climate is just what I need. It rains too much here, but rain it's too bad. I took a walk in the park and was quite surprised to find it so nice. I have another one that I like—Macquarie Park. It is like a letter from home—it is like a letter from home when in the city. I am glad to hear of old friends." ¹⁰³

Macquarie Park
passed away in 1957
(next page).¹⁰⁴



Upon his return, Michael O'Connor wasted little time in marrying Kathleen Cridland at Dubbo in 1918 (**previous page**).¹⁰⁵ They made their home at Balladoran, where Michael selected a 609-acre (247-hectare) block, later adding two adjacent blocks, resulting in a 1,838-acre (744-hectare) farm he called *Frankland*, in a nod to his dearly departed brother, Frank O'Connor. Michael and Kathleen had six children: Francis, Mary, John, Leo, Joan, and Patrick. Kathleen O'Connor, who had a serious illness, sadly passed away in 1941, aged just 44.¹⁰⁶ Michael died in 1961, aged 73, and he is buried with Kathleen at Dubbo.

The youngest of the O'Connors, Edward O'Connor, selected 640 acres, near Collie, in the Parish of Coradgerie on the northern side of the Marthaguy Creek. In 1926, Edward married Claudia Walker in Narrabri, and shortly afterwards, they sold up and relocated to Newcastle, where Edward took on a retail business at Bruncker Street, Adamstown (**below**).¹⁰⁷ He and Claudia had five children Patrick, Cornelius, Terrence, Claude and Mary, with Edward passing away in 1970 at 71 years, while Claudia O'Connor died in 1993 at the ripe old age of 95. Both are buried at Sandgate, Newcastle.

DEATH OF MR. PATRICK O'CONNOR The death occurred at Randwick Military Hospital, Sydney, on the morning of 14th July, of Mr. Patrick O'Connor, at the age of 55 years. Deceased was a returned soldier, and during service with the A.I.F. was gassed. This subsequently told against him, and since 1933 he was a frequent visitor to hospital, and was an inmate for three months on the last occasion. A son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William O'Connor, deceased was born at Eucha, Victoria, and came to this district with his parents in 1901, when the parents purchased "Balboora", Collie, in which district the family was widely known and highly respected. When the call came to our manhood during the Great War days of 1914-18, deceased was one of four brothers who answered that call. One brother, George, paid the supreme sacrifice. Returning from the war, the late Mr. O'Connor became the owner of "Glenwood," Collie, which he kept possession of until he passed away. About eight	years ago, due to indifferent health, he went to Sydney to reside and was located at Waitara. Deceased is survived by a widow and eight children, the youngest being three years, and to these the sympathy of a large circle of friends will be extended in their sad bereavement. The children are: Owen (Glenwood, Collie), William, Tom, Michael, Elizabeth, Colleen, Claire and Patricia, all of whom reside with their mother at Waitara. Deceased is also survived by the following brothers and sisters: Mr. John O'Connor (Collie), Mr. Frederick O'Connor (Collie), Mr. Michael O'Connor (Balladoran), Mr. Edward O'Connor (Newcastle), Mrs. Turner (Warren) and Mrs. Hennessy (Narrandera). The body was removed from the hospital to the Catholic Church, Waitara, where Benediction was held Sunday night and a Requiem Mass on Monday morning by the Rev. Father Hall. The funeral left the church for the Catholic portion of the Northern Suburbs Cemetery, Father Hall also officiating at the graveside. Funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. W. N. Bull, of Newtown.
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Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 25 July 1940.

Edward O'Connor and Claudia Walker, 1926.



Balboora, Collie Listed for Sale

Following the deaths of William and George O'Connor, both *Balboora* and *Lisfarran* continued under family control. At Christmas 1923, following what must have been a profound family discussion, James and Patrick O'Connor, as the executors of both William and George's estates, elected to place the entire holdings under the name *Balboora*, on the market. In January 1924, *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, the Macquarie Advocate, Tuesday 4 January 1924, announced a public sale scheduled for 6

**The Dubbo Liberal
and Macquarie
Advocate, Tuesday
4 January 1924.**

...notable success in
...porting pursuits,
...commitment was most
...ce, and the family

raising funds with remarkable dedication. The period was also marked by the tragic death of young Frank and the passing of William, as well as the marriages of James, John, Patrick, Frederick, Michael, and Edward. At the centre of it all, though, stood Caroline, whose quiet strength held the family strong.

By 1924, the 2,900-acre (1,174-hectare) *Balboora* was in the hands of Frederick O'Connor, and he joined his cousins, Patrick O'Connor at Kyneton and Letitia Healy at Finley, to hold properties bearing the *Balboora* name. **Chapter 6 – Fred's Balboora 1924–1964** focuses on the life and time of Frederick O'Connor and his family at *Balboora*, Collie.

Notes

¹ New South Wales Land Register. Historical Land Records Viewer. Parish of Collie, County of Ewenmar.

² *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 9 February 1901

³ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Saturday 17 August 1901

⁴ The 1901 *Federation drought*, one of the most severe climatic crises to strike Australia, hit the Collie district hard, devastating its predominantly pastoral economy and stressing small farming families already grappling with marginal rainfall. Many selectors faced financial ruin as crops failed repeatedly, wells dried, and the cost of carting water from distant points soared. The drought also saw many families abandoned unviable holdings, while those who remained relying heavily on community cooperation, local relief efforts, and government assistance. Though rain eventually returned by 1904, the *Federation drought* left a lasting impact on the Collie landscape and memory, reinforcing both the vulnerability and resilience of inland settlements on the western plains.

⁵ Document transcribed by Patricia O'Connor [Godlee] and held by Matthew Godlee. Patricia was the daughter of Patrick O'Connor, William O'Connor's son. Matthew Godlee is Patricia O'Connor's son.

⁶ O'Farrell, P. (1993). *The Irish in Australia*. Revised Edition. UNSW Press, Sydney.

⁷ Personal communication – Betty O'Connor

⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1953

⁹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 11 January 1907

¹⁰ New South Wales Land Register. Historical Land Records Viewer. Parish of Tacklebang, County of Ewenmar.

¹¹ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Saturday 25 August 1906

¹² *Daily Advertiser Wagga Wagga*, Friday 5 May 1944

¹³ *Referee*, Wednesday 7 February 1923

¹⁴ A coachman was a driver employed to operate a horse-drawn coach, buggy, or wagon, responsible for transporting passengers, mail, or goods between towns and rural properties.

¹⁵ *Dubbo Dispatch*, Monday 15 June 1942

¹⁶ *Gilgandra and Castlereagh Weekly*, Thursday 9 March 1939

¹⁷ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. James O'Connor and Caroline O'Connor.

¹⁸ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. John and Josephine O'Connor.

¹⁹ Ancestry. (2010). Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. In 1910, John and Josephine O'Connor registered the birth of another girl named Yvonne J O'Connor, in Sydney. Yvonne Josephine A Chowne (O'Connor) died in 1957, with her grave indicating her birthdate as unknown.

²⁰ New South Wales Land Register, *op. cit.* Parish of Collie, County of Ewenmar.

²¹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 3 March 1905

²² *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Wednesday 6 July 1910

²³ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 10 April 1914

²⁴ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 26 November 1915

²⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 30 March 1917

²⁶ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 10 September 1912

²⁷ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 21 August 1914

²⁸ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 18 September 1914

²⁹ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 16 October 1914

³⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 10 December 1915

³¹ A potato race is a novelty or folk-event race in which contestants, either on foot or horseback, must collect potatoes and deposit them in a basket as quickly as possible.

³² *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Wednesday 16 June 1906

³³ *Castlereagh*, Friday 7 June 1907

³⁴ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 6 August 1912

³⁵ By the 1800s, cribbage had become one of the most popular card games throughout the English-speaking world. Requiring little more than a deck of cards, a cribbage board, and two willing players, it was ideally suited to the itinerant lives of labourers, shepherds, drovers, soldiers, and pioneering families who spent long periods on the colonial frontier.

³⁶ Fletcher, B. H. (ed.). (1975). *David Collins: an account of the English Colony in New South Wales*. National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, Canberra. David Collins, a British colonial administrator who arrived with the First Fleet in 1788, observed that Irish convicts readily gambled with whatever possessions they had and frequently played games such as cribbage and two-up. His account highlights both the hardships faced by many Irish convicts and the important role Irish traditions played in shaping the social and recreational culture of colonial Australia.

³⁷ *Castlereagh*, Friday 3 March 1905

³⁸ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. William O'Connor.

³⁹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 19 June 1913

⁴⁰ Balboora Farm 451 Maxwells Rd, Finley NSW.

⁴¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 14 January 1916

⁴² O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Collie Hall 1916 – Farewell dinner – Patrick and Michael O'Connor.

⁴³ The Kookaburra March departed Tooraweenah on 12 January 1916 with 25 volunteers and arrived at Bathurst on 3 February with 100 recruits with stops at Yarragrin, Mendooran, Boomley, Cobbora, Dunedoo, Birriwa, Tallawang, Gulgong, Mudgee, Havilah, Lue, Rylstone, Kandos, Ilford, Capertee, Cullen Bullen, Portland, and Wallerawang.

⁴⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 28 January 1916

⁴⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 11 February 1916

⁴⁶ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Collie Hotel – Send-off for Patrick and Michael O'Connor.

⁴⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 24 March 1916

⁴⁸ Birtwistle Wiki. (n.d.). HMAT A40 Ceramic. Public Domain.

⁴⁹ Davies, W. (Ed.). (2006). *Somme Mud. The war experiences of an Australian Infantryman in France 1916-1919*. Random House Australia, North Sydney.

⁵⁰ Davies, op. cit.

⁵¹ Sea Museum Collections. (n.d.). Australian Army Soldiers Marching Along Macquarie Street Sydney. Public Domain.

⁵² Davies, op. cit.

⁵³ Australian War Memorial. The Australian transport vessel HMAT Medic prepares to leave the wharf at Port Melbourne. Public Domain.

⁵⁴ Davies, op. cit.

⁵⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 6 April 1917

⁵⁶ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, George William.

⁵⁷ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, Patrick.

⁵⁸ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor Michael.

⁵⁹ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. George O'Connor postcard to Eileen Chisholm.

⁶⁰ Gilgandra and District World War 1 Diggers - Website.

⁶¹ *Taken on Strength* means that a soldier was officially added to the roster or establishment of a specific unit or formation.

⁶² *Promoted in the field* means that a soldier received a promotion while serving at or near the front lines, rather than at a rear base, depot, or in Australia.

⁶³ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, George William, op. cit.

⁶⁴ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, Patrick, op. cit.

⁶⁵ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor Michael, op. cit.

⁶⁶ Nephritis is an inflammation of the kidneys that can cause pain, swelling, fatigue, and impaired kidney function, often brought on by infection or disease.

⁶⁷ Pleurisy is inflammation of the pleura—the membrane surrounding the lungs—that causes sharp chest pain with breathing, while pleural effusion is the abnormal buildup of fluid in the pleural space, often resulting from infection, injury, or disease.

⁶⁸ Gilgandra Diggers, op. cit.

⁶⁹ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces (n.d.). O'Connor, Patrick, op. cit.

⁷⁰ Meningitis is an inflammation of the protective membranes (meninges) surrounding the brain and spinal cord, typically caused by a bacterial or viral infection, and can lead to serious complications if not treated promptly.

⁷¹ Gilgandra and District World War 1 Diggers - Website, op. cit.

⁷² National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor Michael, op. cit.

⁷³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 19 January 1917

⁷⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 9 March 1917

⁷⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 22 June 1917

⁷⁶ During the *Great War*, Australians under the age of 21 required written parental or guardian consent to enlist.

⁷⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 10 August 1917

⁷⁸ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Edward O'Connor.

⁷⁹ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, Edward Joseph.

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- ⁸⁰ Australian War Memorial. Image PO4541.001. Public Domain.
- ⁸¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 13 July 1917
- ⁸² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 17 August 1917
- ⁸³ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Tuesday 28 August 1917
- ⁸⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 24 August 1917
- ⁸⁵ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, George William, *op. cit.*
- ⁸⁶ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. George O'Connor.
- ⁸⁷ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces, O'Connor, George William, *op. cit.*
- ⁸⁸ Australian War Memorial. The Battle of Messines June 7th.
- ⁸⁹ Virtual War Memorial Australia. The Western Front – The War Underground.
- ⁹⁰ Carlyon, L. (2006). *The Great War*. Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney
- ⁹¹ Davies, W. (2010). *Beneath Hill 60*, Random House Australia (Vintage Books), North Sydney.
- ⁹² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1953
- ⁹³ Australian War Memorial. *Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau files, 1914–18 War: 1645 Lance Corporal George William O'Connor, 45th Battalion, AIF, 1DRL/0428*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
- ⁹⁴ In 1910, John and Josephine O'Connor registered the birth of another girl named Yvonne J O'Connor, in Sydney. Yvonne Josephine A Chowne (O'Connor) died in 1957, with her grave indicating her birthdate as unknown.
- ⁹⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 2 February 1917
- ⁹⁶ Using the Reserve Bank of Australia's pre-decimal inflation calculator, £1 in the early twentieth century is roughly equivalent to between \$180 and \$220 in purchasing power in 2026.
- ⁹⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 30 November 1917
- ⁹⁸ The Cooees were the volunteers of the 1915 Gilgandra Cooee Recruitment March who walked nearly 500 kilometres to Sydney, calling "cooe" through towns to encourage enlistment and growing from 26 men to more than 260 by journey's end. The *Kookaburras* were a similar recruiting column that set out from Mendooran in 1915, using marches, rallies, and patriotic ceremony to draw local men into the AIF as communities across rural New South Wales rallied behind the war effort.
- ⁹⁹ Returned Soldiers Settlement Act of 1916. With a lack of available Crown land in the Collie district Patrick, Michael, and Edward O'Connor used the Soldier Settlement Loan Scheme, where returned soldiers could obtain government loans to purchase land, stock, machinery, and improvements, helping them establish farming enterprises after their wartime service.
- ¹⁰⁰ Museums of History, New South Wales. Soldier Settlement Loan Files, INX-75-4080, INX-75-6600, INX-75-6601, INX-75-4079, and INX-75-6595.
- ¹⁰¹ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Wedding – Patrick O'Connor and Olive Paton.
- ¹⁰² *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday, 8 May 1914
- ¹⁰³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 19 April 1934
- ¹⁰⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 July 1940
- ¹⁰⁵ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Wedding – Michael O'Connor and Kathleen Cridland.
- ¹⁰⁶ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Saturday 5 Jul 1941
- ¹⁰⁷ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Wedding – Edward O'Connor and Claudia Walker.
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 29 January 1924

Chapter 6

Fred's Balboora 1924 – 1964

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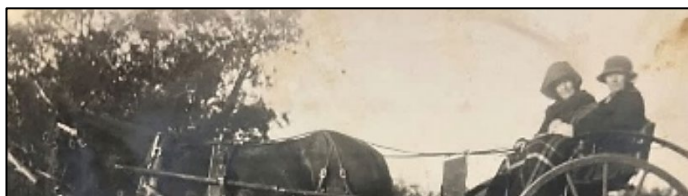
Fred and Eileen

Frederick O'Connor and Eileen Chisholm were well-known to each other, with Fred's brother, George, and Eileen's brother, Donald, being mates. They married on 24 October 1917 at Gilgandra (**below**).³ Eileen was the daughter of Donald and Ellen Chisholm. Donald managed *Pine Lodge* near Collie. Before moving to Collie, the Chisholms lived at Barooga, NSW, across the Murray River from Cobram, Victoria. Donald, a Scotsman, managed sheep for the Scottish Chirnside family, who, through the 1800s, had assembled one of the largest sheep-grazing empires in southeastern Australia.

WEDDING BELLS O'CONNOR—CHISHOLM On Wednesday, October 24th, in the Roman Catholic Church, Collie, the marriage was celebrated by Rev. Father Parker (Gilgandra) of Mr. Frederick O'Connor, son of Mrs. W. O'Connor, "Balbora," with Miss Eileen Jean Chisholm, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. Chisholm, "Pine Lodge," Gilgandra. The bride entered the church, which was nicely decorated by lady friends of the bride, on the arm of her father, who gave her away. She was attended by her only sister, Miss Kathleen Chisholm, as bridesmaid. Mr. Mick O'Connor, brother of the bridegroom, acted as best man. The bride was attired in a gown of ivory crepe de chene, trimmed shadow lace, with touches of silver. The orthodox wreath and veil being worn. The bridesmaid's frock was of white	paillette silk, trimmed Maltese lace, white silk ruched hat, saxe blue velvet roses and streamers. The bridegroom's present to the bride was a gold cable bracelet, together with a bouquet of snowdrops, lillies of the valley, and maiden hair fern; and to the bridesmaid a gold basket bangle, and bouquet of sweet and roses. The bride's present to the bridegroom was a pair of gold sleeve links. The bride's travelling frock was of navy crepe de chene, white sailor collar, hat en suite, white ostrich neck boa. The wedding breakfast was held at Mr. J. Brophy's Collie Hotel. Great credit is due to Mr. and Mrs. Brophy for the excellent, and most elegant manner in which everything was carried out. During the afternoon the happy couple left, mid showers of confetti, by motor car for Gilgandra, where they caught the train for Sydney, where the honeymoon will be spent. Their future home is "Lisfarren," Collie. To the newly married couple we extend our hearty congratulations.
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**Gilgandra Weekly, Friday
2 November 1917.**

In the years before William's death in 1913, he and Caroline O'Connor were living in Brisbane Street, Dubbo. After his passing, Caroline returned to *Balboora*, where Fred and Eileen cared for her. Photographs (**next page**) taken at *Balboora* show Caroline and her daughter-in-law Eileen seated in a sulky, and Caroline enjoying the sunshine while knitting.⁴ Declining health in the late 1920s eventually forced Caroline to leave *Balboora* and return to Dubbo, where her son Jack spent much time with her until her death on 4 September 1929. Caroline's passing was deeply felt by the O'Connor family and many throughout the Collie district. The *Gilgandra Weekly* remembered her as one of its most generous and respected residents, whose life would remain *imprinted on the sands of time*, while an obituary published in *The Catholic Press* eloquently spoke to the love and admiration she inspired (**next page**).^{5 6}



Caroline



the Mary O'Connor.
 Death occurred recently in a private home at Dubbo of Caroline May O'Connor, a ripe old age of 76 years. Deceased had been an old and highly-respected member of the Collie district for 28 years, and she had resided in Dubbo, for some time prior to her death. The O'Connor family, of Collie, are among the oldest of that district, and deceased was well known and wide for her charitable and benevolent nature. She is survived by five daughters, 40 grandchildren, and 100 great-grandchildren, all of whom have shared in her sad bereavement. The sons are (deceased), John (Collie), Pat (Glenwood), Collie, Frederick (Collie), Michael ("Frank" Madoran), and Edward (Newman) and the daughters Mesdames Warren and Hennessy (Narrandine). Her remains were conveyed to Gilgandra, and after prayers in the church were interred in the Catholic cemetery at that town, in the presence of her late husband and a son. The funeral cortege was a large and impressive one. Rev. Father Parker conducted the ceremony at the church and the R.I.P.



Farming Balboora

During the 1920s, farming at *Balboora* centred on sheep grazing, wool production, and cereal cropping, particularly wheat. Horses were indispensable, providing transport and supplying the power needed to pull ploughs and other farm machinery. Four undated photos capture farm work at *Balboora* **(below)**.^{7 8}



Daily life at Balboora through the 1920s. Note the plough pictured bottom right of the panel, and what remains of this plough today (right).



Shortly after taking the reins at *Balboora*, Fred, as well as Patrick McGrane, Charles Monk, Solomon Murray, Morton McDonald, William Barr, John Brophy, William Pearse, and William Fife, were interviewed in the Collie Hall by members of a NSW Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works charged with investigating the viability of a rail line between Warren and Quambone **(next page)**.⁹ In his evidence to the standing committee,

Fred mentioned that he was a farmer and grazier with about 2,800 acres was required to fattening cattle and sheep. He also indicated that he was interested in scientific farming and that the farmers were those who were known as an expert in the use of ensilage with

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household. The onset of
s in late 1929,
Wales.¹³ Wool prices
the late 1920s to less
of shearing, seed,
intensely hot summer
coincided with

collapsing markets. Many Collie farmers fell into overwhelming debt, forcing some to walk off their farms. Graziers fared little better, boiling down sheep for tallow.^{15 16 17} Government wheat and wool tariffs offered limited relief, failing to stabilise markets and deepening the financial strain on rural families.¹⁸

**NSW Parliamentary
Standing Committee on
Public Works, Collie
Consultation.**

**Back (L-R): 1 Patrick
McGrane, 2 Frederick
O'Connor, and 4
Solomon Murray.**

**Front (L-R): 1 Morton
McDonald, 3 John
Brophy, and 4 William
Pearse.**



During the hot, dry summer of 1929/30, Fred and his young family including Jean (11), Don (10), Jack (8), Max (6), Brian (4), Keith (2), and with Eileen eight-months pregnant with Ken, not only had to contend with drought, but all six of his children were struck down at the same time with gastroenteritis, with three taken to Idaleigh Private Hospital in Gilgandra for treatment!¹⁹ The picture **(below)** of Fred with his children in the vegetable garden was taken at about this time.²⁰

**Fred, Keith, Don, Max,
Jack, Jean, and Brian busy
in the vegetable garden.**



As if conditions weren't difficult enough, a double disaster in August 1932, placed further stress on the O'Connor household. Fred's harness shed was destroyed by fire, and just days later, while he and Jean were travelling in the sulky, the horses shied, overturning the gig and ruining the sulky. Thankfully, neither Fred nor Jean was injured.²¹

DISTRESS points may possibly do more harm

Weekly,
July

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wreaked havoc on the
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down by farmers for fallow. A report in the *Gilgandra Weekly* (**previous page**) captured the scale of the crisis confronting farmers across the district.²² Grinding poverty forced many families onto relief rations, drove young men to leave in search of work, and compelled countless farmers to abandon their holdings. Over time, many small selections were absorbed into larger pastoral estates, making the *Great Depression* and drought years a defining period of hardship that permanently transformed farming and community life across the western districts.

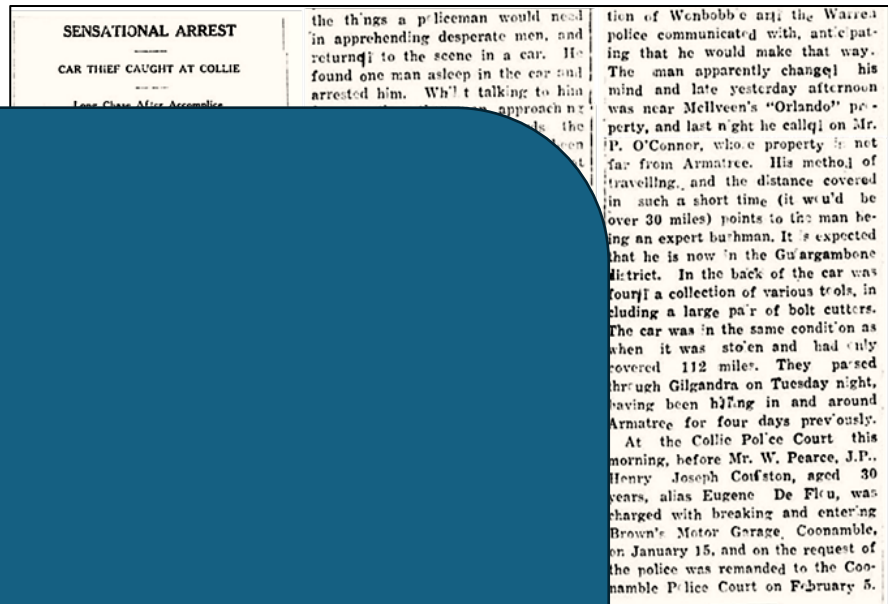
As the hardships of 1930–36 took their toll, many western graziers and wheat-growers began turning their attention southward to the newly irrigated plains of the Riverina and northern Victoria, where government-backed schemes such as the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) promised reliable water, fertile soils, and more secure returns. With growing towns, diversified farming opportunities, and renewed optimism emerging after the worst of the *Great Depression*, the MIA offered hope to families seeking recovery after years of drought, dust storms, and debt. In February 1936, Fred and Eileen packed Jean, Don, and Jack into the family car. They set off on an extended tour through the Riverina and Victoria, renewing family ties and visiting old acquaintances. Given the difficult years the family had endured, the trip may also have been an opportunity to assess whether a move south offered a more promising future. As a frequent contributor to the *Gilgandra Weekly*, Eileen submitted a detailed report describing the places they visited, praising the gardens, farms, and especially the MIA, where she marvelled at the fruit canneries and butter factories at Leeton. She finished her contribution by saying:

*...that after returning home to find Collie refreshed by widespread rain, the good green acres of home compares favourably with the land in any of our pleasant and enlightening motor tour.*²³

How Fred and Eileen O'Connor managed to keep their large young family and farm afloat during these harsh years is difficult to imagine, especially given that Eileen delivered their eighth child, Colin, at Gilgandra in 1931.²⁴ Fred and Eileen would not have any more children until their last two, Terry in 1937 and Ian in 1939.

Even in those tough years, some excitement found its way to *Balboora*. In January 1931, a car thief on the run from the police tried to force his way into the O'Connor home, only to be

met by the formidable Eileen and firmly repelled. The *Gilgandra Weekly* carried the story (below).²⁵



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pal with *Erica* from *The Catholic Press* in Sydney.²⁸ In one of her letters, she described Collie **(below)**.²⁹ During a 1929 tour of New South Wales, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), represented by the Reverend Fathers A. Goodmand and M. J. Ryan, conducted events in Dubbo, including a *Notable Communion Breakfast*.³⁰ As part of this visit to the area, Father Ryan conducted a mission at the Collie Catholic Church, which was attended by the O'Connors, with Jean noting in one of her letters to *Erica*, that:

*Last month we had a mission at our church in Collie. Father Ryan, a Sacred Heart Missionary, conducted it: he was very nice, and instructed us in our Catechism. I was able to attend every morning and night.*³¹

"Balboora," Collie, via Gilgandra, N.S.W.
 Dear Erica,—It seems such a long time since I wrote to you, I thought I would like to write again. I am going to tell you about Collie, Erica. It is only a small town, with one hotel. There are three stores, two halls, a baker and butcher's shop; also a few houses, and there is a post office and garage. Have you ever been to the Wellington Caves, Erica? I have never been through them, but have seen them. Well, dear Erica, I shall now say good-bye, with best wishes to the Page.—From your fond friend,
 JEAN O'CONNOR.
 (I am glad to hear from you again, Jean. Your description of your home town is interesting. What do the people do there, or, rather, round about Collie? Are they farmers? No, I have never been to the Wellington Caves. In fact, I have not seen them, so that you are better off than I am in that respect. I expect that you are back at school now. You do not say whether there are any churches in Collie, where you go to hear Holy Mass, or where your school is. Perhaps you will tell me this in another letter later on.)

**The Catholic Press,
 Thursday 12 February
 1931.**

For the O'Connors and other Catholic families, Sunday Mass at Collie served as a weekly anchor and a time of devotion, fellowship, and spiritual renewal. It offered Fred an opportunity to reaffirm his faith while ensuring his children grew within a strong sense of religious belonging and tradition. Easter and Christmas held particular significance, drawing the extended family together in celebrations that deepened both their spiritual lives and family bonds. Fred and Eileen undoubtedly took great pride in their daughter Jean, who was

among the eight debutantes chosen from over 200 young women at the 1934 Gilgandra Catholic Ball, for presentation to Monsignor O'Donnell of the Bathurst Diocese (**below**).³²

THE DEBUTANTES	
The young ladies presented to	crinkle crepe, white velvet cape and silver halo.
	Miss Jean Meers (Collie), white morocain, pink coat, bouquet of and silver.
	Miss Joan Donnelly, white organ velvet coat and trimmings.
	Miss Joan West, white French coat, sequin trimmings
	Miss O'Connor (Collie), skin, lace pink velvet

most notably during the opening of the new church at Collie. The ladies were organising and raising the necessary funds. In the local community, Fred Gilgandra, to welcome the official opening and

The Gilgandra Ladies' Auxiliary. Bishop Norton was welcomed by Father Emelhainz, Mr. F. O'Connor and Mr. F. Pye, all of whom expressed their appreciation of the interest His Lordship had taken in the erection of the church. The Bishop in his reply congratulated Father Emelhainz and the people of Collie for the enthusiasm and energy they had shown once they came to the conclusion that a more worthy church was needed. He showed how appropriate it was to name the new church Holy Cross, as every Catholic church was in a sense a "Holy Cross" church, in which the sacrifice of Mount Calvary is perpetuated in the Mass. This was the first church building for which Father Emelhainz has been responsible, and Bishop Norton expressed his hope that it would be the first of a long line erected to the glory of God.

Community

Beyond the farm and the church, Fred and Eileen poured a great deal of their energy into community and civic life. Fred was a strong advocate for the rights of the man on the land, playing an active role in the *Collie Farmers and Settlers' Association* and campaigning tirelessly for a railway through Collie. In 1947, as Vice-President of the *Collie Railway League*, he pressed the government to construct the proposed Eumungerie–Collie–Quambone line without delay. The League urged all district residents to join the movement, arguing that *the railway will serve one of the best farming and grazing areas in the state, and it behoves all to get behind the movement and speed it up*.³⁴ Despite years of determined lobbying, a rail line never transpired, and Collie remains without a station.

In 1944, Eileen, whose poetry was widely celebrated, compiled, for publication and sale, a selection of her work, entitled *My Garden of Verse*, to raise much-needed funds to establish a Gilgandra District Ambulance Service.³⁵ In a second edition of her work published in 1984 (**below**), the introduction, written by family friend Marion Dormer, noted that:

*Many of her poems were written during Mrs O'Connor's busy years as a housewife and mother. Others were composed when three of her sons were serving in the Armed Forces. Her courage and maternal love shine through those written during those anxious years.*³⁶

THE NEED IS DESPERATE
 SAYS AN AMBULANCE
 SUBSCRIBER
 APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

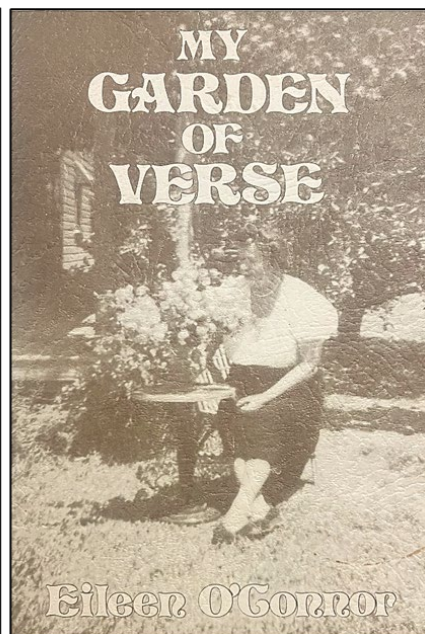
"An ambulance is something Gilgandra lacks and is desperately in need of," says an anonymous subscriber of 410.

The Committee of the service again appeals to all to contribute to this worthy appeal according to their means.

Many appeals have been made in the name of charity and responded to most generously by the people of Gilgandra, but in this appeal the people are asked to relieve pain and suffering—for that is the primary function of an ambulance—and for this reason those who have not already subscribed should do so immediately.

Send in your cheque today.

SUPPORT FROM COLLIE
 To indicate the interest displayed in all parts of the district it is only necessary to mention the effort to help the fund that is being made by a resident of the Collie district. Mrs. Fred O'Connor, of "Lisfaren," whose ability as a writer of verse is known all over the State, is having published at her own expense a book of her poems and these will be sold and the entire proceeds donated towards the Gilgandra District Ambulance Service. A very generous donation on the part of Mrs. O'Connor.



Gilgandra Weekly,
 Thursday 20 April 1944.

O'Connor, Eileen.
 (1984). *My Garden of
 Verse*. Second Edition.

The first poem in *My Garden of Verse* is called Jonquils:

JONQUILS

*I SMELT the first sweet scent of Spring,
Upon the frosty air,
And searching in my garden found*

raise funds for the
rescue after a dray

COLLIE

(Our Correspondent)

O'Connor, of "Balborra",
as the victim of a very
late accident on Friday
was cartng posts in a
when the horse took fright..
O'Connor went to jump off,
slipped, and he fell under
wheels, which passed over his
He was conveyed to hos-
by ambulance. Latest re-
indicate that he is making
satisfactory progress..

School



Collie Public School, 1927.

The Collie Public School (**above**) became a key part of Fred and Eileen O'Connor's lives, as they actively supported the school and encouraged their children's academic, cultural, and sporting development.³⁸ Eileen's deep appreciation for learning shaped the family's priorities, and, with Fred serving on the *Parents and Citizens' Association*, both parents worked determinedly to ensure their children received the best education available in the district.³⁹

It was no surprise, then, that all their children excelled, finishing at the top or near the top of their classes, with Keith, Brian, and Max also earning merit awards in the 1936 *NSW Health and Temperance Examinations*.^{40 41 42 43 44 45 46} To further ensure her children were well-educated, Eileen employed a tutor to assist with their academic lessons and music tuition.⁴⁷ The eight children of Fred's brother Patrick also attended Collie school, and they, too, performed admirably.

A particular highlight of the school year was the Annual Juvenile Ball, such as the 1931 event featuring fancy dress and costumes, where even the parents got involved (**next page**)!⁴⁸

A Great Success Many Fancy and Original Costumes The annual juvenile ball under the control of the Parents and Citizens' Association, was	Best pair, under 10 years: Don McNabb and Valerie Ostler, "Bride and Bridegroom," and Ken McNabb and Jessie McNabb, "Ginger and Min" divided. Best pair over 10 years: Doreen Meers and Marie Brophy, "Nigger Minstrel." Most original costume, under 8 years: Ray McGrane, "Jockey." Most original girl, over 8 years:	Betty Wardrop, Yale Blues, Jean Mealey, Gipsy, Jean McMaster, Columbine, Norma Rankmore, Bluebell, Vera Rankmore, Playing Cards, Joyce Rankmore, Clock, Leesa McGrane, Collie football cup, Betty O'Connor, Fairy, Doreen Hartnett, Butterfly, Evelyn Tink, Welsh Girl, Pat Brophy and Kathleen Moore, Red Riding Hood, Mervyn Ostler, Depression, Ted Welsh, King Billy, Darval Meers, Peanut Butter, Peter McMaster, Shell Benzine, Mick Brophy, Felix, Don O'Connor and Cedric Wardrop, Patch Laddies, Jack O'Connor, Clown, Darval Meers, Union Benzine, Kevin Brophy, Sunbeams, George Hartnett, Red Indian, Malcolm Tink, Gondolier, Arthur Mealey, Clown, Adults' Costumes:— Miss H. Miller, Superstitious, Misses Elsie Moore and E. Welsh, and Gussy, Misses Evie Moore and Molly Brophy, Gollywogs, Spence, Barber, Mulhall, Depression, Greentree, Half and Half, W. Hartnett, Lady, Selby, Bulldog, E. Ostler, Monkey
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specially in athletics,

g events were

ten and Fred

ten hosting inter-

ed its tennis club,

m the Collie Public

n the children

SCHOOL TENNIS

The Collie Public School has reformed its tennis club for 1933, with the following officials:—

President: Don O'Connor.
Vice-Presidents: Betty Wardrop and Mick Brophy.

Secretary: Fay Welsh.
Treasurer: Lola Greentree.
It is hoped to play matches with surrounding schools during the season.

Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 6 April 1933.

Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 15 September 1932.

ANNUAL SCHOOL PICNIC

The annual school picnic was held on Saturday last in fine weather, when a large attendance of parents and children thoroughly enjoyed the various athletic events and games. Refreshments were laid on in abundance and every child present shared in the prize winning. The picnic was followed by a dance at night, when the hall was uncomfortably crowded with dancers, who enjoyed every minute of the evening's entertainment.

Principal prize winners at the picnic were:—

GIRLS' EVENTS (Collie School Children)

First Class: Joyce Wheatley 1, Ida Rankmore 2, Paty Bogie 3.
Second and Third Classes: First Heat, Valerie Ostler 1, Hilda Bogie 2, Betty O'Connor 3; Second Heat, Zena Welsh 1, Betty Bogie 2, Jessie McNabb 3.

Fifth and Sixth Classes: Frances Rankmore 1, Lola Greentree 2, Jean Mealey 3.

Beaten Girls' Race: Joan Meers 1, Norma Rankmore 2, Joyce Rankmore 3.

ALL COMERS GIRLS' EVENTS

Three and four year olds: Diana Tink 1, Kathleen Moore 2, Isabelle Burton 3.

Five year olds: Patsy Brophy 1, Colleen O'Connor 2, Merleen Wilson 3.

Six year olds: Isabelle Ostler 1, Decima Sinclair 2, Isabelle Wheatley 3.

Eight year olds: Nell Wheatley 1, Margaret Hughes 2, Lola Monk 3.

Nine year olds: Margaret McGrane 1, Elva Hannon 2.

Ten year old: Enid Monk 1, Vanice Wheatley 2, Tessie McGrane 3.

Twelve years and over: Alma Monk 1, Fay Welsh 2, Betty Wardrop 3.

Three legged race: First heat, Lola Monk and Nell Wheatley 1, Elva Hannon and Hilda Bogie 2, Zena Welsh and Joan Meers 3; Second heat, Betty Wardrop and Jean Mealey 1, Mary McGrane and Alma Monk 2, Lola Greentree and Valerie Ostler 3.

Skipping even: First heat, Betty Wardrop 1, Frances Rankmore 2; Second heat, Norma Rankmore 1, Jessie McNabb 2, Joan Meers 2.

BOYS' EVENTS (School Children)

First Class: Brian O'Connor 1, Ken Bogie 2, Wally Rankmore and Bill O'Connor dead-heat 3.

Third Class: Kevin Brophy 1,

Charlie Rankmore 2, Don McNabb 3.

Fourth Class: Val Meers 1, Len Ostler 2, Max O'Connor 3.

Fifth Class: Ken McNabb 1, Jack O'Connor 2.

Sixth Class: Darval Meers 1, Don O'Connor 2, Mick Brophy 3.

Beaten boy's race: Mervyn Ostler 1, Owen O'Connor 2, Neville Hannan 3.

BOYS' RACE (All Comers)

Five and six year olds: First heat, Malcolm Tink 1, Keith O'Connor 2, Max Ostler 3; Second heat, Ray McGrane 1, Jack Monk 2, Arthur Mealey 3.

Three legged race: First heat, Ken McNabb and Wally Rankmore 1, Max O'Connor and Paddy O'Connor 2, Don McNabb and Kevin Brophy 3; Second heat, Mervyn Ostler and Don O'Connor 1, Val Meers and Len Ostler 2, George and Jack O'Connor 3.

High jump: Under 10 years, Kevin Brophy 1, Denis McIlveen 2, Brian O'Connor and D. McNabb divided 3; under 13 years: Jack O'Connor 1, Val Meers, Ken McNabb and L. Ostler divided 2; over 13 years: Ted Welsh 1, Don O'Connor 2, Neville Hannan 3.

COLLIE NEWS

School Picnic Big Success

(From Our Correspondent)

WEDDING

A quiet wedding was celebrated in Collie on Wednesday last, at the home of the bride's parents, when Miss Josephine O'Connor, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. O'Connor, was united in matrimony to Mr. Harvey O'Hara, of Collie. Father Eviston, of Gilgandra, officiated. The many friends of the happy couple unite in wishing them a long and happy married life. The honeymoon is being spent at Alberta.

PERSONAL

We regret to announce that Mr. T. Snowball, who is an inmate of the Gilgandra District Hospital, suffering from eye trouble, is showing little signs of improvement. All join in wishing him a speedy cure.

SCHOOL PICNIC

The annual school picnic took place on Saturday last in fine weather, and proved a great success—both socially and financially. A large crowd of children and parents enjoyed themselves thoroughly and all voted the day's gathering a great one. A dance was held at night and such a large number attended that the hall was overcrowded. Several competitions were drawn, and the winners were: Box of sweets, Mr. E. Rowcliff; pair of lacquer boxes, Mrs. C. Kilby. A box of chocolates, disposed of on behalf of the Catholic Church funds, was also drawn, and resulted in a win for Mr. Arthur Bernard Moore.

Following are the results of the athletic events decided at the picnic:—

SCHOOL GIRLS

Fifth and Sixth Classes: Joan Kilby 1, Frances Rankmore 2, Fay Welsh 3.

Fourth Class: Lola Greentree 1, Jean Mealey 2, Betty Wardrop 3.

Second Class: Valerie Ostler 1, Joyce Rankmore 2, Zena Welsh 3.

First Class: Heather Everson 1, Margaret Roberts 2, Jessie McNabb 3.

Consolation Race: Joan McMaster 1, Joan Meers 2, Norma Rankmore 3.

DISTRICT GIRLS

Under 9 years: Margaret McGrane 1, Betty O'Connor 2, Nell Wheatley 3.

Under 12 years: Enid Monk 1, Alma Monk 2, Vanice Wheatley 3.

Over 12 years: Mary McGrane 1, Jean O'Connor 2, Joyce Stewart and Norma McIlveen dead-heat 3.

TINY TOTS

Heat 1: Patsy Brophy 1, Isabelle Wheatley 2, Ida Rankmore 3.

Heat 2: Lola Monk 1, Teresa McGrane 2, Colleen O'Connor 3.

Consolation Race: Hilda Bogie 1, Betty Bogie 2, Elva Hannon 3.

Three-Legged Race: Heat 1: Mary McGrane and Fay Welsh 1, Joan Kilby and Frances Rankmore 2.

Heat 2: Jean Mealey and Betty Wardrop 1, Lola Greentree and Alma Monk 2.

SCHOOL BOYS

Sixth and Seventh Classes: Ted Welsh 1, John Rankmore 2, Cedric Wardrop 3.

Fifth Class: Mick Brophy 1, Darval Meers 2, Dan O'Connor 3.

Fourth Class: Alan Kilby 1, Peter McMaster 2, Ken McNabb 3.

Third Class: Max O'Connor 1, Len Ostler 2, Val Meers 3.

Second Class: Don McNabb 1.

First Class: Brian O'Connor 1, Kevin Brophy 2, Norma Wild 3.

Consolation Race: Jack O'Connor 1, Mervyn Ostler 2, Reg McMaster 3.

District Boys: Frank O'Connor 1, Owen O'Connor 2, Pat Colless 3.

TINY TOTS

Heat 1: Bill O'Connor 1, Ron O'Connor 2, Arthur Mealey 3.

Heat 2: Malcolm Tink 1, Keith McIlveen 2, Jack Monk 3.

Sack Race: Jack O'Connor 1, Cedric Wardrop 2, Val Meers 3.

Three-Legged Race: Division 1: Don O'Connor and T. Wheatley 1, C. Wardrop and J. Rankmore 2.

Division 2: Val Meers and Brian O'Connor 1, Len Ostler and Ken McNabb 2.

ADULT EVENTS

Married Ladies' Race: Mrs. C. A. Mealey (4 yds) 1, Mrs. P. Moore (scr.) 2.

Single Ladies' Race, 75 yards: Miss Edna Rowcliff (1 yd.) 1, Miss E. Wheatley (5 yds) 2, Miss L. Moore (scr.) 3.

Ladies' Three-Legged Race: Misses R. and S. Wheatley 1, Misses E. Moore and D. Meers 2.

Sweethearts' Race: Jack Mealey and Miss E. Rowcliff 1, Jack Wheatley and Miss E. Moore 2.

Married Men's Race: N. McIlveen (2 yds) 1, G. W. Buttriss (scr.) 2.

Single Men's Race, 100 yards: A. Stewart (scr.) 1, J. Wheatley (2 yds) 2, Lance Moore (5 yds) 3.

Broad Jump: A. Stewart.

High Jump: E. Rowcliff.

Three-Legged Race (men): B. Murray and J. Wheatley 1, J. Mealey and L. Moore 2.

Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 14 September 1933.

Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 3 June
1943 (right).

SCHOOLS' PICNIC AND SPORTS **SIXTH CLASS SCHOOLS' RESULTS**

Lorraine Marks (Chippendale) 1; Una Irvine (Eringangerin) 2; Mary Howard (Biddon) 3.
Boys under 11 years, 75 yards: Frank Mulhall (Collie) 1; Ron Fenton (Collie) 2.
Girls under 11 years, 50 yards: Julie Mulhall (Collie) 1.
Boys, under 12 years, 75 yds: Lyle Mulhall (Collie) 1.
Girls under 12 years, 50 yards: Peggy Moore (Collie) 1; Joyce Howard (Biddon) 2; June Palmer (Curban) 3.
Boys under 13 years, 100 yds: Ross Altmann (Curban) 1; Ross McAlary (Chippendale) 2; Colin O'Connor (Collie) 3.
Girls under 13 years, 75 yards: Molly Moore (Collie) 1; Mary Beveridge (Chippendale) 2; Dolores Mills (Tooraweenah) 3.
Boys under 14 years, 100 yds: W. McFenna (Tooraweenah) 1; A. Ovenden (Tooraweenah) 2.
Girls under 14 years, 75 yards: Dorothy Pegler (Tooraweenah) 1.
Girls' Skipping Race, under 11 years, 50 yards: Lorraine Marks (Chippendale) 1.
Girls' Skipping Race, under 14 years, 50 yards: Peggy Moore (Collie) 1; Dorothy Pegler (Tooraweenah) 2; Joyce Howard (Biddon) 3.
Boys' Junior High Jump: Ross Altmann (Curban) 1; Ross McAlary (Chippendale) 2; Colin O'Connor (Collie) 3.
Junior Broad Jump: Ross Altmann (Curban) 1; R. McAlary (Chippendale) 2; C. O'Connor (Collie) 3.

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was on the sporting

field where they particularly excelled. In December 1936, Don and Jack were lauded in the *Gilgandra Weekly* for their school achievements in tennis and cricket:

*Treasure trophies, in the possession of the O'Connor boys, sons of Mr. and Mrs. F. O'Connor, of Collie, when they returned home this week from St. Stanislaus College, Bathurst, were three silver Cups. Don won one cup for the senior tennis championship, and another for the batting average in the senior College cricket team, whilst Jack won his trophy for the junior boy's tennis championship. They have only been attending the College for about four months, their performances are most creditable, and we extend hearty congratulations.*⁶⁵

Some of the O'Connor boys' sporting highlights at St Stanislaus from this period include:

1936 – Jack O'Connor (junior tennis champion) and Don O'Connor (senior tennis champion and senior batting award).⁶⁶ **1937** – Jack O'Connor (senior tennis runner-up).⁶⁷ **1938** – Brian O'Connor (special prize for athletics, juvenile handball champion, and juvenile cricket award) and Don O'Connor (senior cricket award and senior tennis runner-up).⁶⁸ **1939** – Brian O'Connor (junior handball champion).⁶⁹ The family photograph (**below**), taken in 1937, shows Max, Don, and Jack proudly wearing their St Stanislaus school uniforms.⁷⁰ In April of the same year, Fred and Eileen made a trip to Bathurst to visit their three boys.⁷¹ Ian, the youngest child, who was born in 1939, is also pictured (**below**) with Eileen in 1941.⁷²

The O'Connor family in 1937.

Back (L-R): Max, Don, Jean, and Jack.

Middle (L-R): Keith, Terry, Eileen, Fred, and Brian.

Front (L-R): Colin and Ken.



Gymkhanas

Gymkhanas became increasingly popular in the Collie district from the mid-1900s onward. The O'Connors, long devoted to horses for both work, transport, and sport, were naturally enthusiastic participants. Beyond the competition, gymkhanas served as key fundraising events for the Collie district. The September 1946 Collie Gymkhana, which was held at the Collie Sports Ground, was a success. The O'Connors

participated in several of the events, including the 100 yds. race, the 200 yds. race, the 400 yds. race, the 800 yds. race, the 1600 yds. race, the 3200 yds. race, the 6400 yds. race, the 12800 yds. race, the 25600 yds. race, the 51200 yds. race, the 102400 yds. race, the 204800 yds. race, the 409600 yds. race, the 819200 yds. race, the 1638400 yds. race, the 3276800 yds. race, the 6553600 yds. race, the 13107200 yds. race, the 26214400 yds. race, the 52428800 yds. race, the 104857600 yds. race, the 209715200 yds. race, the 419430400 yds. race, the 838860800 yds. race, the 1677721600 yds. race, the 3355443200 yds. race, the 6710886400 yds. race, the 13421772800 yds. race, the 26843545600 yds. race, the 53687091200 yds. race, the 107374182400 yds. race, the 214748364800 yds. race, the 429496729600 yds. race, the 858993459200 yds. race, the 1717986918400 yds. race, the 3435973836800 yds. race, the 6871947673600 yds. race, the 13743895347200 yds. race, the 27487790694400 yds. race, the 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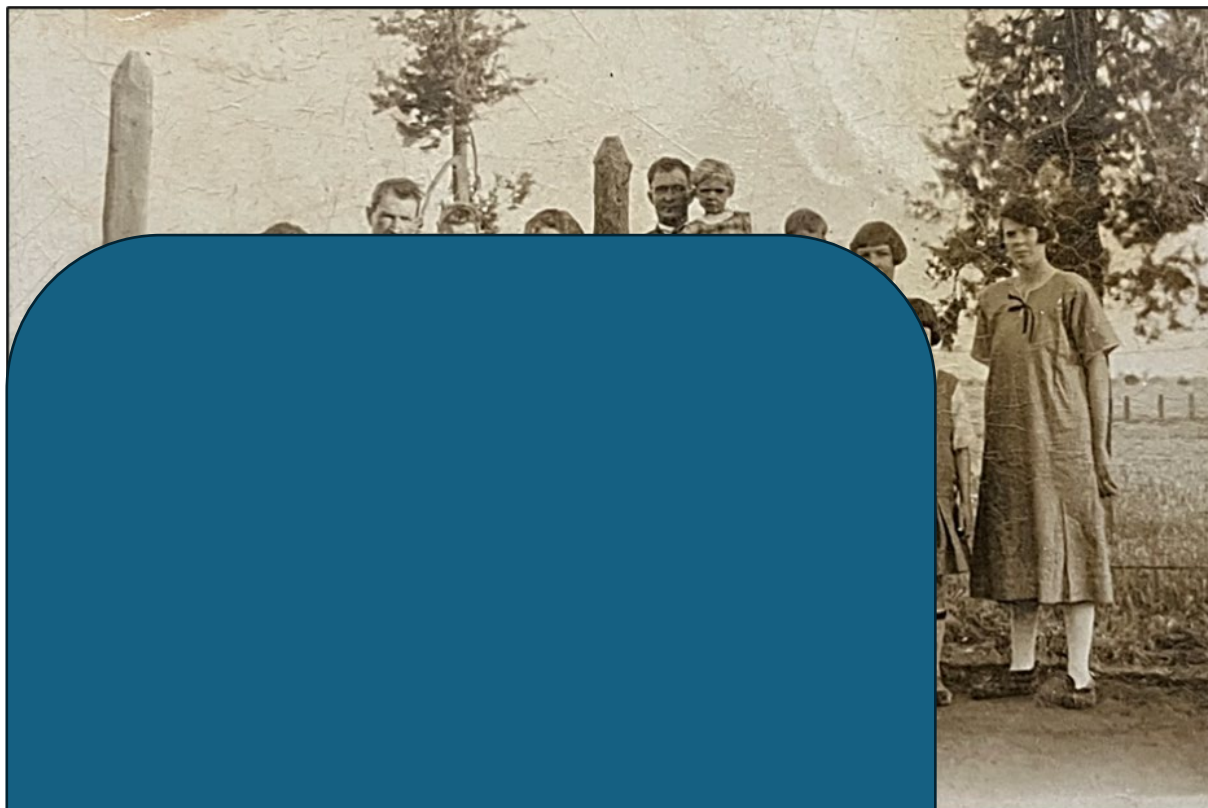
Tennis

During the early 1900s, tennis emerged as one of the most popular and accessible sports across rural New South Wales, becoming an important social and recreational outlet for country communities. Requiring little equipment and with clay courts easily established on farms and in small towns, local tennis clubs flourished, hosting weekend matches, dances, fundraising events, and inter-town competitions. These gatherings helped ease social isolation, strengthened district identity, and provided young people with opportunities for friendship, courtship, physical fitness, and friendly rivalry.

Once the *Balboora* court (**next page**) was levelled, clayed, bagged, rolled, and marked, tennis quickly became a staple of O'Connor family life, with *Lisfarran* even fielding its own team in local competitions.⁷⁴ For example, the results from 1934 (**below**) show the series of games between *Lisfarran* and Collie.⁷⁵ The *Lisfarran* team, comprising the O'Connor, Wheatley, Chisholm, and Meers families, won the day 10 sets (80 games) to 7 sets (72 games). A fortnight later, the *Lisfarran* team tangled with *Lynthorpe* again at *Lisfarran*, walking away with another win.⁷⁶ As soon as they could walk, the O'Connor children had a racquet in their hands. After proper instruction in the rules and tennis etiquette, they began playing with the adults and were soon representing Collie in district tennis, starting with the 16-year-old Jean in 1934. The tennis games of Fred and Eileen O'Connor really hit their straps in 1935, when they won the coveted Collie American Tournament and a cup donated by Mr Brophy.^{77 78}

**Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 7 June 1934.**

COLLIE NEWS —XOX— (From Our Correspondent)	
TENNIS— Teams of four pairs, representing "Lisfarran" and Collie, met at Collie on Sunday last, when a keen and most enjoyable day's tennis resulted in a win for "Lisfarran" by three sets. Scores are as follows (Collie players being mentioned first).— Mens Doubles: A. Stewart and R. Nimmo v F. O'Connor and L. Wheatley, 6/1; J. Murray and T. McIlveen v K. Chisholm and B. Chisholm, 6/5; J. Murray and A. Stewart v L. Wheatley and B. Chisholm, 6/2; T. McIlveen and R. Nimmo v K. Chisholm and F. O'Connor, 6/4; A. Stewart and T. McIlveen v K. Chisholm and L. Wheatley, 4/6. Ladies Doubles: Misses J. Stewart and J. McGrane v Mesdames Wheat-	ley and O'Connor, 4/6; Mrs. Greentree and Miss R. Moore v Misses J. O'Connor and D. Meers, 4/6; Miss J. Stewart and Mrs. Greentree v Mrs. O'Connor and Miss O'Connor, 4/6; Misses J. McGrane and R. Moore v Mrs. Wheatley and Miss D. Meers 3/6 Mixed Doubles: A. Stewart and Mrs. Greentree v L. Wheatley and Mrs. Wheatley, 2/6; R. Nimmo and Miss R. Moore v F. O'Connor and Mrs. O'Connor, 0/6; T. Murray and Miss J. Stewart v B. Chisholm and Miss D. Meers, 6/4; T. McIlveen and Miss J. McGrane v K. Chisholm and Miss J. O'Connor, 4/6; A. Stewart and Miss J. McGrane v L. Wheatley and Miss J. O'Connor, 6/2; R. Nimmo and Miss J. Stewart v B. Chisholm and Mrs. O'Connor, 2/6; T. Murray and Miss R. Moore v K. Chisholm and Mrs. Wheatley, 3/6; T. McIlveen and Mrs. Greentree v F. O'Connor and Miss Meers, 6/2 "Lisfarran": 10 sets, 80 games. Collie: 7 sets, 72 games.



. It is a gathering of
nnor, wearing black, is
and his wife Kathleen
Eileen O'Connor were
Fred and next to Jean;
Eileen is pregnant

more than cricket,
strict, multiple
h on the field and in
y 1890s, and by 1905,
ah, Castlereagh,
ng matches, usually
h other on any given

weekend. Fielding a regular team in Collie, though, proved difficult, causing the Collie correspondent to *The Castlereagh* newspaper in 1907 to publicly chide the local men:

*I don't know whether to attribute it to the climate or mere indifference, but the young fellows around here seem too slow 'to catch grubs,' as the saying goes. Years ago Collie could boast a good cricket club, but latterly no club has existed, although at times spasmodic efforts have been made to liven it up. None of these efforts have received the encouragement they warranted. Now that another season has begun there seems to be the same exhibition of 'slows' or indifference. This seems a pity, for with a little energy and practice a good club could be got together, which would certainly add to the social life of the town and district. Now then boys, wake up, and see if you can do something before the cricket season is too far spent.*⁷⁹

CRICKET. The Collie and Gilgandra cricket teams met on the latter's wicket on Saturday last when the home team scored a decisive victory. Scores:— Collie (1st innings).—C. Munro, c Mudie, b Ryan, 12; M. O'Connor, b Gibson, 1; M. Frudenstein, c Anlezark, b Gibson, 3; S. J. Murray, b Gibson, 1; E. Buckland, b Kerr, 2; W. Curran, not out, 10; S. K. Murray, b Gibson, 0; P. O'Connor, c Burke, b Gibson, 0; E. Murray, b Gibson, 0; S. Murray, b Burke, 8; Alick, b Kerr, 2; sundries, 24; total, 63. Second Innings.—C. Munro, not out, 7; Alick, b Mudie, 13; E. Buckland, b Anlezark, 2; S. Murray, not out, 0; sundries, 5; total, two wickets for 27. Gilgandra (1st innings).—Anlezark, c Buckland, b S. Murray, 31; W. Tibbits, b Murray, 21; B. Gibson, b S. Murray, 1; I. Bonnington, b H. Murray, 3; F. Kerr, b Frudenstein, 21; J. Mudie, b Frudenstein, 1; E. Tibbits, run out, 6; B. Fletcher, c Murray, b Frudenstein, 3; J. Burke, not out, 15; C. Rynn, c and b H. Murray, 13; C. Maguire, c Curran, b H. Murray, 0; sundries, 7; total, 122.	Cobococo. (FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.) ON Saturday last the Collie cricketers met our local players at Pine View. The Collie lads fell easy victims to the bowling of A. Samuels and H. Meeth, the former taking four wickets for twenty-six, and the latter five for eight. Collie batted with ten men only. Pine View put together 156; J. Hope, H. Meeth, T. Connell, L. Tink, and H. Samuels being the principal scorers. F. Samuels had the misfortune to be struck under the knee with the ball, disabling him for the day. Following are the scores:— Collie.—S. D. Murray, 2; S. J. Murray, 0; S. Saddler, 0; M. F. Frudenstein, 8; A. Samuels, 12; M. O'Connor, 6; H. Murray, 3; P. O'Connor, 0; S. K. Murray, 0; E. H. Craze, not out, 0; byes, 6; total, 37. Pine View.—A. Samuels, 6; J. Hope, 18; H. Meeth, 62, retired; T. Connell, 25; F. Bullock, 5; McFetridge, 0; L. Tink, not out, 15; H. Samuels, 19; A. McMillan, 0; Luke, 0; T. Howard, 0; byes, 7; total, 157.
CRICKET. A match was played on Saturday, 2nd instant, between teams representing Collie village and Collie station shearers. After a good game the villagers were defeated by 81 runs. Collie in their first essay made 46, of which Fred O'Connor made 11. The bowling was done by Noonan and Wardrop, the former getting 5 for 12 and the latter 5 for 28. The shearers made 57, Brown 19, being the only double figure scorer. H. Hodge captured 5 wickets for 17 runs, J. Donnelly 3 for 17, and Sam Sadler 2 for 6. Collie in their second attempt only made 30 (J. Mitchell 11). Noonan and Wardrop again wrought havoc amongst the batsmen, the latter securing the splendid average of 8 for 13, whilst Noonan got 1 for 16. The shearers made 110 in their second innings (Brown 18, Noonan 26, J. Wardrop 19, and W. Wardrop 11 not out). For Collie Donnelly got 3 for 10, M. O'Connor 2 for 12, J. Mitchell 2 for 20, S. Sadler 2 for 23, H. Hodge, 1 for 21. The shearers were entertained at dinner at Humphreys' Hotel by the local club.	CRICKET. Since my last Collie has played two cricket matches with Pine View and they stand one about. Collie won the first by eight wickets, and lost the second by 107 runs. In the former H. Meeth 18, J. Hope 22, and G. Spriggins 25, reached double figures for Pine View, and B. Sharpe took 9 wickets for 20 runs, while for Collie G. Mills 40 and 17 not out, and F. O'Connor 13 did best with the bat, and H. Murray captured 10 wickets for 53, G. Mills 5 for 38 and J. Mitchell 2 for 6. In the second match G. Mills 13, H. Murray 16, M. O'Connor 20, E. Meers 10 and W. Wardrop 12 reached two figures, the bowling of A. Samuels and E. and F. Body being too good for the others. For Pine View F. Bullock 30, F. Body 28, E. Body 20 and D. McInnes 20 not out stood out from the others who failed to reach double figures. For Collie every man bowled and nine of them captured a wicket. F. Body and F. Bullock captured the Collie bowling, and gave a fine display of patience tempered with hard hitting.

A selection of scores from 1909 and 1910.

Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative, Thursday, 10 February 1910.

Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, Saturday 13 March 1909.

Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, Sat, 27 March 1909.

Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative, Thursday 14 October 1909.

The rebuke produced swift results. After a fundraising ball on 20 December 1907, a club was formed, and 15 players, including Patrick and Michael O'Connor, attended the opening training session.^{80 81} Cricket quickly became central to the sporting and social life in Collie. Alongside matches against neighbouring villages, the locals held spirited in-house contests such as married men against single men, smokers against non-smokers, and shearers against the town.

Collie was a small town when Mick O'Connor came to the town, claiming a reputation as a more fearsome after this point, Collie was in 1915, the Collie side to catch most of them jewelled seven young dooran and marched ed cricket locally and astonishingly 's players were Collie, prompting one

skinned" that district, as fellows "about the et match! The innings ust yet. Anyhow, what's

comprising almost awrie McIlveen, Mac ly defeated arren in November espondent of March

communities following the grounds remained

touched by grief for seasons to come, honouring players such as Collie's Horace Murray, one of the fallen, who would never again take to the crease.

CRICKET	
COLLIE v. GILGANDRA	
A match between teams representing the above clubs took place on Sunday last on the Gilgandra ground, and resulted in a win for the visitors by 23 runs in the first innings. Gilgandra scored 54 and 95 for 7 wickets, while Collie put 77 and had lost 9 wickets for 46 in their second innings when time was called. The teams played twelve men aside. Following are the details:—	
Gilgandra First Innings	
T. Marchant, b Meers ...	1
F. Hickmott, b Meers ...	0
P. Rose, c McNabb, b Meers ...	0
C. Marchant, run out ...	4
E. Marchant, c and b O'Connor ...	26
A. Noonan, c Mitchell, b McNabb ...	7
C. Horan, b O'Connor ...	2
A. Hannam, b O'Connor ...	0
A. G. Rose, b O'Connor ...	1
C. Holland, b McNabb ...	5
E. Horan, b O'Connor ...	1
L. Trudgett, not out ...	2
Sundries ...	5
Total ...	54
Second Innings—Seven wickets for 95 (A. Noonan 48, P. Rose 26), ten-ings lost.	
Collie First Innings	
L. Ryan, c T., b C. Marchant ...	3
M. Meers, b C. Marchant ...	8
J. Mitchell, b Noonan ...	0
M. O'Connor, c Horan, b C. Marchant ...	1
O. Chapman, st Rose, b Noonan ...	0
V. Fenton, c Hannam, b Fenton ...	0
A. Mills, b C. Marchant ...	22
F. Brophy, c Horan, b Marchant ...	0
J. McNabb, b Rose ...	0
Jas. Mitchell, c Marchant, b Rose ...	33
Sundries ...	2
L. Mollvee, not out ...	6
Total ...	77
Second Innings—Nine wickets for 46 (J. Mitchell 13, M. Meers 11).	
COLLIE NEWS	
CRICKET.	
Warren, 1st Innings.	
W. Cassack, c Mill b McNabb ...	1
J. Perry, c Brophy b Mitchell ...	0
H. Green, b McNabb ...	2
H. Kennedy, b Mitchell ...	8
J. E. Perry, b McNabb ...	0
W. Horton, b McNabb ...	2
V. Parker, not out ...	25
W. Norman, b McNabb ...	0
C. Smart, b McNabb ...	2
G. Shaw, c Brophy ...	12
N. Perry, c Fenton, b Meers ...	7
W. O'Neill, b O'Connor ...	0
Sundries ...	2
Total ...	64
Collie, 1st Innings.	
L. Ryan, b Kennedy ...	20
Theo Murray, c Horton ...	0
L. Mollvee, c Smart b Kennedy ...	9
M. Meers, c Kennedy ...	0
J. C. Brophy, c Green ...	12
A. Mills, c Horton ...	3
M. O'Connor, not out ...	10
A. M. Mills, c Green ...	0
V. Fenton, c Smart ...	25
J. Mitchell, b Horton ...	10
T. Brophy, c Kennedy ...	5
J. McNabb, caught out ...	0
Sundries ...	3
Total ...	100
Warren 2nd Innings.	
H. Green, b McNabb ...	4
H. Kennedy, b McNabb ...	4
J. Perry, b Mills ...	1
W. Horton, run out ...	13
V. Parker, c McNabb, b Mills ...	2
J. E. Perry, run out ...	0
W. Cassack, c Meers b Mills ...	14
N. Perry, c Meers b Mills ...	0
G. Shaw, b Mills ...	4
C. Smart, b McNabb ...	2
N. O'Neill, b Mills ...	2
P. O'Neill, not out ...	0
Sundries ...	8
Total ...	54
Collie, 2nd Innings.	
M. O'Connor, not out ...	7
L. Ryan, b b w., b O'Neill ...	9
J. Brophy, not out ...	5
Total ...	21

**Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 7 November
1919.**

**Gilgandra Weekly,
Friday 28 November
1919.**

Paddy, Mick, and Fred O'Connor were handy cricketers, but for them the sport took a back seat during the 1920s and 30s as each raised families and consolidated their farms. The brothers fostered a love of cricket, which they passed on to their sons, and their sons, and so on.

The O'Connor name, though, came roaring back to Collie cricket on 11 December 1937 when the schoolboy powerhouse, Donald O'Connor, the eldest son of Fred and Eileen O'Connor, was selected to play for Collie against Bundemar. The 17-year-old Don had just arrived home

with his younger brothers, Jack and Max, for the summer holidays from St Stanislaus' College, Bathurst. A week earlier, Don had scored 96 for St Stanislaus' in the Bathurst and district first-grade competition and was quickly establishing himself as a batsman with exceptional talent. Don had no hesitation when asked by the Collie skipper to open the batting, peeling off an impressive 25 runs.⁹⁰ In the remaining two games during his summer break, Don scored 100 and 110.^{91, 92} Pictured **(below)** is the Collie cricket team, 1938-39.



Don had finished near the top of the list for the Collie cricket team. For their summer tour, Don, then a minor, aged sixteen, was selected for Gilgandra Catholic. Don was a very good bowler. Mervyn, the youngest player on the journey home, the skipper, and Jack and Max.

Don, the eldest son of Fred, was a very good bowler for Balladoran, Frank, and a very good batsman. Don had a record of 6 wickets for the Collie cricket team. In the 1938-39 season, at the Collie cricket team, Don was a very good bowler. In the 1938-39 season, at the Collie eleven, while

his cousin Frank continued to spearhead Balladoran's bowling attack. The highlight of Jack's season came against Springfield, where he claimed the first four wickets to fall in the innings.

During the 1938-39 season, Collie fielded teams in both the Gilgandra District Competition and the Lewis Cup challenge competition. Frank's younger brother Leo also emerged for Balladoran, while another cousin, George O'Connor, the twenty-year-old son of James O'Connor, became a regular member of the Collie side. Although Collie forfeited several district fixtures, the team enjoyed greater success in the Lewis Cup, highlighted by a blistering innings by Don O'Connor, home from Bathurst for Christmas, who smashed an unbeaten 126 against Armatree, sending the bowling to all parts of the ground.⁹⁷

Don played three seasons in the Bathurst and district first-grade competition, where he was a prolific run-scorer at the top of the order (**below**) and twice selected for the Bathurst representative team, which contested *NSW Country Week*.^{98 99 100 101}

CRICKET — NEW MATCHES — In First Grade — EGLINTON MEET ST. STANISLAUS With four weeks play disposed of in the Bathurst District Cricket Association's 1939-40 competition, a higher standard of play is now noticeable in all grades. Cricketers have more or less regained last year's form and are approaching their last year's batting and bowling averages.	A new set of fixtures in first grade commence to-morrow afternoon and the best match of the afternoon appears to be that to be played between Eglinton and St. Stanislaus' at St. Stanislaus. The college team has not been beaten this season as yet, but Eglinton failed to get going in their match against Loco several weeks ago and were easily defeated. However, their performance against Gaol was a splendid effort and they measure up more than favorably against St. Stanislaus' in batting and bowling. Don O'Connor, the college star batsman, may prove a thorn in the Eglinton side. His century against Orton Park last week not ^{proved} that he is batting in rare form. The match will undoubtedly be full of interest.
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**National Advocate Bathurst,
Friday 3 November 1939.**

Don joined his brothers Jack and Max for the 1939/40 season. Younger brother Brian O'Connor also played while he was on summer holiday from St Stanislaus. The Collie team concentrated on Lewis Cup cricket and had a good season, with the O'Connor boys dominating most matches. Upon his return, Don immediately knocked Warren all over the park to retire unbeaten on 103.¹⁰² He backed this up with 205 not out, again against Warren,

where he was well supported by Max with 42 not out (**below**).¹⁰³ Another classy century, this time against Kickabil, heralded Don O'Connor as the district's best batsman.¹⁰⁴

CRICKET	
HIGH SCORING	
WARREN	
R. Waters, b Murray	14
N. Stubbs, run out	46
I. Saunders, b B. O'Connor ..	102
N. Tolhurst, retired	73
I. Stamm, c Chisholm, b Ostler ..	43
A. Cleasby, b Murray	13
E. Francisco, b Chisholm	1
A. Green, stp. O'Connor, b ..	
B. Chisholm	1
B. Corfield, not out	25
J. Pitman, stp. O'Connor, b ..	
Brophy	31
K. Cusack, c Ostler, b Brophy ..	10
Sundrie	9
Total	358
Bowling: J. Flynn 0/70; L. Murray 2/85; J. O'Connor 0/14; R. Jordan 0/48; B. O'Connor 1/51; B. Chisholm 2/59; J. Ostler 1/15; J. Brophy 2/16.	
COLLIE	
J. Brophy, c Saunders, b Stamm ..	3
J. O'Connor, b Stamm	5
D. O'Connor, not out	204
L. Ostler, b Waters	19
L. Murray, c Green, b Waters ..	6
N. Ostler, c Stamm, b Tolhurst ..	17
B. Chisholm, stp. Saunders, b ..	
Tolhurst	26
M. O'Connor, not out	42
Sundrie	7
Total, Six wickets for	329

attracting large

No doubt Don's

volving Mass, and

and where Collie

had their own game

of the day when they

oll, their teacher,

a class batsman. The

s for Collie before he

was promoted and left for Cowra during the war years.^{105 106} He and Don were involved in some remarkable partnerships.

HONORS EASY

A drawn game was played between Collie and Macquarie Rovers. Scores:

MACQUARIE ROVERS

H. Sullivan, c Barwick, b O'Connor	19
K. Starr, c Brophy, b O'Connor	12
D. Foreman, c and b O'Connor	23
W. Stoneman, c Meers, b O'Connor	104
T. Harvey, c Flynn, b O'Connor	4
D. Sullivan, c Flynn, b O'Connor	30
O. Stoneman, c Flynn, b O'Connor	0
K. Harvey, b Brophy	10
J. Quigley, c O'Connor, b Meers	1
K. Starr, not out	11
M. Burns, lbw b Meers	0
Sundries	15

Total 325

Bowling: J. O'Connor 7/85, Wilson 0/30, J. Flynn 0/37, M. Brophy 1/80, R. Chisholm 0/27, F. Meers 2/40.

COLLIE

J. O'Connor, b H. Sullivan	37
B. Chisholm, b Harvey	32
D. O'Connor, not out	120
B. Wilson, c and b W. Stoneman	6
I. Ostler, c Starr, b W. Stoneman	2
M. Brophy, lbw b O. Stoneman	7
J. Meers, b Burns	27
J. Flynn, not out	0
Sundries	0

Six wickets for 239

Bowling: K. Starr 0/42, J. Quigley 0/36, H. Sullivan 1/37, D. Sullivan 0/50, T. Harvey 1/32, W. Stoneman 2/32, O. Stoneman 1/10, D. Foreman 0/17, R. Burns 1/10.

RIVAL CENTURIES

W. Stoneman, of Macquarie Rovers, scored 108 of his team's total of five for 326 against Collie. The latter made 306, D. O'Connor scoring 104. Details:

Collie

B. Chisholm, c O. Stoneman, b Sullivan	21
J. O'Connor, b Sullivan	30
D. O'Connor, st. Harvey, b Sullivan	104
W. Warwick, c O. Stoneman, b Starr	35
I. Meers, lbw, b D. Sullivan	16
B. O'Connor, run out	7
J. Wilson, retired	34
J. Flynn, b Foreman	21
M. Brophy, not out	0
M. O'Connor, retired	4
T. Barwick, b W. Stoneman	9
Sundries	26

Total 306

Bowling: K. Starr 1/44, J. Quigley 0/31, D. Sullivan 1/40, G. Sullivan 2/61, W. Stoneman 1/31, H. Sullivan 0/34, D. Foreman 1/15, O. Stoneman 0/15.

Macquarie Rovers

H. Sullivan, lbw b Flynn	39
G. Sullivan, c Warwick, b J. O'Connor	11
D. Foreman, c D. O'Connor, b Flynn	64
W. Stoneman, c W. O'Connor, b Warwick	106
T. Harvey, b Warwick	34
D. Sullivan, not out	26
O. Stoneman, not out	26
Sundries	19

Five wickets for 326

Bowling: K. Warwick 2/91, J. O'Connor 1/62, J. Flynn 2/53, B. Wilson 0/16, M. Brophy 0/28, I. Meers 0/29.

COLLIE

(From Our Correspondent)

The weather has been very hot and sultry. On Monday afternoon it came up stormy and during the night a few points of rain fell and cooled things down.

Many people of the district are away from the heat, holidaying at the seaside.

During the week, Mr. Neville Hannan was the victim of an unfortunate accident. Rolling through the paddocks he ran a stick deep into his leg. He was taken to hospital in Dubbo, and latest reports indicate that he is doing as well as can be expected.

Last week end, a very exciting game of cricket was witnessed at Collie. This was the first match that has been played here for a few years. A team from Eumungerie played Collie. The local team lost the toss and Eumungerie batted first, and soon rattled up 187 runs, of which A. Dohnt contributed 103 retired. Collie then batted, and although the runs came quickly enough, the wickets were falling fast, and when the last man went in to bat Collie still needed two runs to win. Three were scored

before the team was all out for 189. B. Chisholm played a very nice innings for 56 not out.

Scores:

EUMUNGERIE

A. Rossiter, lbw, b J. O'Connor	1
W. McMillan, c and b J. O'Connor	11
A. Dohnt, retired	103
R. Richardson, lbw, b Mathers	16
T. Nangle, b Mathers	12
L. Keirs, c and b Brophy	6
M. Keirs, b Mathers	2
J. Patterson, c K. Brophy, b Sullivan	10
R. Keirs, b Cudden	8
L. Sharp, not out	4
J. Green, b Sullivan	1
Sundries	10

Total 187

COLLIE

M. McGrane, c McMillan, b Richardson	12
B. O'Connor, b Rossiter	25
J. O'Connor, b Rossiter	12
J. Cudden, b Rossiter	4
B. Chisholm, not out	56
K. Brophy, c and b Rossiter	7
J. Sullivan, lbw, b McMillan	3
M. Brophy, run out	7
C. Mathers, b McMillan	29
K. O'Connor, b Rossiter	13
R. Monk, b Richardson	0
Sundries	21

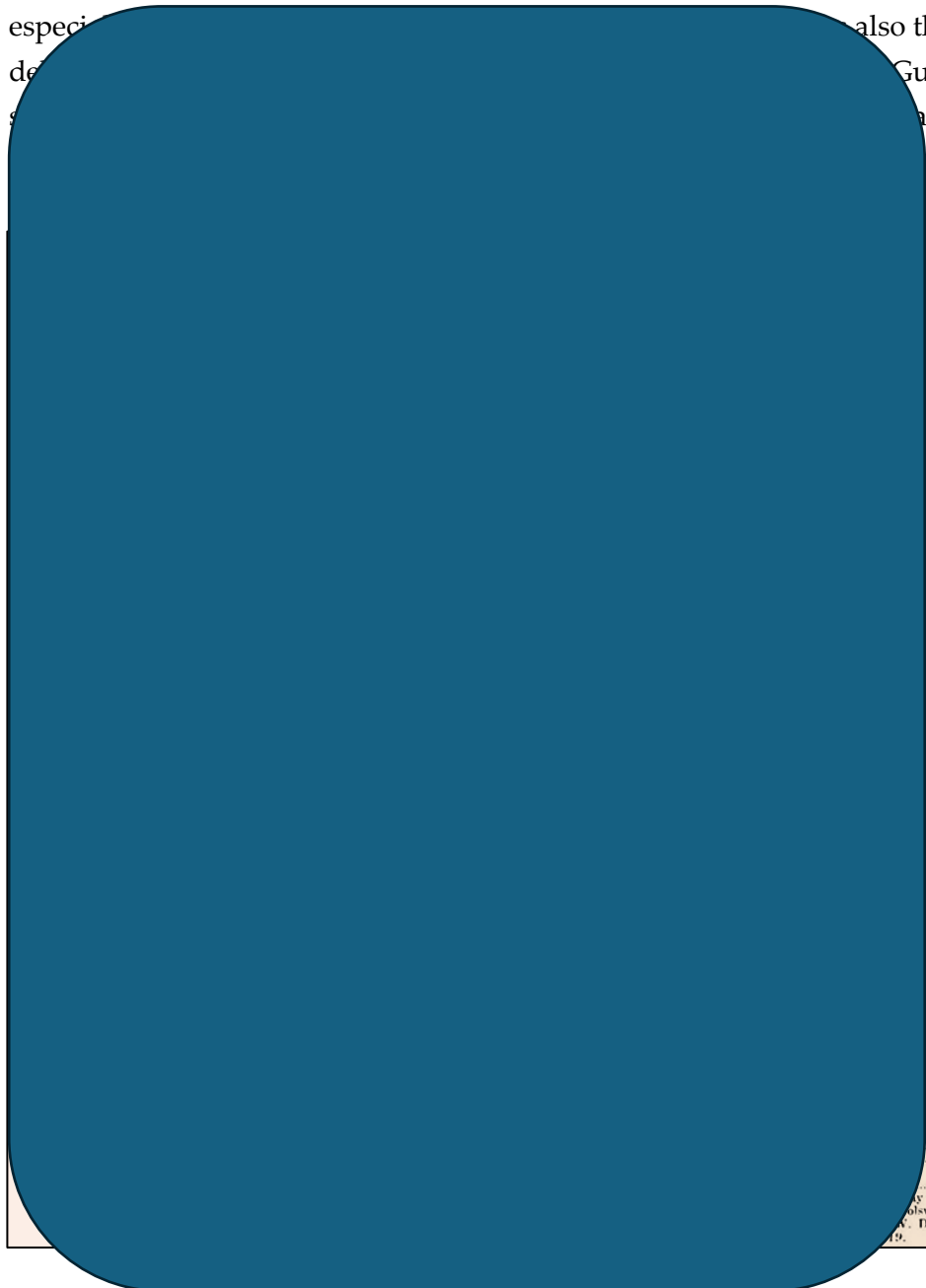
Total 189

Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate, Tuesday 12 November 1940.

Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday 14 February 1946.

Don, Jack, Max, and Brian again donned the whites for Collie in the 1940/41 season, and in their first match against Macquarie Rovers Jack took a remarkable seven wickets opening the bowling while Don blazed 120 not out to ensure a draw, while in their second match, also against Macquarie Rovers, Don carved another hundred, while Jack opened the batting and scored 30 (above left).^{107 108} The following week, against Gilgandra, Jack took three of the first four wickets, finishing with 4/63. He also opened the batting, scoring 18, while Max did some lusty hitting at the tail, scoring 22. Don, though, fell for an uncharacteristic duck! Gilgandra must have thought it was Christmas!¹⁰⁹ This innings would be Don's last for some time as he had enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Collie met Gilgandra again on two occasions in 1940/41, during which Jack scored a tidy 30, and Max scored his first half-century.^{110 111} World War II, though, would bring the season to an early end. Brian also enlisted in the RAAF, while Jack enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Cricket was in hibernation until the war was over.

Cricket resumed in Collie on 9 February 1946 (**previous page right**) when they faced Eumungerie, with Brian, Jack and the 18-year-old Keith all making contributions in a narrow win.¹¹² The following week, Fred and Eileen O'Connor, after a lengthy stay in Victoria visiting their daughter Jean, now Mrs O'Sullivan, were on hand to see Jack, Max, Brian, Keith, and Ken play for Collie against a team of *Challengers*. All made handy contributions, especially the 16-year-old Ken's Gulargambone in back taking four and match.^{113 114}



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	0
	3
	16
	197
3/37, J.	
s 0/17, J.	
hes 2/31.	
rrick 0/9.	
ch	54
in, b	
	42
or b	
	30
on, b	
	26
	7
	8
	24
	14
	265
y 2/71, F.	
olswich 1/53.	
X. Dawes 0/9.	

As the district's cricketers geared up for the 1946/47 season, a meeting of delegates from all teams was held in Gilgandra on 22 October 1946 to reform the Gilgandra and District Cricket Association. Donald O'Connor represented Collie, and it was resolved that each club would field first-grade and second-grade teams in the reformed competition.¹¹⁵ The Collie Cricket Club met the following week to elect officer bearers and organise a Cricketers Ball to raise funds for cricket equipment. Fred O'Connor was elected Club Patron, with Messrs H. O'Hara, J. Cudden, M. Brophy, and D. O'Connor elected as president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively.¹¹⁶

The extent and quality of cricket across the district during this time were exceptional, with over 250 men fighting tooth and nail every Sunday to secure victories for their respective teams. The 1946/47 season was arguably Collie's best, as they won both the first and second-grade titles (**previous page**).^{117 118} Don, Jack, Brian, and Keith O'Connor were the backbone of the first-grade team, while Max and the 17-year-old Ken O'Connor ensured the second-grade team conquered all. Max had a tremendous season with the bat, so much so that with the second-grade title in the bag, he was drafted into the first-grade team for their final, and season-defining match against Balladoran. All available Collie scorecards from the season, published in the *Gilgandra Weekly*, appear in **Appendix Two**.

The following season, Colin O'Connor made his debut in the Collie second-grade team. By the 1948/49 season, with Jack and Brian concentrating on their farms at Bourke and Brewarrina respectively, Don, Max, Keith, Ken, and Colin O'Connor formed the core of the Collie first-grade team. During this season, Don again topped the batting averages with a high score of 105 and an average of 83, while Brian, who managed a handful of matches, scored one century, averaging 32 per innings. In the bowling department, Keith topped the averages, taking 13 wickets at an average of six, while Ken claimed seven wickets at an average of 14.¹¹⁹ Over the next few seasons, Colin emerged as one of Collie's best bowlers, while the two youngest boys, Terry and Ian, began hitting their straps in school cricket (**next page**), and by 1952, they too were playing senior cricket for Collie.^{120 121 122}

The O'Connors dominated cricket at Collie for the best part of a century, with all of Fred's nine boys excelling at the game, primarily Don, who was a prolific run scorer and accomplished wicketkeeper. His skills were elite, and if not for World War II, which took four of his prime cricketing years, he might well have played first-class cricket and even

reached the highest levels. Fred O'Connor was the backbone of Collie cricket. Not only was he a player from its earliest years, but he also served as the Collie club patron and president. For many years, he donated a cricket bat as the annual prize for the club's *best sport*.¹²³

SCHOOL CRICKET

CRICKET

BREELONG DEFEAT COLLIE

In the second grade match played at Breelong on Sunday, the home team defeated Collie by 149 runs to 83. Scores:—

Breelong: B. McEwen, b P. Murray 6; E. McKech nie, b R. Sherring 10; B. Davey, stp. E. Rowcliffe, b T. Martin 56; B. Dupree b T. Martin 22; R. Hillyer c E. Rowcliffe, b N. Mealey 17; R. Irwin, c I. O'Connor, b J. Mealey 9; B. Thompson, b T. Martin 5; B. Long, b I. O'Connor 8; I. Markey, c E. Rowcliffe, b I. O'Connor 6; L. Roach stp. E. Rowcliffe, b R. Sherring 0; A. Irvin, not out 3. Sundries 7. Total 149. Bowling: R. Sherring 2/33; P. Murray 1/24; T. Martin 3/34; J. Mealey 1/18; I. O'Connor 2/12; N. Mealey 1/2.

Collie: R. Sherring, b B. Dupree 20; P. Murray, lbw, b B. McEwen 4; T. O'Connor, c R. Hillyer, b B. Dupree 20; E. Rowcliffe, c B. Long, b R. Hillyer 0; J. Mealey, c B. Thompson, b R. Hillyer 2; N. Mealey, c B. Long, b B. Dupree 15; T. Martin b B. Dupree 1; I. O'Connor, not out 14; R. Rowcliffe, b R. Irvin 3; D. Mealey, c B. Davey, b R. Irvin 0; K. Rowcliffe, b R. Irvin 0.

Sundries 4, Total 83.

Bowling: B. Long 0/17; B. McEwen 1/5; B. Dupree 4/26; R. Hillyer 2/24; R. Irvin 3/1.

you in 1939 again drew the
Collie's military expansion

into the Pacific region in 1941. Eight members of the extended O'Connor families enlisted. Patrick, the youngest son of James and Eliza O'Connor, joined the AIF in 1944 and fought the Japanese on the island of Bougainville, later dying in 1946 at just 23 years from nephritis attributed to his wartime service. Owen, eldest son of Patrick and Olive O'Connor, enlisted in 1941 and served as a gunner in the defence of Darwin between 1943 and 1945. His younger brother, William, enlisted at 18 in 1944 and served at Rabaul, New Guinea, where malaria abruptly ended his military career. Michael and Kathleen's eldest son, Frank O'Connor, enlisted at Gilgandra in May 1940 and served on active duty in New Guinea until his discharge in 1944, while his younger brother John enlisted in November 1941 and fought against Japanese forces in New Guinea and Borneo until the war's end in 1945.

In February 1941, Donald, the twenty-one-year-old eldest son of Fred and Eileen O'Connor, qualified for entry into the Royal Australian Air Force and was placed on the reserve list.^{124 125} As his father's indispensable right-hand man at *Balboora*, though, his labour was vital to the farm's operation, a fact Fred strongly emphasised in the employer's report accompanying Don's application.¹²⁶ Fred wrote:

Balboora

Collie P.O. NSW

21/1/42

I hereby grant permission to my son D. R. O'Connor to enlist for service with the RAA Force.

He can be spared off the place at present.

Of course if he can be spared I would like to have him home for shearing which is in July-Aug & harvest which is in November.

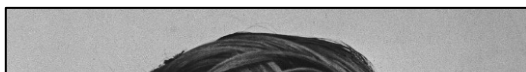
Signed

F. O'Connor

Don (**next page**), described by his Commanding Officer as a *sober, honest and respectable citizen*, served with the RAAF until 26 March 1946, mainly at the No 2 Aircraft Depot RAAF Richmond, as a Leading Aircraftman (LAC).¹²⁷

Jack O'Connor listed his occupation as a *shearer, farmer, and grazier* when he enlisted as a reserve at 18 years of age. He received his call-up in December 1941. He served in the AIF until the end of the war, initially in the 63rd Battalion, then in the 6th Australian Motor Regiment, and subsequently in the 6th Light Horse Regiment. His Commanding Officer described Jack as a *keen student. Mechanically minded – capable. Has ability to improve with*

*further experience. Driving, map reading good. Maintenance very good. Note-book fair. March discipline good. He saw active service, fighting the Japanese in the islands of Morotai, Indonesia, and Bougainville.*¹²⁸



r (left) and Brian

43 (above). He, too,
ng Training in June
e Acting Air Crew.
ompleted his service

s in World War II,
ving them a taste of
and welcomed them
ot have been thrilled to

share their house with such distinguished visitors.¹³⁰ By mid-1946, most of the young men and women of Collie who had served in the war had returned and were formally welcomed home at a gathering in the Collie Hall, with each presented with a fountain pen and wallet (below).¹³¹

**Gilgandra Weekly,
Thursday 20 June 1946.**

Presentations were made to:
ACW, Jean McMaster, Pte.
J. Brophy, Pte, H. Bogio, Gnr
R. Bassett, Pte P. Colless, WO
E. Dempsey, LAC G. Harrison,
LAC E. Hensley, Flt. Lt.
D. Irving, Dvr. J. M. Irving,
Cn. G. Kilby, LAC A. O. McCutcheon,
Cpl. A. McIveen,
LAC D. McIveen, Dvr. M.
McGrane, Craftsman J. Mealey,
Cpl. R. B. Meers, Dvr V. E.
Meers, Pte W. B. Meers, Dvr.
L. Moore Pte R. Monk, Dvr H.
Monk, LAC B. O'Connor, LAC
D. O'Connor, Pte. J. O'Connor
Flt. Lt. J. Perry, LAC G.
Perry, Tpr G. Stokes, Pte. B.
Schy, Flt. Lt. E. Sproule, Pte.
C. Wardrop, Sgt N. Wilson.
The following were unable to
attend:— R. G. McCutcheon,
P. McGrane, F. Kilby, L. K.
Rege s, A. E. Morris, J. Meers,
M. Tink, J. McIveen, P. Moore

Life at *Balboora* during the war had been far from easy. With Don, Jack and Brian in service, the responsibility for the farm fell heavily on Max, Keith and Ken, who worked tirelessly to support their aging father, Fred, nearly 60 years old by the of the conflict, through shearing, ploughing, and harvesting. No one, though, felt the strain more keenly than Eileen, whose poem *A Mother's Creed* reveals the quiet courage required of her throughout those anxious years:¹³²

*I MUST be strong, to hold the torch
Of Faith and Hope on high,
When dark and thunderous clouds of war,
Obscure the sunlit sky.
When trouble wanders o'er the land,
And happy days are fled,
The lights of home must brightly burn,
To show the way ahead.*

*I must be strong, my country calls,
In this her hour of need,
I give to her my best, my all,
This is a mother's creed.
And I must give my gallant sons,
So young and tall and brave,
To guard this jewel of the South,*

6th Light Horse in
penned, in part: ¹³³

*The foe shall know as they blast and burn,
The strength of their deadly might.*

*Honour the men of the fighting front,
Where ever the battle leads.
Mid the thunder of guns they carry on,
A pageant of noble deeds...
Heroes that do, and dare, and die,
In ghastly enterprise.
Fighting for a victorious peace,
That a better world may rise.*

Fred and Eileen's Legacy

**Gilgandra Weekly, Thursday
13 September 1951.**

THE CALL OF THE LAND
Mr. and Mrs. Fred O'Connor, of "Balborah," Collie, have been taking things easy in the city of Dubbo for several months, where they have a very fine home. However, the call of the bush has been hard to resist and they have returned to the old home, where Mr O'Connor feels that his assistance is badly needed. Rabbits have been breeding up in droves in that area, and our friend recently showed the young 'uns how to prepare a proper driving wing and netted 1100 of the pest. Too many of our local residents are forsaking the land for the city and we are sure the O'Connors will be doubly welcome to Collie district functions.

In March 1951, Fred and Eileen O'Connor retired to their comfortable Dubbo residence, where the *Collie News* section of the *Gilgandra Weekly* reported that *they had been residents in the district for a great many years and will be greatly missed by their many friends. The best wishes of the community are extended to them in their new home.*¹³⁴ Their retirement, though, was short-

lived as *Balboora*, like all its nearby properties, became overrun with rabbits, which formed *moving carpets* at night and devastated paddocks, stripping pastures bare, destroying young crops, and leaving sheep without feed. Despite extensive trapping, poisoning, warren-ripping and fumigation, the sheer scale of the plague overwhelmed local efforts, forcing the shire council and land board to launch coordinated destruction campaigns. Fred and Eileen, in their [redacted] returned to *Balboora* in [redacted] Se [redacted]

erke,
59.

fr [redacted] (ve).¹³⁶ Frederick's life [redacted] ment while travelling [redacted] in the Collie district,

Fred, with Eileen by his side, had earned a reputation as a skilled and dependable farmer, guiding both family and property through some of the most difficult decades in rural history.^{137 138} Despite collapsing wheat and wool prices during the *Great Depression* and the devastating droughts of 1930–31 and 1934–36, Fred's ingenuity distinguished him from many of his contemporaries. His early adoption of ensilage saved thousands of sheep at a time when graziers elsewhere were losing stock in large numbers. Careful paddock rotation, attentive soil management, and his insistence on maintaining strong pasture cover enabled *Balboora* to endure while neighbouring farms failed. During the labour-scarce war years of the 1940s, he and Eileen sustained the farm through resolve and hard work, and by the 1950s, *Balboora* was widely regarded as a benchmark wheat and sheep enterprise.

Fred & Eileen O'Connor.



Following the example set by his father, William, and grandfather, Patrick, Fred was determined that his children would acquire the discipline and practical skills necessary for a successful life on the land. This inter-generational legacy was strengthened by Eileen's quiet determination, whose steadfast commitment to a loving, nurturing, and principled home life proved indispensable. Together, their emphasis on hard work, faith, education, and participation in community life created an environment in which their children and grandchildren thrived. Fred passed on his values and traditions to his children, who in turn passed them on to their own children, ensuring the legacy through the generations. Fred's family included Shannon, Bourke, Coonamble, Ken at Collie, and Ian at Balboora. When gathered, in song,



The names of the original blocks
later years, the name *Lisfarran* fell

- ⁷ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. *Balboora*.
- ⁸ O'Connor, E. Photograph of old plough, *Balboora*.
- ⁹ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Frederick O'Connor and John Brophy - Standing Committee on Public Works.
- ¹⁰ Ensilage is the process of preserving green fodder, such as grasses or crops, by fermenting and storing it in airtight conditions to produce nutrient-rich silage for livestock feed.
- ¹¹ *Daily Express, Wagga Wagga*, Saturday 1 February 1930
- ¹² Museums of History, New South Wales NSW. *Card Index to publicans' licences. Hotel - Collie, Collie, Wammerawa*.
- ¹³ The *Great Depression* was caused by a worldwide collapse in financial confidence following the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash, which triggered a chain reaction of bank failures, reduced international trade, and a sharp contraction in global economic activity.
- ¹⁴ A bushel of wheat is a traditional unit of volume used in grain measurement, equal to 60 pounds (27.2 kg) of wheat in standard commercial practice.
- ¹⁵ Boiling down sheep for tallow refers to the process of rendering the carcasses of low-value or starving sheep in large vats to extract their fat, which was then processed into tallow for use in candles, soap, lubricants, and industrial products.
- ¹⁶ Woodley, P.A. (2021). *Community, Class and Place in Dubbo's Farmlands, 1870–1950*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. ANU Open Research Repository.
- ¹⁷ Cannon, M. (1996). *The Human Face of the Great Depression*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- ¹⁸ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Friday 9 January 1931
- ¹⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 23 January 1930
- ²⁰ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Fred O'Connor and children.
- ²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 11 August 1932
- ²² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 4 July 1935
- ²³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 26 March 1936
- ²⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 May 1931
- ²⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 29 January 1931
- ²⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1933
- ²⁷ The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a comprehensive summary of Catholic doctrine that outlines the Church's teachings on faith, morals, sacraments, and prayer.
- ²⁸ Erica was the pen name of Constance Mary Le Plastrier, an Australian schoolteacher, botanist, and writer who contributed to *The Catholic Press* in Sydney during the 1930s. Under this pseudonym, she managed the *Children's Page*, particularly the popular *Erica's Letter Bag*, where she corresponded with young readers, offering guidance, encouragement, and fostering a sense of community among Catholic children across Australia.
- ²⁹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 12 February 1931
- ³⁰ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 27 June 1929
- ³¹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 12 December 1929
- ³² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 June 1934
- ³³ *Catholic Weekly*, Thursday 3 September 1953
- ³⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 8 May 1947
- ³⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 April 1944
- ³⁶ O'Connor, Eileen. (1984). *My Garden of Verse*. Second Edition. Printorana, Dubbo. [Reprinted from the original 1944 Edition]
- ³⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 12 August 1948
- ³⁸ Museums of History, New South Wales. NRS-15051-1-8-[453]-2, Collie Public School 1927.
- ³⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 4 April 1946
- ⁴⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 March 1937
- ⁴¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 4 April 1946
- ⁴² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 December 1933
- ⁴³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 September 1933
- ⁴⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 December 1936
- ⁴⁵ These exams were part of broader moral, social, and hygiene education initiatives, influenced by religious and social reform movements, including the temperance movement focused on warning children about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and other "vices," promoting sobriety and self-control.
- ⁴⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 17 December 1936
- ⁴⁷ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 6 February 1930
- ⁴⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 11 June 1931
- ⁴⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 15 September 1932
- ⁵⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 April 1933
- ⁵¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 15 September 1932
- ⁵² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 September 1933
- ⁵³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 June 1943
- ⁵⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 29 April 1948
- ⁵⁵ St Stanislaus' College is a Jesuit school in Bathurst founded by the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers (Patron Saint, St Vincent de Paul) that arrived from Ireland to administer the college in 1889.
- ⁵⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 9 December 1937
- ⁵⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 10 December 1936
- ⁵⁸ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Saturday 24 June 1933
- ⁵⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 September 1933

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- ⁶⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 January 1934
- ⁶¹ Unfortunately, the Annual Presentations from St Stanislaus' Catholic College Bathurst were not widely published after World War II.
- ⁶² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 8 February 1940
- ⁶³ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 14 December 1933
- ⁶⁴ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 11 December 1941
- ⁶⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 10 December 1936
- ⁶⁶ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 31 December 1936
- ⁶⁷ *National Advocate Bathurst*, Monday 6 December 1937
- ⁶⁸ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 22 December 1938
- ⁶⁹ *Catholic Press*, Thursday 30 November 1939
- ⁷⁰ Gibbs, M. Private Photograph Collection. O'Connor Family.
- ⁷¹ *National Advocate Bathurst*, Saturday 17 April 1937
- ⁷² O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Eileen and Ian.
- ⁷³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 5 September 1946
- ⁷⁴ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Tennis court *Balboora*, O'Connor and Wheatley families.
- ⁷⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 7 June 1934
- ⁷⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 June 1934
- ⁷⁷ An American tournament is a round-robin style tennis competition designed to maximize participation and social interaction.
- ⁷⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 29 August 1935
- ⁷⁹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 18 October 1907
- ⁸⁰ *Castlereagh*, Friday 22 February 1907
- ⁸¹ *Castlereagh*, Friday 20 December 1907
- ⁸² *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative*, Thursday, 10 February 1910
- ⁸³ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Saturday 13 March 1909
- ⁸⁴ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, Sat, 27 March 1909
- ⁸⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative*, Thursday 14 October 1909
- ⁸⁶ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 24 February 1914
- ⁸⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 3 March 1916
- ⁸⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 7 November 1919
- ⁸⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Friday 28 November 1919
- ⁹⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 16 December 1937
- ⁹¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 January 1938
- ⁹² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 27 January 1938
- ⁹³ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Collie cricket.
- ⁹⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 17 February 1938
- ⁹⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 3 March 1938
- ⁹⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 10 March 1938
- ⁹⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 22 December 1938
- ⁹⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 26 November 1938
- ⁹⁹ *National Advocate (Bathurst)*, Friday 4 November 1938
- ¹⁰⁰ *National Advocate (Bathurst)*, Friday 3 November 1939.
- ¹⁰¹ New South Wales Country Week was an annual cricket carnival held in Sydney that brought together representative teams from rural and regional districts to compete in a week-long tournament against one another, and often against Sydney grade sides. It was the most important showcase for country cricketers in NSW, run by the NSW Cricket Association as a pathway for talented players outside the metropolitan competition to be seen by state selectors.
- ¹⁰² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 December 1939
- ¹⁰³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 1 February 1940
- ¹⁰⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 March 1940
- ¹⁰⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative*, Monday 8 February 1937
- ¹⁰⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 27 January 1944
- ¹⁰⁷ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 12 November 1940
- ¹⁰⁸ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, Tuesday 19 November 1940
- ¹⁰⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thu 28 Nov 1940
- ¹¹⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 13 February 1941
- ¹¹¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 March 1941
- ¹¹² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 February 1946
- ¹¹³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 28 February 1946
- ¹¹⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 21 March 1946
- ¹¹⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 24 October 1946
- ¹¹⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 31 October 1946
- ¹¹⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 March 1947
- ¹¹⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 March 1947

¹¹⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 5 May 1949

¹²⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 December 1950

¹²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 6 November 1952

¹²² *Gilgandra Weekly*, Wednesday 9 February 1955

¹²³ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 16 April 1936

¹²⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 27 March 1941

¹²⁵ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Service Record, O'Connor, Donald Ross.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ A Leading Aircraftman (LAC) in the RAAF during World War II was responsible for technical, mechanical, and ground support duties such as aircraft maintenance, signals, and logistics. Although not aircrew, LACs played a crucial role in keeping aircraft operational and supporting air operations both in Australia and overseas.

¹²⁸ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. *Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, O'Connor, John Thomas.

¹²⁹ National Archives of Australia, Australian Military Forces. Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Service Record, O'Connor, Anthony Brian.

¹³⁰ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 14 June 1945

¹³¹ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 20 June 1946

¹³² O'Connor, Eileen, op. cit.,

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 15 March 1951

¹³⁵ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 13 September 1951

¹³⁶ *Western Herald, Bourke*, Friday 2 October 1959

¹³⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 25 January 1940

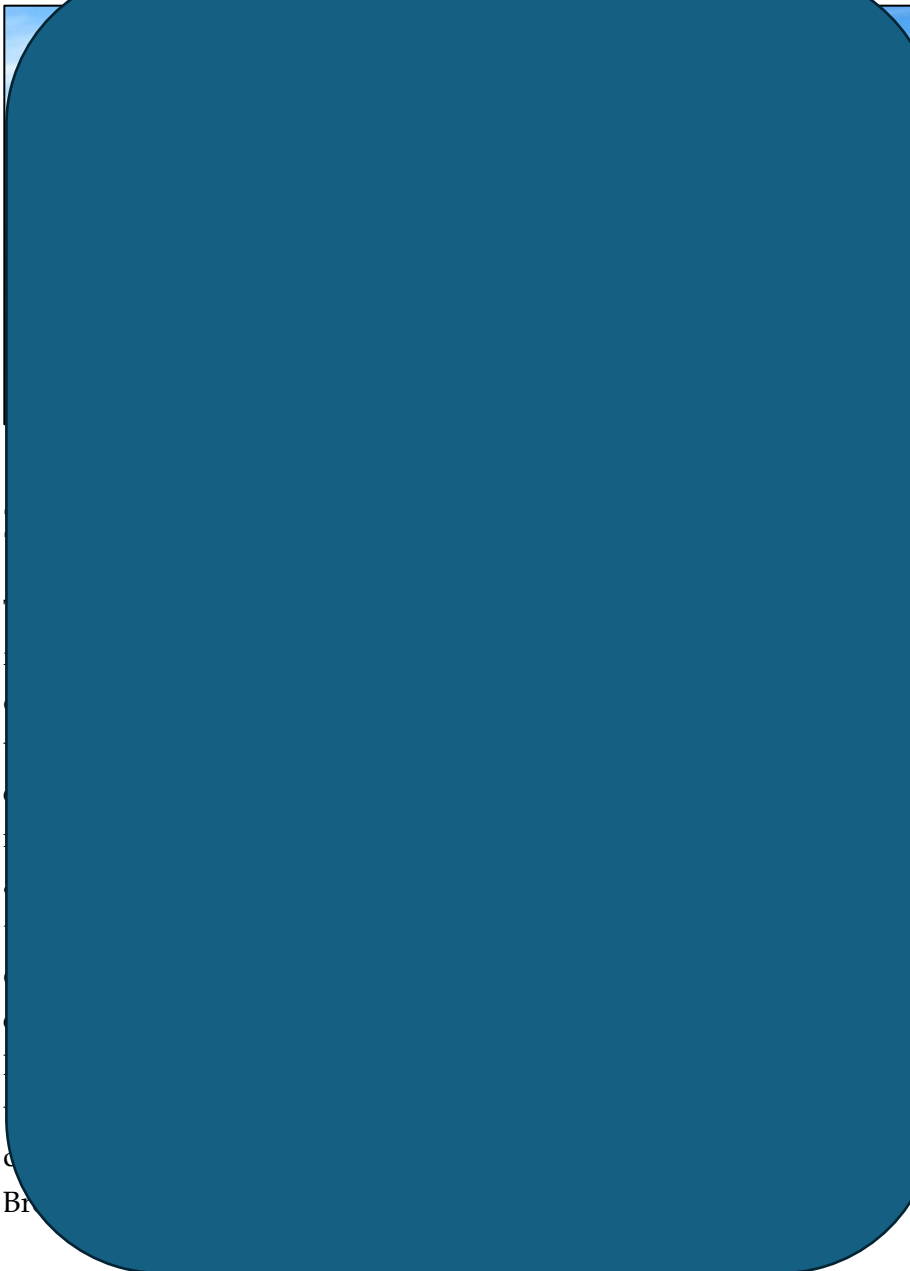
¹³⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly*, Thursday 19 August 1943

¹³⁹ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. Fred and Eileen O'Connor.

¹⁴⁰ O'Connor, I. Private Photograph Collection. The wedding of Ian O'Connor and Betty Foran 1961.

Chapter 7

Carrigafoyle Castle 600 – 1700



Carrigafoyle Castle

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Warfare across these communities was an ever-present reality, most often expressed through cattle raids that served not only as economic contests but also as assertions of power, honour, and dominance. Warriors travelled lightly and relied on speed and surprise, fighting with spears, axes, swords, bows, and slings **(below)**.² Raiding warriors often took hostages to secure alliances or enforce submission. These raids could escalate into wider conflicts when disputes over succession, honour, or territory drew in rival túatha, or indeed kingdoms, creating a landscape in which alliances shifted as readily as hostilities, with survival dependent upon strength, leadership, and the loyalty of one's kin.^{3 4}

Irish axe men (c. 1100)



External pressures greatly intensified this instability. Viking incursions from the late 700s introduced new centres of trade and conflict along the coast and rivers, while the Anglo-Norman invasion from 1169 brought fortified castles, feudal lordships, and a challenge to Gaelic authority. Yet neither the Vikings nor the Anglo-Normans fully displaced the existing order; instead, they became part of a complex, evolving social and political mosaic, often intermarrying with and allying with Gaelic families. All the while, the English Crown loomed in the background, strongest in *The Pale*, an area in and around Dublin, but increasingly determined to control and colonise, ensuring that conflict in Ireland was never

purely local, but part of a broader struggle for power and sovereignty.^{5 6 7} It was within this contested and shifting world that the *O'Connor Kerry* dynasty emerged, ruled, and declined, and from whom the *Balboora O'Connors* descend. **Chapter 7 – Carrigafoyle Castle 600–1700** takes a deep dive into the Middle Ages and Early Modern period to explore the emergence of the *Balboora O'Connors*.

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people thought to have settled Ireland from the Iberian Peninsula region of modern-day Spain and Portugal.¹⁹

The forebears of the *O'Connor Kerry* belonged to the *Ciarraighe Luachra*, an early Gaelic people active between 400 and 1200 who dominated a region encompassing much of modern north County Kerry, parts of northwest County Cork, and southwest County Limerick, and from whom both the kingdom and modern-day County Kerry take their name.^{20 21}

The Viking Raiders

Viking raiders from modern-day Norway, Denmark, and Sweden began attacking Ireland from the late 700s. Their incursions, characterised by abrupt and extreme violence with calculated terror, targeted monasteries, river settlements, and coastal communities, places both vulnerable and rich with ecclesiastical treasure.²² Longships moved swiftly through estuaries and inland waterways, especially the River Shannon, allowing raiders to strike deep into the interior with little warning. They plundered wealth, seized captives, and burned what they could not carry. Far from being random, these assaults formed part of a deliberate strategy that enabled rapid attack and equally swift withdrawal before organised resistance could be mounted (**next page**).^{23 24 25} For those living along the Shannon and its estuaries, including the forebears of the *O'Connor Kerry*, the consequences were profound. The great river, long a lifeline of movement and exchange, became a corridor of exposure and danger. Raids disrupted settlements and weakened local authority. Yet this same disruption also created new opportunities. As Viking activity evolved from raiding to settlement, the waterways that had once carried destruction became conduits of trade.

Limerick emerged as a Viking stronghold and commercial hub, and those Gaelic families able to command the surrounding river routes, such as the later *O'Connor Kerry*, were well placed to engage with, regulate, and ultimately benefit from this changing economic landscape.

The Irish response to the Viking aggression was neither uniform nor static. Some dynasties resisted fiercely, while others entered alliances shaped by opportunity and necessity. From this turbulent environment emerged a new King of Munster, Brian Boru. He was born Brian mac Cinnéide (Brian, son of Cinnéide [Kennedy], King of Thomond), later assuming the

name Boru from Bóruma, a place near Killaloe, County Clare, from where he took a cattle tribute from minor clans or septs.^{26 27}



A Viking raid.

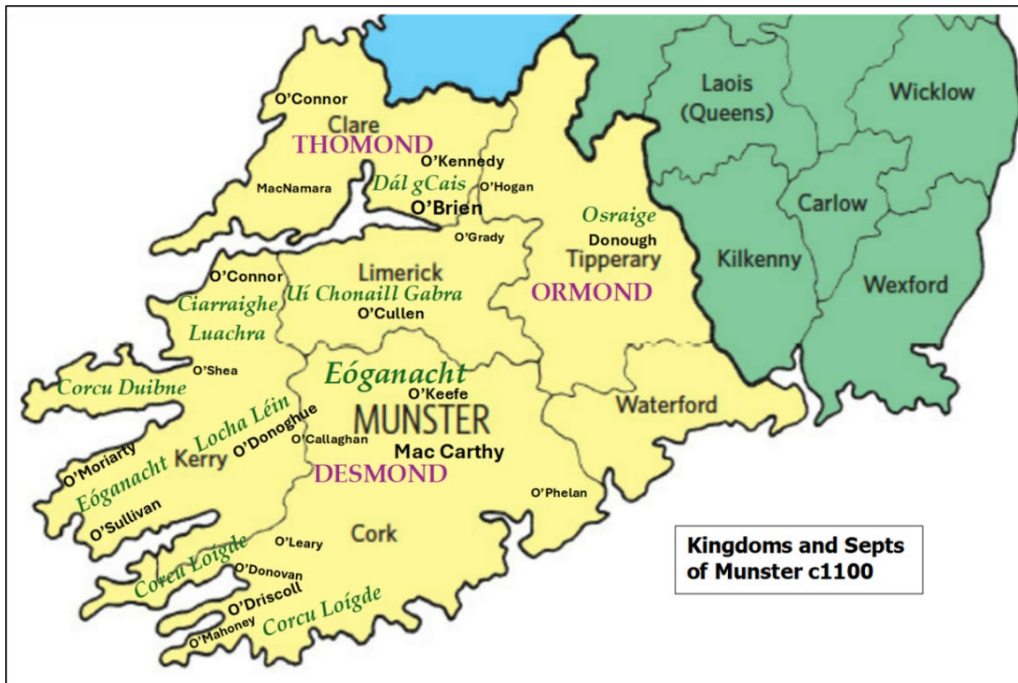
**Brian
Boru**

(c. 977–1014) or *Brian*
symbol of royal
Gaelic Ireland. His
raids, were directed as
raiders, bringing
the high kingship of
the end of Viking
Ireland and integrated

The
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The Ciarraighe Luachra
Ciarraighe Luachra in ancient

annals is the Annals of Kerry, where, at the *Battle of Clontarf*, O'Connor, the King of the *Ciarraighe Luachra*, fought and died on the side of High King Brian Boru, to be succeeded by *Culuachra Ua Conchobhair* (O'Connor of the Luachra).^{30 31} The next mention is in *Chronicon Scotorum*, where *Conchubuir*, King of *Ciarraige Luachra*, is killed, as part of an alliance between Munster and Leinster in a battle against *Áed Ua Conchobair* (Aed O'Connor), King of Connacht and the Leinster warriors.³²



As mentioned, it is from this same era that hereditary surnames became more firmly established in Gaelic Ireland, giving rise to the name Ó Conchobhair Chiarraí (*O'Connor Kerry*), by which the dynasty would thereafter be known. Gaelic dynasties in Munster through the 1000s and 1100s included the O'Brien, the leading family of the Dál gCais and the kings of Thomond, and the Mac Carthy, rulers of the powerful Eóganacht, and the kings of Desmond. The *O'Connor Kerry* lived alongside them and other leading Munster septs, each embedded within the complex and competitive Gaelic order, such as the Ó Súilleabháin (O'Sullivan), Ó Donnchadha (O'Donoghue), Ó Ceallacháin (O'Callaghan), Ó Caoimh (O'Keefe), Mac Conmara (MacNamara), Ó Gráda (O'Grady), Ó Cinnéide (O'Kennedy), Ó Faoláin

(O'Phelan), *Ó Muircheartaigh* (O'Moriarty), *Ó hEidirsceoil* (O'Driscoll), *Ó hÓgáin* (O'Hogan), *Ó Laoghaire* (O'Leary), *Ó Mathghamhna* (O'Mahony), *Ó Donnabháin* (O'Donovan), *Donnchadh* (Donough), and *Ó Culeáin* (O'Cullen) / *Ó Coileáin* (O'Collins) (**previous page**).³³

From their fertile lands in north Kerry with their command of the Shannon estuary, the O'Connors' strength, enabling them to prosper, their ascendancy was their power. The O'Connors' sept, such as the O'Connors' corridor and sustained the O'Connors' ally Connacht, and the O'Connors' appear not as the O'Connors' the age, joining the O'Connors' and engaging in the O'Connors' the *Uí Chonaill* the O'Connors' held by the O'Cullen

Kerry record a period. In the mid-17th century the Shannon corridor. The O'Connors' was killed, and the O'Connors' let his death in a the O'Connors' gs dead. Later, in the O'Connors' is passing recorded the O'Connors'. The O'Connors' attack on Munster, the O'Connors' He passed through the O'Connors' Connor Kerry and the O'Connors' allies, including the O'Connors', including hostages, the O'Connors' Tadhg O'Brien as the O'Connors' their submission to the O'Connors' assert his dominance

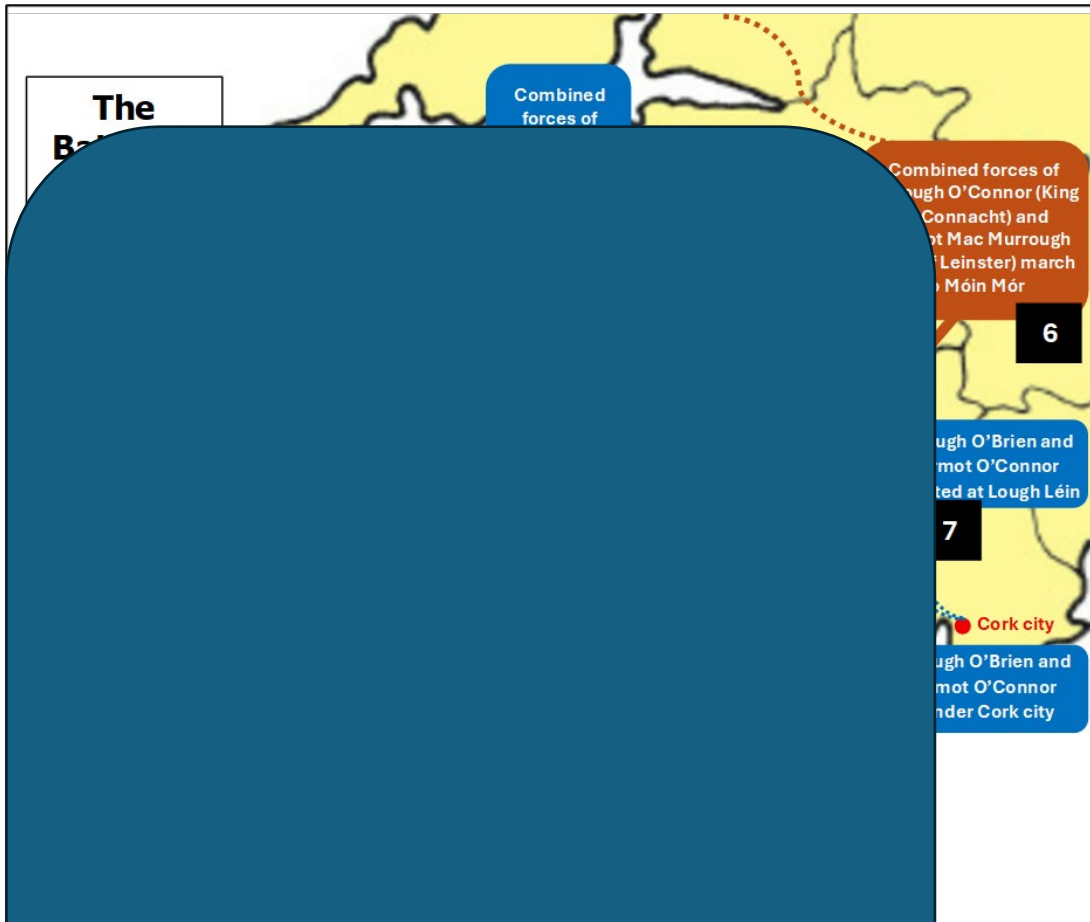
over Cormac Mac Carthy, Turlough O'Connor killed his Desmond hostages and again brought his fleet down the Shannon in 1124 to invade Munster, this time in alliance with the Kerry kings. Cormac Mac Carthy immediately repudiated the Kerry kings, including O'Moriarty, King of the *Eóganacht Locha Léin*; O'Connor, King of the *Ciarraighe Luachra*; and O'Shea, King of the *Corcu Duibne*. The King of Connacht eventually forced Mac Carthy to submit. In 1127, following an O'Connor Connacht hosting in the town of Cork, regional kings, including Donough, Mac Carthy, O'Mahoney, O'Donoghue, O'Keefe, and *O'Connor Kerry*, offered submissions to Turlough O'Connor, which resulted in an agreement that each king would give the King of Connacht 15 hostages, to ensure compliance, and Munster was divided between Donough, O'Brien and Mac Carthy. Central to the agreement was the release of the O'Cullen territory of Connello to O'Brien. This part of the agreement, though, was an uneasy outcome for Cormac Mac Carthy, who held valued territory and fortifications at *Maigh Tamhnach* (Mahoonagh), part of Connello, near modern-day Newcastle, in County Limerick.

The Slaying of the King of Desmond

The longstanding enmity between the *O'Connor Kerry* and the Mac Carthy dynasties reached a violent retribution in 1138, with the Mac Carthy-sponsored killing of Mahon O'Connor. His son and new King of the *O'Connor Kerry*, *Diarmaid Súgach Ó Conchobhair* (Dermot the cheerful O'Connor), upon the urgings of the O'Brien of Thomond, slew Cormac Mac Carthaigh, King of Desmond, while all three were staying at Mac Carthy's fort in Mahoonagh. The assassination of Cormac Mac Carthy left the Desmond Mac Carthy kingship reeling for strong leadership, until his son, Dermot Mac Carthy, became king in 1143. Mac Carthaigh's Book recorded the event:

A.D. 1138. Cormac son of Muireadhach Mac Carthaigh, king of the two provinces of Munster, and defender of all Leath Mogha, the most pious and valorous of men, the best for [bestowing] food and clothes, was, after building the church of Cormac at Cashel and twelve churches at Lismore, treacherously killed by Diarmaid Súgach Son of Mathghamhain Ó Conchobhair Ciarraighe and Ó Tailcín, at the instigation of Toirdhealbhach son of Diarmaid Ó Briain, in his own house at Maigh Tamhnach.

The Battle of Móin Mór



as their king, and, had spent years as King of by his son of his brother Teige nor, mindful of both pact also made him kingship of Munster.

Later in 1151, Mac Carthy's forces descended upon Kerry, harrying and plundering the land, only to be met and routed by the *O'Connor Kerry*, with Mac Carthy suffering heavy losses near the mountains of *Sliabh Mish*. This invasion of Kerry stirred Turlough O'Brien into action. He and his great partner Dermot O'Connor, and the allied septs of Thomond, including the O'Kennedy and the O'Hogan, assembled a formidable army that gathered at Mahoonagh, Connello, to prepare for war against Mac Carthy and his *Eóganacht* coalition. The warriors of Thomond and Kerry razed the countryside as they marched to Cork city, where they continued to wreak considerable havoc.^{35 36}

Alarmed by the strength of the Thomond and Kerry army, Dermot Mac Carthy avoided direct engagement and withdrew southward. At the same time, Dermot O'Connor, in a striking display of ingenuity and warcraft, had some of his warriors transport seven ships overland from his fortifications at Asdee, launching them upon the O'Moriarty stronghold at Lough Léin. Lough Léin formed a defensive heartland where crannógs, high-status residential fortifications built on small islands, and monastic sites such as Inisfallen, provided refuge, authority, and control. These island strongholds were integral to the political and military landscape of Desmond, their security resting on the natural barrier of water, until Dermot O'Connor, by bringing their ships inland, stripped that advantage away, subduing the O'Moriarty by both water and land. Heavily defeated, the O'Moriartys, now MacCarthy allies, fled eastward, giving Dermot O'Connor authority over western Desmond.

It was then that the conflict widened decisively. Seeking to counter the O'Brien and *O'Connor Kerry* aggression, Mac Carthy secured the support of Turlough O'Connor, the King of Connacht and Dermot Mac Murrough, the King of Leinster, who saw the suppression of Turlough O'Brien as an opportunity they could not forgo. They advanced their considerable armies into Desmond from the north. As the forces of Thomond and Kerry withdrew from Cork, they were pursued from the south by a combined *Eóganacht* force led by Dermot Mac Carthy, including warriors from the O'Mahony, O'Donoghue, O'Keefe, and O'Moriarty septs. Fully aware they were under pursuit by Dermot Mac Carthy, Turlough O'Brien, and Dermot O'Connor, chose to take their men on an alternate route through the boglands of Móin Mór. A blinding mist at Móin Mór shrouded Turlough O'Brien and Dermot O'Connor, leaving them unaware of the converging enemy and the catastrophe about to unfold. Suddenly surrounded by the forces of Mac Carthy of Desmond, reinforced by allies from

Connacht and Leinster, the men of Thomond and Kerry were overwhelmed and cut down in one of the bloodiest encounters of the age. The losses were devastating, not only countless warriors, but dozens of kings, chieftains, and their sons fell, including leading figures of the O'Dea, O'Kennedy, O'Hogan, and O'Grady septs. Incredibly, Turlough O'Brien and Dermot O'Connor escaped, shielded by the same heavy mist that helped undo them.³⁷³⁸ The Annals of Tighearnach record the battle as follows:

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The Anglo-Norman invasion



A painting of the Gaelic Irish in battle against the Anglo-Normans by Angus McBride.

Less than two years after the death of Dermot O'Connor, the King of Connacht, Turlough O'Connor also died, and his son, Rory O'Connor, succeeded him as king. Rory, who had been by his father's side for many battles, was eager to ascend to the high kingship of Ireland. One man standing in his way was Dermot Mac Murrough, the King of Leinster, whom Rory forced into exile in England in 1166. In exile, Mac Murrough sought the support of King Henry II and powerful Norman lords, whose forebears, a century earlier, had conquered England at the *Battle of Hastings*, to form a coalition to invade Ireland. Mac Murrough was prepared to do anything to regain the kingship of Leinster and contest the

high kingship of Ireland. The ensuing Anglo-Norman invasion, beginning in 1169, did restore Mac Murrough in Leinster but, in doing so, extinguished any realistic prospect of his attaining the high kingship, as power passed instead to the incoming Norman lords and the English Crown.

The Anglo-Norman invasion was a turning point in the history of Ireland. The Normans (and later the English), sought to impose their feudal system on the Irish lords and their warriors. The Normans wrote the parchment on which the Irish lords signed their oaths in a bitter, determined tone. The Normans overwhelmed the Irish lords with their superior armoured knights and their superior warfare techniques, which were a far cry from the Irish style of fighting.

The Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland was a turning point in the history of Ireland. Although Irish lords fought back, the Normans eventually won. Intermittent fighting continued for decades, but by the 1200s Munster had been largely conquered. Only a few lordships survived only in the west, such as in Kerry, where they held on across wide parts of the province. The Normans, known as the Anglo-Normans, which they drew from France, and raised castles across most of Munster. By the early 1200s, the Normans had, about 10 kilometres

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too were negotiation, intermarriage, and alliance, as the FitzGerald and FitzMaurices manoeuvred between service to the English Crown and partnerships with Gaelic kings. The experiences of the *O'Connor Kerry* during this period provide a perfect illustration of the volatile, opportunistic, and ever-shifting nature of power in Munster at the time.

**A painting of Shanid Castle
c1780 by Gabriel Beranger.**



**The ruins of
Shanid Castle.**

In 1261, the *Battle of Callan* marked a major Gaelic resurgence as the *O'Connor Kerry* joined with the O'Sullivans and O'Driscolls to support the Mac Carthys in a decisive victory over the Anglo-Normans in Desmond, killing John FitzGerald, the Lord of Connello, in the process. The battle captured in bardic poetry:^{51 52}

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Their standing was dramatically enhanced in 1490 when *Conchobhar Liath Ó Conchobhair* O'Connor (Connor *the grey* O'Connor), drawing on Anglo-Norman building techniques and with support from their centuries-old ally, the O'Briens of Thomond, constructed *Caisleán Charraig an Phoill* (Carrigafoyle Castle).⁵⁶ Carrigafoyle Castle was one of the most imposing fortifications in Ireland at the time, signalling to allies and rivals alike that the *O'Connor Kerry* remained a formidable and resilient dynasty.⁵⁷

**A glimpse inside
Carrigafoyle Castle.**



The Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Norman Coalition

By the 1500s, the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman settlers had, in large part, become indistinguishable from the Gaelic Irish among whom they lived. The Desmond Geraldines intermarried with Gaelic dynasties, adopted the Irish language, and in many cases governed according to Brehon law. They came to be known as the Old English Catholics, a society neither wholly Norman nor wholly Gaelic, but a complex fusion of both, in which kinship and shared interests increasingly outweighed the legacy of conquest.^{58 59}

To the English Crown, particularly to King Henry VIII of the Tudor dynasty, this transformation was deeply troubling.⁶⁰ English authority had never extended far beyond *The Pale*, and now those who had once served as its agents of conquest appeared to have slipped beyond its control. Henry's oft-repeated observation that the Anglo-Normans had become *more Irish than the Irish themselves* reflected not only a cultural assimilation but a significant erosion of English control. Among them the O'Connor

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ht sword, speaks to

readiness in defence of honour and kin, while its gold embellishments suggest nobility and prestige.

The accompanying motto, *nec timeo, nec sperno*, *I neither fear nor shrink*, captures a spirit of measured resolve, neither intimidated by danger nor careless of it, but steadfast in the face of challenge. The version of the crest (**below right**) represents a modern rendering adapted for commercial use. In contrast, the crest (**below left**) more closely reflects how such imagery may have appeared upon the buildings, battlements, and armour of the O'Connor Kerry in the later Middle Ages.⁶⁷



The Desmond Rebellions

Elizabeth I was determined to break the power of both the Gaelic Irish and the Old English Catholics. Her government pursued a policy of centralisation, seeking to impose direct royal authority across Ireland. This effort combined political control with religious reform, as her Protestant state attempted to dominate a predominantly Catholic society. Rather than securing obedience, however, it intensified resistance, drawing Gaelic Irish and Old English Catholics into a powerful alliance against a common enemy, the English Crown. In Munster,

the Desmond Geraldines and their Gaelic allies, including the *O'Connor Kerry*, increasingly stood in opposition to a regime that viewed their autonomy, alliances, and faith as a threat.⁶⁸

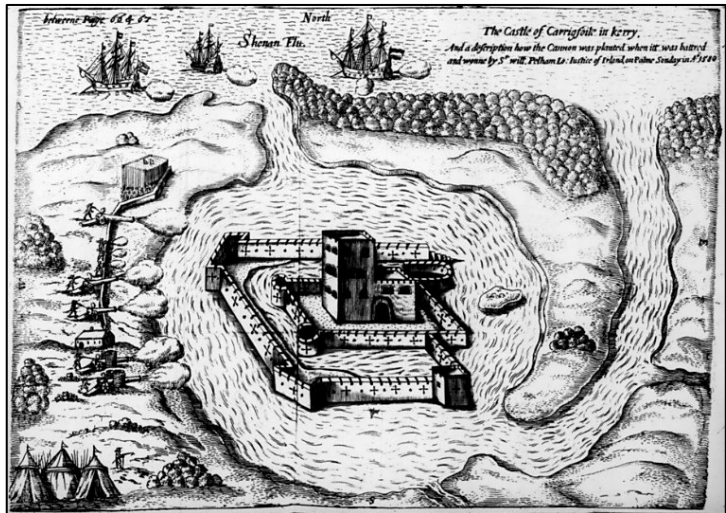
Unable to accept Elizabeth's policies, the Desmond Geraldines rose in rebellion in 1569. Gaelic kings soon joined them, and the Desmond Rebellions were underway. Elizabeth's response was to send William Pelham and Walter Raleigh to Ireland. Raleigh not only rebel forces but also English soldiers, livestock slaughtered, and a famine across Munster. The last Earl of Desmond contributed to English power.^{69 70 71 72 73 74}

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of Elizabeth I was to cut the heads from bodies of the Irish, regardless of gender, age, rank or origin, and keep them as trophies of conquest **(below)**.⁸⁰ Among the victims whose severed heads were displayed at Carrigafoyle and other massacre sites across Kerry and Limerick were O'Connors and their kin, men who carried the same blood that would later flow through the *Balboora O'Connors*.



Cannons firing upon Carrigafoyle Castle in 1580 (above), and a contemporary photograph of the Carrigafoyle Castle ruins, showing the impact of the cannon fire (left).

English soldiers collecting severed heads during the Desmond Rebellions.



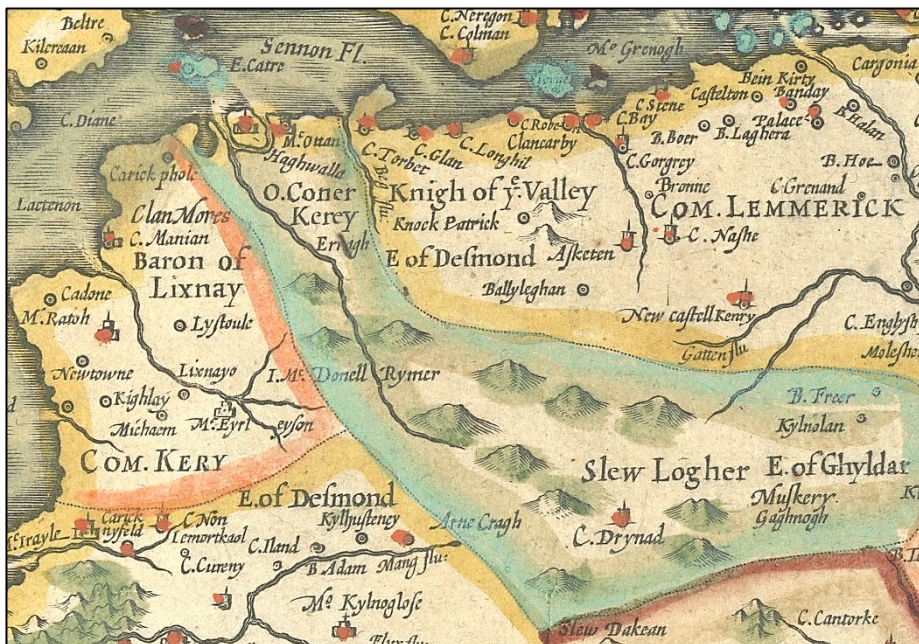
The destruction of Carrigafoyle sent shockwaves across Munster. The apparent invincibility of the great tower houses was now vulnerable to English cannons. In the weeks that followed, other Desmond Geraldine strongholds surrendered or were abandoned without resistance, and the military balance shifted decisively in favour of the English Crown. In crushing the rebellions, Elizabeth I dismantled the longstanding Gaelic and Old English Catholic hierarchy. Families such as the *O'Connor* and *Keogh* lost their lordship, their status, and social order was disrupted. The history and legacy of the castle is remembered in the ruins that stand forward in the landscape.

The O'Connor Kerry in Connello

The O'Connor name is not an ancient occupying or leadership sept or clan of Connello. In the early medieval period, before the arrival of the Vikings, Connello formed part of the territory of the Uí Chonaill Gabhra, ruled by the Ó Conaill (O'Connell) kings, from whom the region takes its name. Alongside them, other Gaelic septs also held influence in the district, including the Ó Culeáin / Ó Coileáin (O'Cullen / O'Collins), Ó Donnabháin (O'Donovan), Ó hAinbhith (O'Hanvy), Ó Madagáin (O'Madigan), and Ó Fathaidh (O'Fahy).^{85 86}

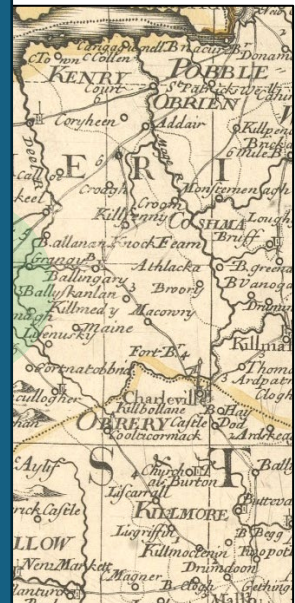
⁸⁷ By the later Middle Ages, however, the O'Connor name begins to appear with increasing frequency across Limerick, particularly within the Barony of Connello. As outlined in **Chapter 1 – County Limerick 1584–1839**, this presence is reflected in the 1584 land surveys undertaken by the English Crown following the Desmond Rebellions.⁸⁸ These surveys, designed to record and value the confiscated estates of the Desmond Geraldine lords and their allies, including the *O'Connor Kerry*, provide one of the earliest clear snapshots of O'Connor settlement in Connello on the eve of the Munster Plantation.

What drew families of the *O'Connor Kerry* eastward into Connello?



A section of a map of Munster made before the Desmond Rebellions (c. 1569) showing the land held by the O'Connor Kerry and the Knight of ye Valley (Connello) held by the Earl of Desmond.

For centuries, the *O'Connor Kerry* had raided into Limerick, and the fertile lands of Connello would not have gone unnoticed.⁸⁹ In the 1100s, the O'Cullen territory in Connello was taken by the O'Brien dynasty as part of a political settlement brokered by the King of Connacht to resolve rivalry with the Mac Carthys of Desmond over the kingship of Munster. Connello included valued fortifications at Mahoonagh near modern-day Newcastle town. The O'Brien dynasty was at Mahoonagh in 1138 when the King of Desmond, an ally of the *O'Connor Kerry*, was killed.



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The relationship between the *O'Connor Kerry* and the Desmond Geraldines through the 1500s was generally very positive, and families of the *O'Connor Kerry* had very likely settled in Connello as soldiers, vassals, or retainers within the Desmond Geraldine sphere.^{90 91} Yet the most decisive movement likely came in the aftermath of the Desmond Rebellions. With the destruction of their great stronghold at Carrigafoyle Castle and the collapse of the Desmond-Geraldine resistance in 1583, the O'Connors of *Kerry* were largely displaced. Many families fled over the *Mullach an Radhairc* (Mullaghareirk Mountains), seeking refuge around the Newcastle area in Connello, shaded green on the map (**previous page**), an area long familiar to them through raid, alliance, and story, and one embedded in the deeper folklore of their past.^{92 93}

The Munster Plantation

The Munster Plantation between 1586 and 1598 marked a period of profound change, as lands confiscated from the defeated Desmond Geraldines and their allies, including land owned and farmed by O'Connors, were surveyed and redistributed to English undertakers, settlers loyal to the Crown who gave an undertaking to colonise, develop, and secure the land. They were expected to import English tenants, build fortified houses, establish towns and agriculture along English lines, and, where possible, exclude the Irish from tenancy.

In Connello, this process significantly disrupted an already layered society of Gaelic Irish septs and Old English Catholic families, many of whom had long been integrated into the local landscape through kinship and a shared Catholic identity. Most became tenant farmers, driven into marginal lands, while the Protestant settlers and new landowners attempted to impose English systems of law, tenure, and agriculture.

The result was not a clean replacement but a tense and uneven transformation, marked by cultural dislocation, economic hardship, and persistent resistance, as the Gaelic Irish and Old English Catholics fought back between 1594 and 1603 to reject a colonial framework imposed by the English Crown. This period is known as the *Nine Years' War*. The war, though, brought renewed devastation to the Barony of Connello as the Catholic Irish resisted English colonial expansion. English colonisers were attacked or driven out, with the land again subjected to widespread burning, plunder, and famine.^{94 95 96}

The Irish Confederate Wars (1641-1652)

The *Irish Confederate Wars* (1641–1652) were a series of Catholic uprisings seeking to reverse decades of dispossession and religious discrimination that quickly expanded into a prolonged and devastating conflict across Ireland. In Munster, and particularly within the Barony of Muskerry, a region already unsettled by the earlier wars, the conflict tore families, among them the O'Sullivans, apart. The Confederate cause in the region was supported by dozens of families, many of whom were on the land where the sacking of Killybeggs took place. The O'Sullivans, Irish and English alike, were traditionally tied to the farming of the land. The region was fractured under the influence of the English and the Desmond Geraldine families, who were vying for competing interests. The region's vulnerabilities, particularly in the south, had been exposed since the late 1500s.⁹⁹

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In the wake of the destruction, resistance persisted in another form. Across rural districts such as Connello, displaced men took to the woods and mountains, waging guerrilla war against the occupying forces. These fighters depended upon local communities for shelter and sustenance, and in turn those communities suffered harsh reprisals, including imprisonment, execution, and transportation. The distinction between combatant and civilian blurred, as the war devolved into a struggle for survival amid hunger and insecurity.¹⁰² The most profound transformation, though, followed Cromwell's reign of terror. Under the *Cromwellian Act of Settlement* (1652) and subsequent surveys and land distributions, Connello emerged within a new colonial order. Leading Catholics were dispossessed on a vast scale, some transplanted west of the Shannon into Connacht, others reduced to simple tenancy. At the same time, their lands were granted to Protestant soldiers, creditors, and settlers.

Historians have argued the English massacres under Cromwell, deliberate devastation of the countryside, and policies of mass displacement and transplantation, amounted to attempted genocide, given the scale of death and intent to obliterate Irish Catholics.



The cumulative effect of the *Irish Confederate Wars* and the Cromwellian conquest was not merely defeat. It was a wholesale reordering of society in Connello, embedding a legacy of dispossession that would endure well into the 1800s.¹⁰³

From the Celebrated to the Vanquished

And so, the once-celebrated Gaelic septs of Munster, among them the *O'Connor Kerry*, stood outwardly vanquished, dispossessed of power, their kingships broken, and their lands passing into the hands of their enemy. Yet defeat did not mean disappearance. Their bloodline continued through generations, even as the socialisation reshaped their

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es, reflecting traits such as ame, for example, *Domnall Ruadh* (re *ruadh*), Duff (from *dubh*), and Bane (from

- ⁹ Irish bardic poetry was a highly formalised traditional poetry composed in strict syllabic metre by professional hereditary poets, celebrating the lineage, honour, and political legitimacy of Gaelic leaders.
- ¹⁰ Ó Corráin, D. (1969). Some place-names in the Barony of Iraghticonnor, *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 2.
- ¹¹ MacLysaght, E. (1985). *The Surnames of Ireland*, 6th edn. Irish Academic Press, Dublin.
- ¹² O'Hart, J. (1892). *Irish Pedigrees; or, The Origin and Stem of the Irish Nation*, 5th edn. James Duffy and Co., Dublin.
- ¹³ Rooney, J. (1895). *A genealogical history of Irish families: with their crests and armorial bearings*. Cherouny Printing & Publishing Company, New York.
- ¹⁴ Woulfe, P. (1923). *Sloinne Gaedheal is Gall: Irish Names and Surnames*. M.H. Gill & Son, Dublin.
- ¹⁵ Hogan, E. (1910). *Onomasticon Goedelicum: An Index to Irish Names of Places and Tribes*. Hodges & Figgis, Dublin.
- ¹⁶ Ancient Irish annals such as the *Annals of the Four Masters* originated in early medieval monastic communities, where clerics systematically recorded in Irish and Latin events year by year, drawing on earlier chronicles, oral tradition, and ecclesiastical records. Their purpose was to preserve a continuous account of Ireland's past, documenting kingships, deaths, battles, and notable occurrences, while reinforcing dynastic memory and situating Irish history within a broader Christian framework of time.
- ¹⁷ MacLysaght, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁸ Ó Corráin, D. & Maguire, F. (1990). *Irish Names*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin.
- ¹⁹ O'Hart, *op. cit.*
- ²⁰ Frame, *op. cit.*
- ²¹ Ó Corráin (1972), *op. cit.*
- ²² Sacred objects were often made of gold, silver, and adorned with precious stones, used in religious practice or housed within monastic communities.
- ²³ Ward, J. Irish warriors preparing to oppose the landing of a Viking fleet at Dublin. Public Domain.
- ²⁴ Ó Corráin (1972), *op. cit.*
- ²⁵ Duffy, S. (2005). (ed.). *Medieval Ireland: An Encyclopedia*, Routledge, New York.
- ²⁶ MacManus, S. (1921). *The Story of the Irish Race: A Popular History of Ireland*. Devin-Adair Co., New York.
- ²⁷ A tribute is like a tax. It is a payment, often in goods like cattle or produce, made by a subordinate group to a ruler or king as a sign of submission, loyalty, or protection, whereas a tax is typically a more formal and regular levy imposed by a central authority.
- ²⁸ Byrne, *op. cit.*
- ²⁹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*
- ³⁰ Ó Corráin (1972), *op. cit.*
- ³¹ O'Donovan, J. (1841). (ed.), *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* [includes references to Kerry], CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork.
- ³² Mac Niocaill, G. (2003). (ed. & trans.) *Chronicon Scotorum*, CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork.
- ³³ Ancient annals use both Ó Culeáin and Ó Coileáin to describe the kingship of the Uí Chonaill Gabra in the 11th and 12th centuries. Both forms derive from the earlier Ua Cuilén (O'Cullen), the ruling lineage of Uí Chonaill Gabra, later anglicised as O'Collins.
- ³⁴ A hosting refers to the muster or mobilisation of an army by a king or lord for the purpose of campaigning. It typically involved gathering followers and allied forces for a raid, punitive expedition, or assertion of authority, often moving through rival territories to exact tribute, enforce submission, or engage in battle.
- ³⁵ Kelleher, J. V. (1988). The Battle of Moin Mór. *Celtica: Journal of the School of Celtic Studies*, Vol. 20.
- ³⁶ Jeffries, H. A. (1984). Desmond before the Norman invasion: a political study. *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, Vol. 89, No 248.
- ³⁷ Kelleher, *op. cit.*
- ³⁸ Ó hInnse, S. (1947). (ed. & trans.). *Miscellaneous Irish Annals (A.D. 1114–1437)* [Mac Carthaigh's Book], Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin.
- ³⁹ Mac Niocaill, G. (2010). (ed.), *The Annals of Tigernach*, CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork.
- ⁴⁰ Ó hInnse, *op. cit.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.* Ó Cuilén went into Ciarraighe and burned Ard Feartha Bréanainn to the detriment of the nobles of Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair.
- ⁴² Jeffries, *op. cit.*
- ⁴³ Ó Corráin (1972), *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁴ The Antiquities of Kerry. (1855). The Forfeitures of Iragh-y-Connor, *The Kerry Magazine: A Monthly Journal of Polite Literature*, Vol. 2, No. 22.
- ⁴⁵ Flanagan, M.T. (1989). *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship: Interactions in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- ⁴⁶ Nicholls, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁷ Byrne, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁸ Duffy, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁹ Ó Cléirigh, M. (n.d.). *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann (Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters)*, CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork.
- ⁵⁰ Lydon, *op. cit.*
- ⁵¹ King, J. (c.1911). *King's History of Kerry: History of the Parishes in the County*, Part V: *The Kerry Bards*, Ryle & Quirke, Tralee.
- ⁵² The reference to O'Connor highlights the O'Connor Kerry fleet of ships. Sassanach is a Gaelic word for the English, while the de Cogan family were influential Anglo-Normans who held extensive lands in Cork.
- ⁵³ Ó Cléirigh, *op. cit.*
- ⁵⁴ Waters, K. A. (2004). *The Earls of Desmond in the Fourteenth Century*. Doctoral thesis, Durham University.
- ⁵⁵ O'Hart, *op. cit.*
- ⁵⁶ Ó Cléirigh, *op. cit.*
- ⁵⁷ McAuliffe, M. (2014). O'Connor Kerry of Carrigafoyle: History and Memory in Iraghticonnor, *Béalóideas*, No. 82.

⁵⁸ Frame, *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ Duffy, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ The House of Tudor were a Welsh-origin royal dynasty that ruled England from 1485 to 1603, beginning with Henry VII of England and including monarchs such as Henry VIII of England and Elizabeth I of England, overseeing a period of centralisation, religious upheaval, and expansion of royal power.

⁶¹ MacManus, *op. cit.*

⁶² Nicholls, *op. cit.*

⁶³ Lydon, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴ Frame, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Lydon, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ A heraldic achievement is the full formal display of a person's or family's coat of arms, including not just the shield but all associated elements such as the helmet, crest, mantling, supporters, motto, and sometimes a compartment, arranged according to heraldic tradition to represent identity, status, and lineage.

⁶⁷ Rooney, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ Nicholls, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ Frame, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ Duffy, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ Lydon, *op. cit.*

⁷² Lenihan, P. (2001). *Desmond Rebellions*, in S.J. Connolly (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. 2nd edn. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁷³ McCarthy-Morrogh, M. (1986). *The Munster Plantation: English Migration to Southern Ireland, 1583-1641*. Clarendon Press. Oxford.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Ó Cléirigh, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ In 1580, a small force of Spanish and Italian troops, sent with papal backing, landed at Smerwick in County Kerry to aid the rebellion.

⁷⁷ McAuliffe, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ Stafford, T. (1633). *Pacata Hibernia: or, A History of the Wars of Ireland, Especially within the Province of Munster, under the Government of Sir George Carew*, printed by Aug. Mathewes for Robert Milbourne, London.

⁷⁹ Ó Cléirigh, *op. cit.*

⁸⁰ The Irish History. Desmond Rebellions.

⁸¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*

⁸² McAuliffe, *op. cit.*

⁸³ King, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ This verse comes from the topographical poem of Giolla na Naomh Ó hUidhrín (d. 1420), often dated to around 1400, which catalogues the principal dynasties and territories of Gaelic Ireland. In this passage, Ó hUidhrín identifies the *Ciarraighe Luachra* (north Kerry) as the rightful domain of the O'Connor Kerry (Ó Conchobhair Ciarraighe), affirming their kingship and territorial authority. The reference to land "rich in mead" is a conventional poetic image denoting fertility and prosperity, while the span "from the strand to the Shannon" emphasises the extent and strategic importance of their territory along the Shannon estuary—an area central to trade, power, and regional influence in medieval Munster.

⁸⁵ Woulfe, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ Hogan, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ Ó Corráin (1972), *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ Murphy, J.A. (2013). (ed.). *The Desmond Survey*, CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College Cork, Text ID E580000-001.

⁸⁹ Waters, *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ Vassals were individuals or families who held land from a lord in return for service and allegiance. In Connello, this could mean members of the O'Connor Kerry occupying land under the authority of the Desmond Geraldines, owing rents, military support, or other obligations in exchange for protection and tenure. Retainers were followers or dependants attached to a lord's household or affinity, often serving as soldiers, administrators, or trusted agents. They did not necessarily hold land in their own right but were maintained by the lord and formed part of his military and political network. Together, the terms suggest that O'Connor Kerry individuals may have been integrated into the Geraldine power structure either as subordinate landholders (vassals) or as members of the lord's personal and military following (retainers).

⁹¹ Trinity College Dublin. A correct map of Ireland, divided into its provinces, counties, and baronies. Digital Repository of Ireland.

⁹² State Papers Ireland. (1580). *Correspondence on the Siege of Carrigafoyle Castle*. In: *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland, Tudor Series*. Longman, London.

⁹³ Trinity College Dublin. A correct map of Ireland, divided into its provinces, counties, and baronies Digital Repository of Ireland.

⁹⁴ Canny, N. (2001). *Making Ireland British 1580-1650*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁹⁵ Lennon, C. (1994). *Sixteenth-Century Ireland: The Incomplete Conquest*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.

⁹⁶ McCarthy-Morrogh, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷ Trinity College Dublin. 1641 Depositions.

⁹⁸ Canny, *op. cit.*

⁹⁹ McCarthy-Morrogh, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ Lenihan, *op. cit.*

¹⁰¹ Ó Siochrú, M. (2008). *God's Executioner: Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland*, Faber & Faber, London.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Canny, *op. cit.*

Appendix One

The Balboora O'Connors

Frederick O'Connor
(1886 - 1964)

married

Eileen Jean
Chisholm
(1890 - 1959)

Eileen Eileen (1918 - 2005)

Donald Ross
(1919 - 1974)

John Thomas
(1921 - 1991)

Frederick Maxwell
(1923 - 1997)

Anthony Brian
(1925 - 2002)

Keith Joseph
(1927 - 1980)

Kenneth Francis
(1929 - 1981)

Colin Chisholm
(1931 - 2002)

Gerence Michael
(1937 - 2009)

Patrick Ian (1939 - 2024)

Appendix Two

First Grade 1946/1947 Gilgandra and District Cricket Competition

Collie v IOOF 10 November 1946

IOOF, First Innings	
Alex Holland, lbw, b K. Meers	8
Marchant, c J. Meers, b R. Meers	6
R. Lewis, c K. Meers, b J. Meers	22
Max Smith, b R. Meers	25
Jack Wilson, b R. Meers	0
C. Giddens, b R. Meers	0
Merle Smith, b R. Meers	2
Ted Holland, c D. O'Connor	5
R. Meers	1
K. Marchant, not out	2
J. Holland, b R. Meers	0
Sundries	1

Total 72
Bowling: K. Meers 1/22; R. Meers 7/32; J. Meers 2/13.

COLLIE, First Innings	
J. Meers, c J. Marchant, b Merle Smith	52
B. O'Connor, c R. Green, b Max Smith	2
K. Meers, c Giddens, b Max Smith	11
D. O'Connor, c Marchant, b J. Holland	60
A. O. McCutcheon, not out	38
J. Cudden, c J. Marchant, b Merle Smith	10
K. O'Connor, not out	1
Sundries	2

Five wickets for 19'
Innings declared closed.
Bowling: R. Lewis 0/19; Max Smith 2/76; K. Marchant 0/12; J. Marchant 0/24; J. Holland 1/3; Merle Smith 2/12.

IOOF, Second Innings	
Max Smith, c R. Meers, b K. Meers	7
J. Marchant, c and b K. Meers	17
R. Lewis, b J. O'Connor	28
A. Holland, lbw, b J. O'Connor	32
J. Wilson, b J. Cudden	8
K. Marchant, b K. Warwick	8
Merle Smith, c R. Meers, b J. O'Connor	2
R. Green, run out	0
J. Holland, b K. Warwick	6
C. Giddens, not out	8
Ted Holland, b K. Warwick	0
Sundries	6

Total 109
Bowling: K. Meers 2/16; R. Meers 0/20; C. Mathee, 0/15; J. Meers 0/13; J. Cudden 1/17; J. O'Connor 3/17; K. Warwick 3/6.

Collie v Armatree 17 November 1946

DRAWN GAME AT ARMATREE
At Armatree the Collie eleven just failed to clinch victory on the first innings needing only eight runs with three wickets in hand when time was called.

ARMATREE	
O. Peart, c O'Connor, b K. Meers	47
H. Twigg, c O'Connor, b R. Meers	4
T. Bills, b K. Meers	6
R. Bills, b K. Meers	0
N. Law, b J. Meers	18
W. Wyegold, c Warwick, b Mathee	51
K. Zell, c Cudden, b Warwick	20
A. Barden, b R. Meers	0
C. Jackson, not out	16
L. Quinlan, c O'Connor, b R. Meers	1
Sundries	6

Total 178
Bowling: K. Meers 4/31; R. Meers 3/29; J. Meers 1/33; J. Cudden 0/10; J. O'Connor 0/26; C. Mathee 1/29; K. Warwick 1/12.

COLLIE	
J. Meers, c Bagden, b Zell	2
R. O'Connor, c Zell, b Wyegold	25
K. Meers, not out	71
D. O'Connor, c Hansford, b Bills	31
A. O. McCutcheon, b Jackson	4
K. O'Connor lbw, b Wyegold	14
J. O'Connor, b Wyegold	0
K. Warwick, b Wyegold	0
R. Meers not out	20
Sundries	4

Total seven for 171
Bowling: Wyegold 4/60; Zell 1/31; Bills 1/22; Jackson 1/8; W. Law 0/44.

Collie v Macquarie Rovers 24 November 1946

A GRADE

MACQUARIE ROVERS

H. Starr, c McGrane, b K. Meers	4
R. Phillips, c McGrane, b K. Meers	0
G. Sullivan, c Brophy, b J. Meers	10
W. Stoneman, c and b J. Meers	13
P. Phillips, lbw, b R. Meers	20
R. Phillips, b R. Meers	42
K. Starr, c O'Connor, b J. O'Connor	2
J. Quigley, c O'Connor, b J. O'Connor	0
R. Harvey, c and b J. O'Connor	7
N. Sullivan, b R. Meers	7
K. Sullivan, b R. Meers	0
M. Phillips, not out	5
Sundries	4

Total 114
Bowling: R. Meers 4/48; K. Meers 3/15; J. Meers 1/29; J. O'Connor 3/18.

COLLIE

J. Cudden, b Starr	76
B. O'Connor lbw, b Phillips	67
R. McGrane, b Phillips	9
M. Brophy, c Phillips, b K. Starr	11
K. O'Connor, c Quigley, b R. Phillips	1
M. McGrane, c Stoneman, b Phillips	4
J. O'Connor, c Phillips, b Quigley	32
D. O'Brien, c Phillips, b B. Quigley	12
R. Meers, c Phillips, b P.	3
J. Meers, not out	5
D. O'Connor, not out	26
Sundries	26

Total Nine for 253
Bowling: K. Starr 2/36; R. Harvey 0/25; Quigley 2/33; P. Phillips 1/36; R. Phillips 4/58; W. Stoneman 0/20.

Collie v Tooraweenah 1 December 1946

TOORAWEENAH, First Innings

M. Grocke, stp D. O'Connor, b K. Meers	0
L. Davidson, c Mathee, b J. Meers	23
R. Grocke, b K. Meers	5
R. Devine, c Warwick, b Mathee	75
J. Varley, b R. Meers	5
V. Collets, b K. Warwick	20
A. McGill, b K. Warwick	11
C. McWhirter, b K. Meers	3
J. Balderston, b K. Warwick	10
W. McKenzie, not out	2
M. Connors, c J. Meers, b K. Warwick	0
Sundries	4

Total 158
Bowling: K. Meers 3/33; R. Meers 1/29; J. Meers 1/29; C. Mathee 1/30; K. Warwick 4/28.

COLLIE

B. O'Connor, c Devine, b Varley	2
J. Cudden, c McKenna, b R. Grocke	95
K. Meers, lbw, b Devine	34
J. Meers, retired	30
D. O'Connor, retired	52
A. McCutcheon, not out	17
C. Mathee, lbw, b Devine	2
K. O'Connor, not out	7
Sundries	14

Six wickets for 235
Bowling: Varley 1/64; Collets 0/14; K. Grocke 1/62; R. Devine 2/44; McGill 0/84; M. Grocke 0/15; McKenna 0/6.

**Collie v Gilgandra
8 December 1946**

**Collie v Biddon-Bearbong
15 December 1946**

**Collie v Balladoran
12 January 1947**

**Collie v IOOF
19 January 1947**

GILGANDRA

L. Meers
O. N.
D. N.
2

BIDDON-BEARBONG

DRAWN MATCH AT

COLLIE	
K. Meers, run out	1
J. Meers, c and b Merle Smith	87
B. O'Connor, stp. J. Wilson, b K. Williams	17
D. O'Connor, c Green, b McKellar	64
K. O'Connor, c Wilson, b K. Williams	23
L. Murray, b K. Williams	1
J. O'Connor, c Wilson, b K. Williams	6
B. Chisholm, lbw, b H. Williams	19
R. Meers, stp. Wilson, b H. Williams	6
C. Mathes, c Lewis, b J. Marchant	7
R. Monk, not out	6
Sundries	23
Total	253
Bowling: A. McKellar	1 42
Max Smith 0/18, Merle Smith 1/25, K. Williams 4/37, R. Lewis 0/7, H. Williams 2/34, E. Hillyer 0/7, J. Marchant 1/17.	
I.O.O.F.	
A. Holland, c D. O'Connor, b R. Meers	0
R. Lewis, b R. Meers	2
J. Marchant, b R. Meers	12
J. Wilson, c B. O'Connor, b K. Meers	2
H. Williams, b J. O'Connor	21
R. Green, b R. Meers	5
A. McKellar, b C. Mathes	16
E. Hillyer, not out	7
K. Williams, not out	12
Sundries	9
Seven wickets for	86
Bowling: K. Meers 1/19; R. Meers 4/13; J. O'Connor 1/18; J. Meers 0/13; C. Mathes 1/9.	

Collie v Armatree
2 February 1947

ARMATREE	
H. Twigg, c J. O'Connor, b J. Meers	8
A. Barden, b J. O'Connor	23
T. Bills, how. b J. Meers	39
A. Peart, b J. O'Connor	0
W. Wyegold, lbw., b O'Connor	7
N. 1 b J. O'Connor	2
T. Zell, b J. O'Connor	2
R. Billa lbw., b J. O'Connor	0
S. Fowler, b R. Meers	29
O. Peart, b R. Meers	7
G. Shanklin, not out	1
Sundries	28
Total	148
Bowling: T. Meers 0/29, R. Meers 3/42, J. O'Connor 5/20, J. Meers 2/24, C. Mathes 0/5.	
COLLIE	
K. Meers, c Barden, b Wyegold	21
J. Meers, lbw., b Peart	34
B. O'Connor, c Peart, b Fowler	30
D. O'Connor, retired	42
M. O'Connor, b Fowler	11
J. O'Connor, c Peart, b Shanklin	19
K. O'Connor, c Law, b Peart	0
R. Chisholm, how., b Wyegold	2
L. Murray, c Wyegold, b Shanklin	0
R. Murray, c Wyegold, b Law	27
C. Mathes, not out	19
Sundries	12
Total	207
Bowling: O. Peart 2/40, T. Zell 0/26, W. Wyegold 2/23, N. Law 1/26, R. Bills 0/20, G. Fowler 2/20, G. Shanklin 2/21, A. Barden 0/3.	

Collie v Tooraweenah
9 February 1947

COLLIE	
K. Meers, c Kilfoyle, b Ison	17
J. Meers, c Balderson, b Varley	40
J. Cudden, b Varley	1
D. O'Connor, retired	76
K. O'Connor, c McGill, b K. Ison	27
J. O'Connor, c W. McWhirter, b McGill	31
R. Chisholm, not out	6
Sundries	13
Six wickets for	211
Bowling: J. Varley 2/41, R. Devine 0/15, M. Kilfoyle 0/27, F. Fyfe 0/9, A. McGill 1/31, K. Ison 2/58, W. McKenna 0/9, G. Crocker 0/9.	
TOORAWEENAH	
G. Crocker, b K. Meers	13
R. Devine, c K. Meers, b J. Meers	12
K. Ison, lbw., b R. Meers	0
A. McGill, c H. Freeth, b J. Meers	17
J. Varley, b R. Meers	2
M. Balderson, c K. Meers, b C. Mathes	4
M. Kilfoyle, b J. O'Connor	16
C. McWhirter, b J. O'Connor	11
C. Yea, not out	15
F. Fyfe, lbw., b C. Mathes	15
W. McKenna, b J. O'Connor	21
Sundries	13
Total	139
Bowling: K. Meers 2/14, J. Meers 1/26, R. Meers 2/14, C. Mathes 2/19, J. O'Connor 3/18, K. O'Connor 0/28, K. Warwick 0/7.	

Collie v Balladoran
16 March 1947

**GOOD SCORING
AT COLLIE**

**Gallant Bid By
Balladoran**

At Collie on Sunday the home team and Balladoran met in a match that decided the result of the Gilgandra and District Cricket Competition and it proved a fitting final. It was voted a great match, with the Collie eleven a little too good on the day, clinching victory in the last few minutes of play. Balladoran batted first and compiled the respectable total of 197. P. Wheaton and W. Holswich were the chief contributors and they figured in a partnership that added 133 runs. Wheaton's score was 87.

K. Meers and K. O'Connor gave the home-side a good kick off with an opening partnership of 70, but it was not until the last five minutes that the required runs were scored.

Scores:—

BALLADORAN	
W. Daves, b J. Cudden	2
W. Holswich, b K. Meers	46
W. Lindsay, c B. O'Connor, b K. Meers	5
P. Wheaton, how., b K. Meers	87
F. Wheaton, b J. O'Connor	1
R. Daves, lbw., b J. O'Connor	2
N. Daves, b C. Mathes	7
A. Lindsay, c Warrick, b L. Murray	0
G. Anderson, c K. O'Connor, b Mathes	28
K. Richardson, run out	0
F. Alchin, not out	3
Sundries	16
Total	197
Bowling: K. Meers 3/37, J. Cudden 1/14, A. Mealey 0/17, J. O'Connor 2/42, C. Mathes 2/31, L. Murray 1/28, K. Warrick 0/9.	
COLLIE	
K. Meers, lbw., b Holswich	54
K. O'Connor, c F. Alchin, b P. Wheaton	42
B. O'Connor, c Richardson, b Lindsay	30
D. O'Connor, c Anderson, b Lindsay	26
J. Cudden, run out	7
M. O'Connor, not out	8
J. O'Connor, not out	24
Sundries	14
Five wickets for	205
Bowling: W. Lindsay 2/71, F. Wheaton 0/17, W. Holswich 1/53, P. Wheaton 1/15, W. Daves 0/9, K. Richardson 0/19.	

Second Grade 1946/1947 Gilgandra and District Cricket Competition

Collie v IOOF 10 November 1946	Collie v Balladoran 24 November 1946	Collie v Curban 15 December 1946	Collie v Curban 12 January 1947
			Collie registered an outright win at the expense of IOOF seconds in the B grade competition cricket on Sunday. Collie had a first innings total of 276, best scores being D. O'Brien 73, M. O'Connor 39, J. Kenny 39, P. Moore 29, P. Meers 28. IOOF totalled 82 in the first innings, of which B. O'Neill contributed 34, and 78 in the second. Wickets were well distributed amongst Collie bowlers.

Collie v Balladoran

2 March 1947

COLLIE BOWLERS

ACCURATE

IN MATCH AT BALLADORAN

And Win Second Grade Competition

Due mainly to the splendid performance of the bowlers Collie second grade cricketers registered an eight point win in the match at Balladoran on Sunday and thus won the Gilgandra District Second Grade Cricket Competition for the current season.

P. Meers was outstanding, bagging two wickets for three runs in the first innings, and five wickets for seven runs in the second. Balladoran could only muster 69 and 37, whereas Collie compiled 210 for the loss of only four wickets, the innings being declared closed. Opening bat L. Murray struck form with the willow, accounting for 95.

Scores:—

BALLADORAN, First Innings	
D. Wilson, c L. O'Connor, b Mealey	6
L. O'Connor, lbw, b Mealey	11
T. Bellenger, lbw, b Mealey	0
V. Wilson, b D. O'Brien	1
R. McLeod, c Murray, b D. O'Brien	11
P. Holswich, b Meers	31
P. Wilson, run out	4
W. Hazelton, c Murray, b P. Meers	0
R. Furness, c K. O'Connor, b Murray	3
I. Hazelton, c Meers, b Murray	0
G. Alchin, not out	0
Sundries	2

Total 69

Bowling: A. Mealey 3/24, D. O'Brien 2/32, L. Murray 2/9, P. Meers 2/3.

COLLIE

L. Murray, c and b McLeod	95
M. McGrane, c and b Wilson	7
K. O'Connor, lbw, b Wilson	13
R. McGrane, c Wilson, b McLeod	4
A. Mealey, not out	37
D. O'Brien, not out	39
Sundries	15

Four wickets for .. 210

Innings declared closed.

Bowling: G. Bellenger 0/19, L. O'Connor 0/34, P. Holswich 0/45, P. Wilson 1/22, D. Wilson 1/17, N. Wilson 0/14, R. McLeod 2/44.

BALLADORAN, Second Innings

D. Wilson, c McGrane, b P. Meers	8
M. Wilson, b Meers	4
R. McLeod, c Mealey, b Meers	3
P. Holswich, c O'Connor, b Murray	0
G. Bellenger, lbw, b Meers	0
L. O'Connor, lbw, b Murray	0
I. Hazelton, b Murray	4
P. Wilson, lbw, b Meers	4
R. Furness, run out	0
G. Alchin, not out	5
W. Hazelton, c McGrane, b Brophy	7
Sundries	2

Total 37

Bowling: A. Mealey 0/4, D. O'Brien 0/6, L. Murray 3/9, P. Meers 5/7, M. Brophy 1/7, J. Mealey 0/1.

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