

Wolseley Anzacs.

by Ben Matthews

Wolseley Anzacs

Nearly two hundred years of the Preece family in Australia.

This is the story of a pioneer family and their children who moved to the country town of Wolseley, in South Australia. It was here that three brothers went to war to fight for the British Empire, in the war to end all wars. The Preece family had to deal with loss, uncertainty, sickness and the military. This story is the history of the Preece family and the generations that they influenced.



Allan Preece 1914.

Allan Preece was the oldest of five brothers who lived in Wolseley, South Australia. He had one older sister, and four younger. Born in 1879 Allan became a member of the Australian Light Horse during the First World War, while two of his brothers served in the AIF, also in the war to end all wars.

Written by *Ben Matthews*. Allan Preece was my Grandmothers Uncle.

| Chapter | page |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1 ~ Evan and Margaret Preece ~ | 4 |
| 2 ~ Alexander and Jane Preece ~ | 7 |
| 3 ~ 1900, the Turn of the Century ~ | 16 |
| 4 ~ After Gallipoli ~ | 34 |
| 5 ~ Their Memory ~ | 50 |
| 6 ~ The Next Generation ~ | 52 |
| 7 ~ After the War ~ | 66 |
| 8 ~ In Honour of ~ | 73 |

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My thanks to Peter John Vesely and Sandra Elizabeth Krake for their support and their input. Without them this story would be thirty pages shorter and a lot less accurate. They are deserving of our accolades.

~1~

~ *Evan and Margaret Preece* ~

Allan was thirty-six when he bolted out of a trench in an attempt to charge up a narrow ridge with 149 other Australian soldiers of the 8th Light Horse battalion. Only two minutes before, 150 Aussies had already been gunned down, attempting the exact same feat while serving their country at Gallipoli. Allan never had children of his own, yet he was a family man through and through. With that said, I think we should start at the beginning.

It was 1990 when my Grandmother handed me a piece of paper with a story of our ancestors. Unaware of computer technology, she asked me if I could retype a particular story eight times, so that she could give a copy of it to family members that had asked. I didn't have the heart to tell her that I only had to type it once on the computer, and then print nine copies, one for myself of course. I had earned some brownie points for myself that day, and an exquisite chocolate cake for a reward. But more than that, she sparked a desire in me to find out more, which has taken me on a journey and a roller coaster ride for more than twenty-five years while I researched my family history. Some members still elude me while others display a character and lifestyle that helps me understand, not only where I come from, but why I am the way I am. This was the story that she gave me!

Evan Preece was born 12th June 1803 in Herefordshire, England. His parents, John and Mary remained in England while Evan sailed across the ocean to an island far away from home, to an Island known as 'Van Diemen's Land'. He arrived in Hobart on the 9th November 1824, aboard the 'Princess Charlotte'.

The earliest written record of Evan Preece comes from the Oxford Lent Assizes in 1824, and it is here that the story of the Preece family in Australia begins. This record shows that Evan was 19 years old when he was accused of stealing a sheep worth two pounds, from Mr George Yeld on the 10th of March 1824 at Pembridge, Herefordshire.

Evan was tried in the Oxford Lent Assizes on the 22nd of March, 1824. And although he pleaded 'not guilty' to the charge, he was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to death by hanging. However, this sentence was later commuted to 14 years transportation.

Evan was stored on the 'Princess Charlotte' like cargo, which departed England on the 9th of September 1824. The ship was under the command of Captain Blythe, and had 140 convict on board, none of which he considered worthy of his company. The ship arrived in Hobart on the 9th of November, 1824.

Convict records describes Evan Preece as being 5'9" tall with brown hair, grey eyes and a small mole on the right inner lip. ^[1] His native place was given as Dilling/Leominster in Herefordshire and his occupation was listed

¹ [Convict records from the Tasmanian State Archives]

as a farm labourer and ploughman. Evan is described in his gaol report as being 'disorderly and of indifferent character'.

While serving his time in Van Diemen's Land, Evan, on the 2nd of June, 1829, was reported for insolence and disobedience to an Officer Adey and others, and was sent for six months to Maria Island, which was an isolated and cold place off the coast of Tasmania. This report was made by Captain George Meredith who later played a part in the opening up of more farmland in the southeast of Tasmania. Evan was again reported by Meredith on the 2nd of March 1830 for insolence and violence towards an overseer's wife. For this he received twenty five lashes.

Even's attitude mellowed over the years, especially when free women were arriving in the colonies. An Irish orphan woman by the name of Margaret Callaghan had sailed from London with 216 other free immigrant woman aboard the 'Bodicea' which arrived in Hobart on the 4th of February 1836. The term free only meant that they were not convicts, and had received free passage as an incentive to leave an overcrowded England, in the hope of starting a new life in the colonies.



Margaret Preece. ^[2]

It is unknown how Evan and Margaret met exactly, although it was over a year later when Evan made an application to the governor to marry. Convicts wishing to marry had to apply for approval to do so, and on the 9th of May 1837, Evan did exactly that. After waiting nearly three weeks for his approval, he was given permission to marry Miss Callaghan.

Although her name was Margaret, all previous records of her maiden name show that the spelling of her family name was uncertain. There are various records where her name had been spelt as 'Callaghn', 'Callahan' and 'Calahin'. This is not surprising in view of the fact that neither she nor Evan could read or write.

Margaret Callaghan was born in 1810 and was twenty-seven years old when she married Evan on the 26th of June 1837 at Great Swanport, Tasmania. Evan was seven years her senior and married in the Parish of Sorrell, where both were recorded as being from the parish of Great Swanport, which is the district around Swansea on the east coast of Van Diemen's Land. ^[3] It was common practice at the time for convicts nearing the end of their sentence to be assigned to free settlers as farm labourers and it is most likely that Evan was so assigned at the time of their marriage. Evan Preece received a conditional pardon on the 3rd of February 1838, one month shy of his fourteen year sentence.

² [<http://trove.nla.gov.au/picture/result?q=Preece>]

³ [Van Diemen's Land was later renamed Tasmania]

Evan and Margaret continued to live in the parish of Great Swanport until at least 1848. His occupation began as a farm labourer and was later promoted to farmer. ^[4]

On the 20th of February 1851, Evan and Margaret Preece left Launceston Tasmania, for Portland Bay, Victoria on the 'City of Sydney'. They took with them nine of their ten children: George, John, Jane, Mary, Michael, Evan, James, Thomas and William. While birth records exist for three of their children, Mary (born 04.12.1843), Evan (born 13.04.1845) and Thomas (born 14.11.1848), there is also a birth record for another daughter, Maria (born 25.02.1847). Maria was not listed as being on board the 'City of Sydney' in 1851, plus there are no records for any deaths on board the ship. This leads us to believe that Maria Preece had died somewhere between 1847 and 1851. Despite the fact that death records were kept in Van Diemen's Land at the time, no record of her could be found. As for births, they were not legally required to be registered in Van Diemen's Land until the late 1830's and did not become common practice until the mid-1840's. Since Evan nor Margaret could read nor write, and that only four of the seven births were recorded prior to 1847, it seems strange that there are no records of the three births that occurred between 1848 and 1851, after compulsory records had been introduced. We can conclude that not all records were enforced by the government of the day, which may have been what prompted the Preece's to leave Launceston in the first place.

After disembarking from the 'City of Sydney' at Portland Bay, Victoria, Evan, Margaret and the children, travelled by foot towards Mount Gambier, situated in the Southeast of South Australia. A report in the Mount Gambier newspaper, 'The Border Watch', describes how the family were found lost and hungry near the Victoria, South Australia border on the Edge of Mount Shank station by station workers. The owner arranged for provisions to be sent to them. To repay his kindness, Evan worked at Mount Shank station for some time.

Evan died in 1860 and was buried in the Mount Gambier cemetery. He was reunited with his wife after she passed away on the 22nd of October 1877, aged 67. During their time together, Margaret and Evan had eleven children, the youngest was only eight years when his father died. We have already mentioned George, John, Michael and Jane, who were four of the nine that were born in Tasmania. Mary was number five and deserves an honourable mention for having twenty-two children after she married Mr Alfred J. Hateley, yet there were only one set of twins among the siblings. There sheer number dictates that they are well known in Mount Gambier district.

The sixth child for Margaret and Evan was Evan junior, born in 1845, and was followed by the mysterious Maria who had died before 1851. Then came Thomas Preece, who became a government official of Mt Gambier in his later years. The ninth was James Preece who made a name for himself in Sandford, Victoria. William Joseph Preece was number ten and was born in 1850, while our eleventh child, Alexander John Preece, was the only south Australian in the family, born in 1852 at Mount Gambier. It is with Alex that our story continues, since he is my grandmothers, grandfather.

⁴ [The birth records of their children show that they remained in Great Swanport.]

~2~

~ Alexander and Jane Preece ~

Alexander John Preece was born in Mount Gambier, in South Australia's Southeast. It's a beautiful place with a big blue lake that doubles as a water supply, where the water congregates into an inactive volcano. Talk about one of nature's great wonders. Alex's father was a convict from Somerset in England and, to cut a long story short, he married and made his way to Mount Shank, which is also another inactive volcano in the Mount Gambier region.

Although the volcano in Mount Shank is not as big, the soil is fantastic for farming, which was how they made a living.



Alexander John Preece, born 1852. [5]

Life in Mount Gambier was far from complex, yet there was plenty of work to be done. Alex was the youngest of eleven children, of which eight were boys. Growing up as the youngest is most often met with mixed emotions. Everyone else in the family has more experience, is more educated and has had more life lessons to learn from. As a toddler Alex was learning to crawl while everyone else is either walking past or running rings around him. When Alex finally learned to run, everyone else is taller and faster, even if they are only two years older. Being the youngest is like being the runt of the litter, always being pushed aside and your opinions are flawed with inexperience and most often ignored. Yet when there is work to be done, you're expected to not only pitch in, but catch up. Consequently, Alex hated the farming life since he could never get approval for what he could do, and because it was family, he was ridiculed for what he couldn't do. If he tried to argue or discuss his poor treatment, his brothers were not only bigger, they had no problem giving him a fat lip or a bruised rib. Plus their father thought that fighting was a natural part of growing up. Headlocks were the easiest and most common form of torture from his siblings, which is why Alex chose a profession that got him away from farming and away from his family.

Horse training became his passion but training was not about bullying animals into submission, as most people saw it; it was about respect between a horse and its rider. For the horse, it was about learning a new

⁵ [Picture supplied by Peter Vesely]

language and forming a partnership with a rider. It took time and patience before a horse would even accept a rider let alone obey one.

Horses were the largest form of transport throughout this vast Australian land, yet more importantly, horses were a reliable asset to farming and agriculture. All Australians had respect for these animals, especially since they were the biggest and strongest in the relationship. You can't call the family horse a pet, but they were well looked after as if they were one. A rider bonds with their horse as if the horse was their big brother, their comrade in arms, or even their best buddy. A horse and rider was a partnership that is as close as an inseparable friendship. Yet it is also about teamwork, where one has to lead so that the other can follow. To train these horses is an emotionally rewarding experience, especially when they are handed over to their owners. This gave Alex, not only great personal reward, but an income as well. It gave him self-confidence and self-belief which was enough fuel for life, and enough courage to find himself a partner.

Alex was approaching his mid-twenties and the love of his life was a Scottish born lass, named Jane Lamont. ^[6] Although getting pregnant out of wedlock was not uncommon, it was frowned upon. So when they found that they were expecting their first child, Alex put their other need aside and decided marriage was the priority. Alex had invited his sister Jane to the wedding, although she had moved to Casterton, in Victoria when she had married about ten years before. His sister Jane had travelled with her husband, Robert Lambert and their three children for the special occasion. Although Alex was happy to see his sister at their wedding, he didn't realise that Robert and Jane had a proposition for the young couple, to go back with them and train horses. They wasted no time in getting there.

The wedding was in 1877 and in May the same year there was a sports event that was taking off, as the Victorian Football Association was formed. It should keep the city folk busy on the weekends. Chester won the Melbourne Cup that year and the population was estimated to have reached the two million mark. It had not even been ninety years since the arrival of the First Fleet, and already people were worried if the country could sustain so many people. Anyway, back to Alex.

The baby was a girl and they named her Margaret Jane Preece. She was given the name 'Margaret' after Alex's mother who was not well at the time. They added the 'Jane' to honour their new life, thanks to his sister Jane. As for Alex, he was not that accustomed to babies, or young children for that matter. He may have come from a large family, but as the youngest, he spent more time trying to win the approval of his older siblings, not give it. Consequently, he spent most of his time on horseback, especially when infants were around. Alex's role as a horse trainer also spilled over into droving, which meant some nights were spent sleeping under the stars and with a baby home, that's exactly where he preferred to be. He would boil the billy over a campfire and hunt rabbits to satisfy his hunger. He also made damper which is bread that is left to cook overnight in the coals of an extinguished flame. Fresh damper in the morning would almost melt in your mouth, but there was work to be done as well. The horses needed water and grazing the night before, and in the morning it was saddling up the horses

⁶ [Jane Lamont was born 1855 Argyllshire, Scotland. Father Allen, mother Jane nee MacLane.]

and getting those sheep to their new owner, since that's how a drover earns his wage. This was the reality that Alex understood; he had no idea why babies cried.

Casterton was open terrain and sometimes neighbours were too far away for socialising, but luckily Alex's wife Jane was with people who cared for her. Robert and sister-in-law Jane, kept that isolated feeling down to a minimum, as well as provide advice about the baby, since they had learnt from raising three children of their own. This gave both the girls time to do their cross-stitching, which would hang on the wall when they had finished. Jane's first one said, 'Home, Sweet Home'. Cross-stitch was a form of entertainment, which is why Jane would only do her hobby after she had hand washed all the dirty clothes, made the beds, fed the chickens and made sure the animals had water and the horses had enough feed. These were all tasks that could be done with a child sitting on your hip. Jane was content in her new environment, and it wasn't long before she was expecting another baby. During their three-year stay in Casterton, young Allan was born. It was soon after his birth that work had taken the family Southeast, to a place called Sandford.

These were supposed to be happy times for a husband and a wife with two children, but for Jane it was a lot of hard work looking after two children when she became pregnant with the third. Over the next two years little Jane junior and Alexander junior were born. It was now four kids demanding their mother's attention.

As for Alex, his line of work was consistent with a builder, farmer and drover. He made and mended fences, erected stables and sheds; he chopped wood for the fire and then stacked it into a storage shed close to the back door, which unintentionally helped to attract spiders. His biggest building project was the long drop; virtually a hole in the ground with a toilet seat on top. Once that was done, a shed like structure was built around it for privacy, where three walls and a door turned it into an outhouse. It was called an outhouse because it was built out the backyard away from the house to keep the smell away, as well as those god-dam flies. There were thousands of the little buggers; it was ridiculous how they found a toilet fragrance appealing. With the necessities complete, Alex found himself spending long hours training horses at the stables, or was away droving, transporting horses and sheep. Even though these were pioneer days when families were semi-isolated and family was the only company, Alex was hardly at home, let alone having input into the raising of their children.

Placing his skill of fatherhood aside, Alex was highly regarded as a competent horse trainer. Even though most people didn't like his methods, they were impressed with the results. As we said before, horses were invaluable for transport and farming. They were a necessity for pioneering Australia, as were a good pair of shoes, since most people spent the best part of the day riding or walking.

There were no race horses in his repertoire, but there were plenty of work horses that Alex had trained. Just getting a horse to accept a saddle took time and patience. It was a whole other story to train a good droving horse, as speed and agility were needed to get around the sheep. Riders needed to

be trained as well, to get the horse to respond to the bridle, which was used to directed and re-directed the horse quickly and swiftly. Then there were the Clydesdales, the work horses. These horses were heavy, yet strong and reliable. They were often placed in teams for pulling ploughs, buckboards and wagons. The wagons only needed one or two horses to pull the weight, but ploughing needed muscle, and sometimes there would be up to six Clydesdales to a team, for the soil can be harsh and the days can be long.



Ploughing the harsh soil.

When all the horses were trained in Sandford, the family moved to sheep country, to the town of Merino in Victoria, where their next child was born. When Murdoch arrived, little Margaret was seven. He mother Jane was slowly teaching her to help around the house. There was only enough work for a year in Merino before the family travelled across the border to a little town that is not really on the map. The only way to find Teatrick is to look up Teatrick Road, a little way out of Bordertown. Where the road ends, that is Teatrick.

Margaret was ten when her baby brother, John, became the sixth child to be born into the family. Margaret had become like so many other first-born children who had been given too much responsibility at an early age. Although she was great with the kids she was also a bully at times. As for the eight year-old Allan, he was starting to rebel against her methods and was prepared to argue with her when she went overboard. Even though he was younger, because he was a boy he felt he was stronger, which gave him the confidence to stand up to her, just in case their arguments came down to a fight. Luckily it never did, or so we've been told, however, slowly but surely Allan began to show compassion for the younger children as he found himself responding to what seemed like injustice from Margret. It was as if he was being caught in the middle, trying to negotiate with his older sister who was demanding and aggressive, while being punished by his mother

when Margaret complained that Allan wasn't helping. Allan may have only been eight, but he had already displayed a heart for the underdog. As for his father Alex, he was proud of his first-born son, but like so many dads, he had never taken the time to tell him. What he did make time to do, was to teach Allan to ride a horse. The ability to ride was almost as basic as the ability to walk to these early pioneers. The first time Allan was placed on a horse by his father, he sat high in the saddle and looked down, the ground looks so far away for a young boy. Then the command comes as Alex tells his son to kick the beast. The boy had a horrid look on his face as he turned to his instructor. It was a look as if he was stepping into a boxing ring against the heavy weight champion of the world, knowing full well that his destiny was to be beaten to a pulp. With the expression noted by his father, Alex repeats himself, "kick the horse."

Reluctantly the boy digs his heels into the belly of the beast, and then to his surprise, nothing happens. The horse gives a little shake of the head, but does not move a step. The response from his father was a simple bow of the head in disbelief, although he fully expected the result. He raises his head and raises his voice to the boy and says, "Kick the bloody thing".

The boy tries with all his might to dig his heels into the animal, and then with a raised head, the horse slowly takes a few steps forward. Since the boy didn't have a tight grip on the reins, after four or five steps, the horse came to a halt. The horse knew full well that his rider was not in control. It was as if the horse was thinking, 'either give me some instructions, or I'm off to eat grass.' A horse needs to understand the intent of the rider if this partnership is going to work. The bridle is the metal bit in the horse's mouth that the reins are connected to in order to steer the horse, and the kick in the horse's belly is the accelerator. As for the boy, he eventually learnt that to a big horse, being kicked is hardly noticeable, that is why it required a little more effort than what Allan was prepared to give. Allan mastered it eventually as did his younger brothers when they were old enough. Alex educated all of his sons in the informal pioneer school of riding, which lay the foundations for their future as drovers and horse trainers.

What they didn't have was a formal education, as schools were still being established in Australia and were still not available where these children lived. It was the same for Alex and Jane, who themselves could neither read nor write, let alone teach their children the craft. That doesn't mean that life does not school a child with the skills and education for adulthood. Alex had learnt to train horses well enough to pass on his trade to his children. Jane learnt to cook while the whole family also learnt to farm, build, clean and communicate in an ever-growing family. All the work around the farm was for their survival and money was also needed for the things they couldn't do themselves. So they moved to where they could earn it.

From Teatrick, it was onward to Custon which lies in South Australia and butts up against the Victorian border. Alex managed to work for nearly two years in Custon where Jessie Elizabeth was born. She was a pretty little baby and quiet as well. Some say she was quiet because she received a lot of attention from the other children, especially Margaret and Allan. It was while in Custon that Alex had learnt workers were needed at the railway yard in Wolseley, just a few miles north of Teatrick. So by 1890 the Preece family

had acquired a new home, a new job and another new baby. Mary Ann was the new addition, and while her mother took care of her, Margaret and Allan were in their teens, taking good care of the other siblings. Margaret helped with the washing, which also caused some arguments with the boys, since they were notorious for grime and odours, and yet managed to avoid the housework. There was work outside that needed attention, such as chopping wood for the fire. Wood was needed all year round as the stove had to be stocked with wood to do the cooking and boil the kettle for a cup of tea, which is why everyone congregated into the kitchen, especially in winter. There were small gardens out the back to grow a few veggies that went down well at the evening meal and mum cooked the daily bread. By the time they had moved to Wolseley, Margaret was thirteen and was efficient in her home duties, which meant she had no need for an education. Allan was only eleven and hadn't been to school before, but even though he already knew how to ride a horse, the school here was close enough to walk. Allan didn't think he needed an education as he already knew how to ride horses and envisioned his future as a drover, or even a horse trainer like his dad.

Wolseley was where Allan's maternal instincts were free to shine. Allan was a natural at caring for the little ones and had great joy in escorting them to the school. It was time to get an education. School was slightly different for boys and girls. Although they both received instruction in the basic subjects of reading, writing and maths, the girls also spent 80 minutes of the day sewing, knitting and darning, while the boys spent this time learning geometry, geography and more arithmetic. The days commenced with the teacher inspecting the pupils to see that their face and hands had been washed, their hair combed and their clothes neat, and where necessary, had been darned. Thirty minutes of each day was also taken up with singing; however, the teachers primarily tried to instil into the children the advantages of being orderly, clean, punctual, decent and courteous. Manners were, first and foremost, the most important quality taught at schools during the pioneer days. ^[7]

Margaret was so jealous, and if you thought she was a bully before, you should see her now that the others were going to school and she will be the only one to miss out. Allan didn't know what she was complaining about, since there were only two kids left at home for her to look after. Mum would care for the new born while Margaret would look after John, who was three. The one year-old, Jessie could be carried around on her hip while John chased the dog around the backyard. Allan got all the others, Jane, who was nine now, the young eight year-old Alec and Murdoch who was six. Granted, they sort of look after themselves, but if anything went wrong, it was Allan who got punished with the belt. School was so great, it was worth putting up with their angry older sister. However, Margaret was not one to miss out and at every opportunity had coaxed Allan into helping her to read and write; she didn't want to be like her illiterate mother, who was almost constantly pregnant.

⁷ [IFHAA Australian Schools]

As for the provider of the family, Alex got a steady income and steady work on the railways. He was in charge of the horses for Smith & Timms Railway Construction, but the days were long.

The railway station in Wolseley was the hub of the farming industry ever since the railway line had been completed three years before. Grain, sheep and cattle were transported to and from Melbourne and Adelaide, while some of the locals also worked on the railway line, extending it towards Mount Gambier. The working day had remained the same since 1860, with 7am starts, and it was all go until 6pm. Dinner better be on the table because a man was hungry when he got home. Alex would be in no mood for dealing with the kids either, children are to be seen and not heard, which was the old cliché that many family men lived by in the early days. Besides, it has been a long day and a man needs to wind down, rather than make decisions for children. Jane understood that, and the family worked around it. This was a male dominated world, it wasn't as if women had the right to vote or anything.

Alexander Jr., or Alec, as I like to call him, was so engulfed with Wolseley. Although the family lived on a property where your life revolves around the tasks at home, Wolseley was like a treasure to the senses. To an eight year-old Wolseley had it all, a school, neighbours, shops and a railway station. It had places to play, such as the grain storage sheds, where kids would walk on the grain as it acted like quicksand. No-one thought it was dangerous back then. Wolseley was virtually a small town that also provided their father with a good income with horses or sheep on all the surrounding farms. As the boys became men, both Allan and Alec were kept in steady work as drovers, since they were competent horse riders. Their dad not only trained horses well, he also taught the boys to ride confidently with or without a saddle. Over the next few years, Alex taught his boys everything he knew about horse training, so that the horses were reliable and devoted to their owner.

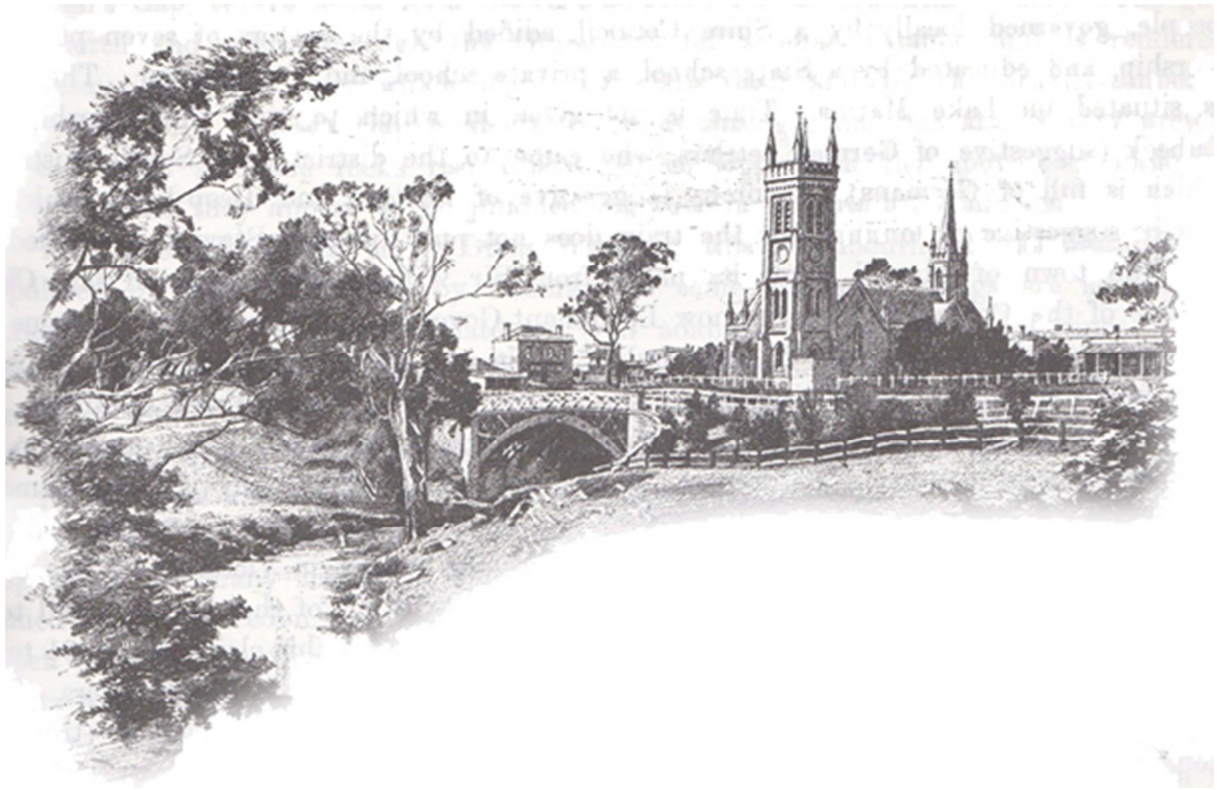
Baby number nine was George. He was born in 1892 and then Hannah in 1895. When the calendar flicked over to 1896, the Olympics Games hit the newspapers. The school teacher at Wolseley was reading the results from the local paper, where most of the medals were won by Americans. However, their interest laid in an Australian from Victoria who won two gold medals in the running. Our Aussie, Edwin Flack, won the 800 metre and 1500 metre races. The Olympic committee had never heard of Australia and chose the Austrian national anthem to play when Edwin had won. The Union Jack was still raised up the flag pole, which was acceptable since the British had paid for him to get to Athens, Greece, where the event was held. Although Edwin was a competent tennis player, he was knocked out in the first round, which did not deter him from running in the marathon. This race was considered to be the most prestigious event on the Olympic program. However, Edwin did not finish the gruelling 26 mile race because of the local beverages that were on offer along the course. To put it bluntly, Edwin drank a little too much of the delicious wine that was available and collapsed from overindulgence. All the runners were offered the same beverages by the locals, who were just being friendly. The idea was to quench their thirst, not to take them out of the running. Nevertheless, he scored the first two gold medals for the land

from down under, and sent a message to all the young boys, inspiring them for the next Olympics, or at least that was what John was thinking. He would run home from school all excited, racing against all the other kids along the way. They would draw lines in the dirt out the back and pretend they were at the Olympics. John was nine but was always a close second to the fourteen year-old Alec. John was fast for his age. The following year, the baby boy of the family was born; he was named August. The older siblings were already set to tease him for it, but they had to wait until he was old enough to understand. Why would anyone name a child after a month, I'll never know.

1899 was a year to remember, one that was filled with mixed emotions. Margaret was turning 22 this year and although by looking at some of the local girls, it seemed that women had to get pregnant before they could get married around here, yet this was not the case for Margaret. His name was Francis and although he was a gentleman, his name was a horrible name for a man, which is not just my opinion. As Francis was growing up, he was constantly teased beyond compare, which, I guess, toughened him up a little. As for Jane, she was pregnant again with baby number twelve. They were hoping for a girl to make it six of each, both six boys and six girls, but Jane was having problems this time. She was forty-four now and the doctor told her she was too old to bear children without a lot of bed rest and frequent hospital care, a luxury she could not afford. Allan was nineteen when his younger sister Susan was born. A child's birth had always been a joyful occasion in the Preece household, but not this time. The doctor said the baby was just not strong enough to survive. Susan only lived for an hour.

Allan was accustomed to deaths, but they were animals, such as sheep, lambs or dogs. He had even killed a fox himself once, but that did not compare to losing a sister. The whole family was devastated and it caused division and anxiety at home. For the younger ones it created problems at school as well. George, Mary, Jessie and John were still at school, but their minds were not. Consequently, their grades fell away, not that their grades were that great in the first place, but it was obvious that they were distracted. Grieving can be a strange process as they didn't even realise that their sister's death was the cause of their anger and outbursts. They were kids; they did not have the knowledge to understand their emotions, and counselling was unheard of, it was considered to be for the weak. Murdoch was fifteen that year so he left school to help out at home. He got a job at the railways with his dad and his two older brothers. Jane was inconsolable for ages and never had any more children after that. Margaret still got married to Francis Edward Jolly on the 13th of November 1899, at a beautiful church in Strathalbyn. This delightful country town was the attraction of travellers passing overland between Adelaide and Melbourne. The River Angus runs through the town and its population consists of the industrious and well-to-do people. I would have to say that only the rich can live there, but their hospitality is enchanting, and the surrounding views are picturesque. It was

the perfect place for a wedding before they moved to Goolwa to start a better life and a family of their own. ^[8]



Strathalbyn, South Australia.

⁸ [Drawing of Strathalbyn - Australia's first century *Fine Art Press* 1989, page 753]

~3~

~ 1900, the Turn of the Century ~

The turn of the century is an emotional time where everyone seems to look to the future. It marks a time in history that not everyone is able to obtain. We all have New Year's resolutions, but watching the calendar click over into a new century, makes you think of plans that are much longer than just for a year. We all know we are not immortal and a new century reminds us of our limitations and the desire to make the best of what we have.

As for the athletically minded in the family, their attention had turned again to the newspaper as the next Olympics Games were held in France. The first of the modern Olympics Games were held four years ago and were attended by as many as 280 athletes, all male, coming from 12 countries. However, in 1900 women also competed, although they were dressed in formal attire. I love the tie. It was Frederick Lane who won two gold medals in the swimming for Australia, yet it was the runner, Stan Rowley that the Preece boys wanted to read about. Stan was Australia's only competitor on the athletic field. He entered the sprint races, the 60, 100 and 200 metre events, taking the bronze medal in all three. As for Lane, although he won the 200 metre freestyle and obstacle races, he did not receive any gold medals, but instead was rewarded with two bronze sculptures, one of a horse and the other a peasant girl. There were questions left, right and centre about an obstacle event in swimming. Apparently there were three obstacles throughout the 200 metre course. Swimmers had to climb over the first two, which was a pole and a row of boats, and swim under the third, which was another row of boats. I'm not surprised that this was the only year it was featured. ^[10]



Charlotte Cooper of Great Britain, one of the first individual female Olympic Champion. ^[9]

By July of 1900 Alex had turned 48 and was struggling with the work at the railways. He still desired to ride so he became a boundary rider at the Nalang Station, checking and repairing fences, and again sleeping under the stars. Nalang Station was first settled in the 1840s when a grazing lease was taken out by Loudon McLeod. The surrounding area was known as 'Tatiara' which was supposedly a local Aboriginal name for 'good country'.

By September, word had reached Wolseley that Margaret gave birth to her first child, a boy that they named Francis Edward Jolly, after his father. A couple



Alice and Frank MacLeod with family at Nalang c. 1866

Nalang Station 1866. ^[11]

⁹ [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/98/Charlotte_Cooper.jpg]

¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia_at_the_1900_Summer_Olympics]

¹¹ [picture courtesy of Peter Vesely]

of months later and Alex was in the papers. The headlines in the local newspaper read, 'Bushfire at Bordertown'. Alex had been working at Nalang Station for about five or six months, when a fire broke out that destroyed the Hayes home on Australia Day, 1901. Police were called in to investigate. Each of the four men who had fought the blaze were questioned, Henry Hayes and his son Edward, Alexander Preece and William Mepstead. Although these men did what they could to extinguish the flames, their efforts were futile compared to the fire's hunger to consume the dry summer grass and was helped along by a gentle summer breeze. About five thousand acres were destroyed, along with some fencing and a few head of sheep. Although the evidence points to a discarded cigarette prior to the wind picking up in the area, the police could not *substantially* conclude as to how the fire started. The only positive conclusion was that it was unintentional.^[12]

Later in the year, Margaret and Francis returned to Wolseley. Margaret had grown accustomed to that big family experience, finding Goolwa isolated and alone. Hey had decided to move back to Wolseley where she was happier; so-much-so that child number two was born a year later. Ernest Vincent Jolly was born on the 18th of August 1902. In Margaret's eye's, the family was all back together again, be it ever so briefly. Nearly two years had passed and another wedding came knocking on the family door. Jane Jr. was all of twenty-three when she married William Thomas Natt in 1904 and moved to Victoria to live. Meanwhile Margaret was pregnant again and was turning out to be more like her mother than she was prepared to admit. Child number three for Margaret was Emily Isabel, born in July of 1904, while number four was Arthur Gilbert Jolly, arriving in June 1906.

1908 was special as August was eleven now. He was having problems at school because of his name, and like me, kids can be cruel. His nick-name started at home but the other kids soon caught on and began calling him 'Angus'. They say it makes him sound like an angry Scotsman, and why not, he soon learnt to fight like one. Over time, even his parents started calling him Angus. It's only a name but it seemed to have lifted his spirits. When he walked he held his head so high with confidence that he seemed to be two inches taller than he was before. Before the year was out Margaret's fifth child was a girl, Phyllis Glen, born on the 26th of October 1908. "Thank God," she said, for it was now three boys and two girls. She was starting to panic that she would be dominated with boys.

The Olympics were special this year. Even though Australia had competed in the last three, this was the first time it was in a combined effort with New Zealand. Australia had a bond with New Zealand as we were both, I won't say discovered, but we both became part of the British Empire due to a man named Captain James Cook. We share that in common, as well as our location as neighbours in the Southern



Australasian Olympic Flag. ^[13]

¹² [Border Chronicle, page 4. Fri 8 Feb. 1901]

¹³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australasia_at_the_1908_Summer_Olympics]

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