

The Wattle Flat Wesleyan Cemetery and a Most Successful Miner of the Turon

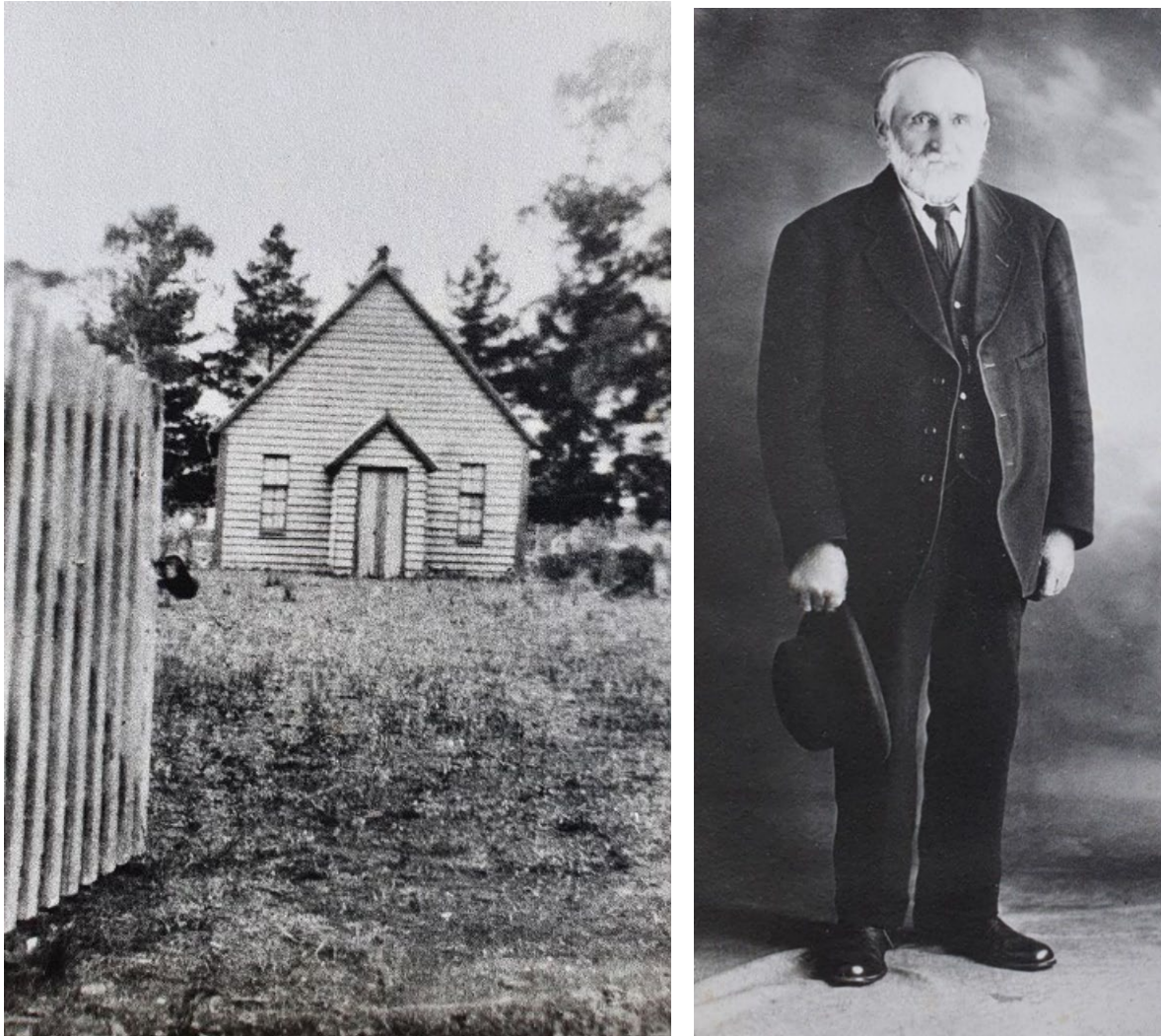


Figure 1: (left) The original Wesleyan Church (right) John (Giavanni) Mini on his 80th birthday dressed how he would like to return to his native Poschiavo, Switzerland as “a most successful miner of the Turon Goldfields”

The Wesleyan church and cemetery, consecrated in 1863, reflect the seeds of a future multi-cultural Australia. The Chinese were not the only ethnic group to come to the Turon Goldfields. Italian-Swiss from Poschiavo, Switzerland, including 18yr old Giovanni (John) Mini and 21yr old school teacher Carlo (Charles) Vassella, came because of the lure of gold and to avoid fighting in the Italian Civil War.

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the Turon Goldfields. Italian-Swiss from Poschiavo, Switzerland, including 18yr old Giovanni (John) Mini and 21yr old school teacher Carlo (Charles) Vassella, came because of the lure of gold and to avoid being drafted into the Austrian army in the Italian Civil War. Around 5% of the male population (approximately 200 men) from Poschiavo came to the Australian gold rushes. Such a departure event was reported in the newspaper, *Il Grigione Italiano*, on 19 October 1859:

“Yesterday morning in the town square of Poschiavo (see Figure 1), you could have witnessed a moving spectacle: another party of 31 men and lads in the prime of life had gathered to set out on the journey to Australia [...]. Their relatives and friends had accompanied them thus far to make their sad farewells”.



Figure 2: Giovanni (John) Mini (left) and Carlo (Charlie) Vassella (right) immigrated to Australia from Poschiavo (above), Switzerland in 1859 and 1860, respectively.

John Mini and Charlie Vassella supported Garibaldi's war against the Papal States, hence their professed Protestantism. John Mini fished first in the Bendigo goldfields. In a letter to his parents, he wrote: "I speculated too much, and I did not manage to do anything, and we lost a considerable sum".

At Wattle Flat, John Mini and Charlie Vassella mined a rich claim on the OK reef near Surface Hill. The NSW Department of Mines Report 1879 for the Sofala Division states:

“The claim of Mini and Vassella still maintains its reputation as one of the richest in the district, being remarkably rich in patches, but from the very hard nature of the rock and the nature of the vein, it is slow work raising the stone. 41 tons from this claim gave the handsome yield of 100ozs (ounces) and 5dwts (pennyweights).”

By 1889, they worked The Big Oakey mine on tribute, discovering a rich vein of gold, unbeknown to the owners. Having bought the lease, over a period of four years from 1891 to 1895, Mini and party mined 2557 ounces of gold worth \$12.5m at today's prices. John Mini, on his 80th birthday, dressed how he would like to return to his native Poschiavo, Switzerland as 'a most successful miner of the Turon Goldfields' (see Figure 1 right).

Sadly, Carlo Vassella died on August 24, 1890 from gangrene as a result of breaking his leg in a mine accident and did not share in this fortune. He made his son promise that he was to be buried here in an unmarked grave and not in the Catholic cemetery. John Mini also had tragedy in his family. His 7yr old son Antonio broke his neck falling from a haystack on their property in 1881. Further, his 14yr old stepdaughter Therese died the same year and his 2yr old daughter Agnes died from possibly measles in 1883. They are buried near Carlo in this cemetery. John Mini's daughter Alma married Cyril Spencer Smith in this church in 1915.

John Mini and Charles Vassella married protestant Scottish sisters, Isabel and Ellen Mitchell, respectively. The sister's father, James Mitchell, who is buried here, was born in Banffshire, Scotland. He and his sons Jimmy and Johnny Mitchell, were respected miners at Surface Hill. He was elected to represent the district in the 1873 Gold Commission.

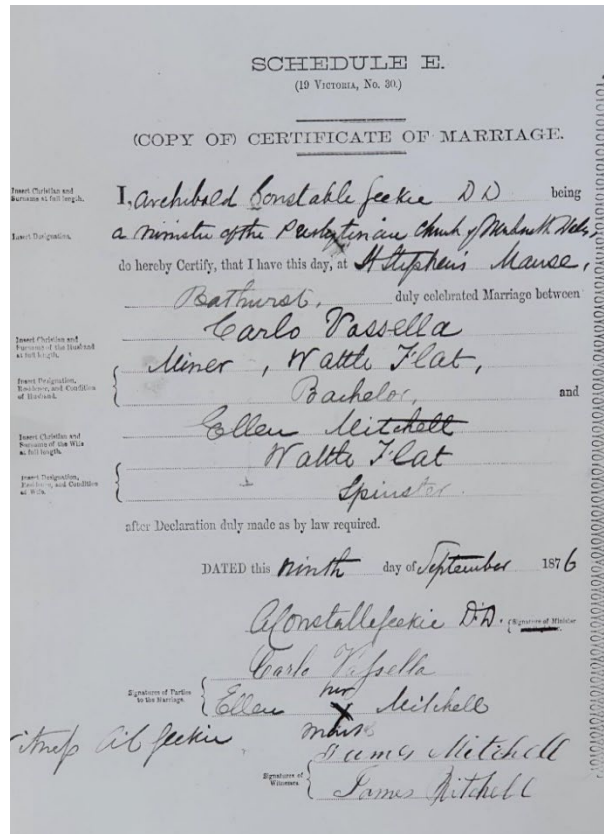


Figure 3: (Left) James Mitchell Snr and four of his children. James Jnr (Jimmy) and John (Johnny) were also prominent miners at Surface Hill. (Right) Carlo Vassella and Ellen Mitchell's Wedding Certificate.

Isabella Mini (Mitchell) was described by Ted Reilly as talkative and a 'live wire', whereas Ellen Vassella (Mitchell) was quiet and gentle. She preferred to stay at home and look after Isabella's daughter, Therese, whilst Isabella went fossicking, after her first husband, John Tilley, died in 1868 (who is buried here). Jim Vassella remembered that his mother Ellen had a deadly throw when killing snakes with a rock. Isabella loved to read till all hours of morning with a candle around her neck. James Jnr ('Jimmy') and John ('Johnny') Mitchell, two brothers of Isabella and Ellen were Wattle Flat identities. Jimmy was tall with a wispy white beard, 'a pillar of respectability', whilst Johnny was shorter, nuggetty, with a big white bushy beard and was legendary for his shyness. Jimmy looked after his brother after Johnny was blown up in a mining accident on Surface Hill before WW1. They lived out in the bush above Little Oakey Creek. Belle Vassella remembers the 'Uncles' on a trip in 1915:

“They would sit at either end of a large table in their bush hut, near Little Oakey, reading the newspaper and swapping the pages under candlelight. They had two fair-sized rooms and the kitchen had a big open fire, where they would put what they called a ‘green log’ at the back, low down on the floor of the fire and ‘dry wood’ at the front- the green log took a long time to burn. Chains hung down from some iron and the kettle and camp oven hung on hooks. That is how they cooked, with room to put pots down at the side. They had an earth floor and Uncle Jimmy terrified me with the story of his pillow moving at night and a snake sliding out from within it and down a hole in the wall.”

Jimmy was the ‘chief cook and bottle wash’ and, in old age, sluiced Little Oakey Creek, building walled banks of stone along the creek to concentrate the stream flow, helping to wash the gold (these rock walls along Little Oakey Creek were classified by the National Trust in 1976). Johnny was a recluse and would only talk to his neighbour Ted Reilly from behind a tree or from within the house. Later, the Mitchell family became prominent in Australian university education. James Mitchell (Snr’s) nephew was Sir William Mitchell who became Vice Chancellor at Adelaide University (1916-1942) and his son Sir Mark Mitchell, Chancellor of Flinders University, His great-grandson, Professor Alex Mitchell, who was Professor of Early English Literature at Sydney University became inaugural vice chancellor at Macquarie University (1965-1975). However, on her marriage certificate, Ellen Mitchell signed her name with an ‘X’ (Figure 3 right).

The Mini-Vassella-Mitchell families, drawn together by the gold rush, represent an emerging and successful multiculturalism of 19th century Australia within the mission of the Wesleyan Church.

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Written and compiled by Dr Robert G. V. Baker.

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→ The Church (link)



Figure 1: Wesleyan Church Wattle Flat c1915 and (right) Alex Pittendrigh, one of the major supporters of building the original church.

The original Wesleyan church was built and consecrated in 1863 with the Reverend George Pickering as the first minister. Alex Pittendrigh was one of the major proponents and supporters of this church (Figure 1). Pittendrigh was born in Aberdeenshire Scotland and was a shoemaker who emigrated in 1841 to work for George Rankin at Eglinton, Bathurst. He joined the gold rush in 1852 and bought land at the 'Green Wattle Flat' (later called 'The Green Man') after the gold discovery there in 1854. He and his family were staunch Methodists. Neary (1940 p.119) reports that to defray the cost of the building, a huge tea party was arranged and strongly supported by the community, raising all the money for the weatherboard construction. The old church was demolished in the 1960s and the current building constructed, still with the support of the Pittendrigh Family.

→ The Cemetery (link)

There are 33 inscriptions recorded in the cemetery (Figure 1, <https://austcemindex.com/?cemid=100>). Not only were members of the Mini, Vassella, Mitchell and Pittendrigh families buried here, but many people or families, who were supporters of the Wesley tradition or members of the Temperance League.



Figure 1: Wesleyan Cemetery Wattle Flat 2004: Source: <https://austcemindex.com/?cemetery=100>)

One of the striking features of 19th century cemeteries are the number of graves of children and many of them unmarked. Infectious diseases were a scourge of families. For example, in Wattle Flat in the first five months of 1868, there were 8 fatalities of children from the possible Sydney measles outbreak of 1867 (John Rushton 2yr, 25/3/1868; Thomas Duggan 4m, 27/3/1868; Edwin Ellis 3d, 13/4/1868; Mary McDonald 2yr, 17/4/1868; Alice Brockwell 3yr, 19/4/1868; David Bennett 3yr, 26/4/1868; Maria Sheldon 23m, 2/5/1868; George Storey 2yr, 5/5/1868: <https://gutenberg.net.au/hill-end/namelist-deathdateorder.html>). There are still a number of marked children's graves in this cemetery, reflecting sacred spaces for the families and community.



Figure 2: The Graves of the Rutter and Caugherty Families in 1915 and 2024

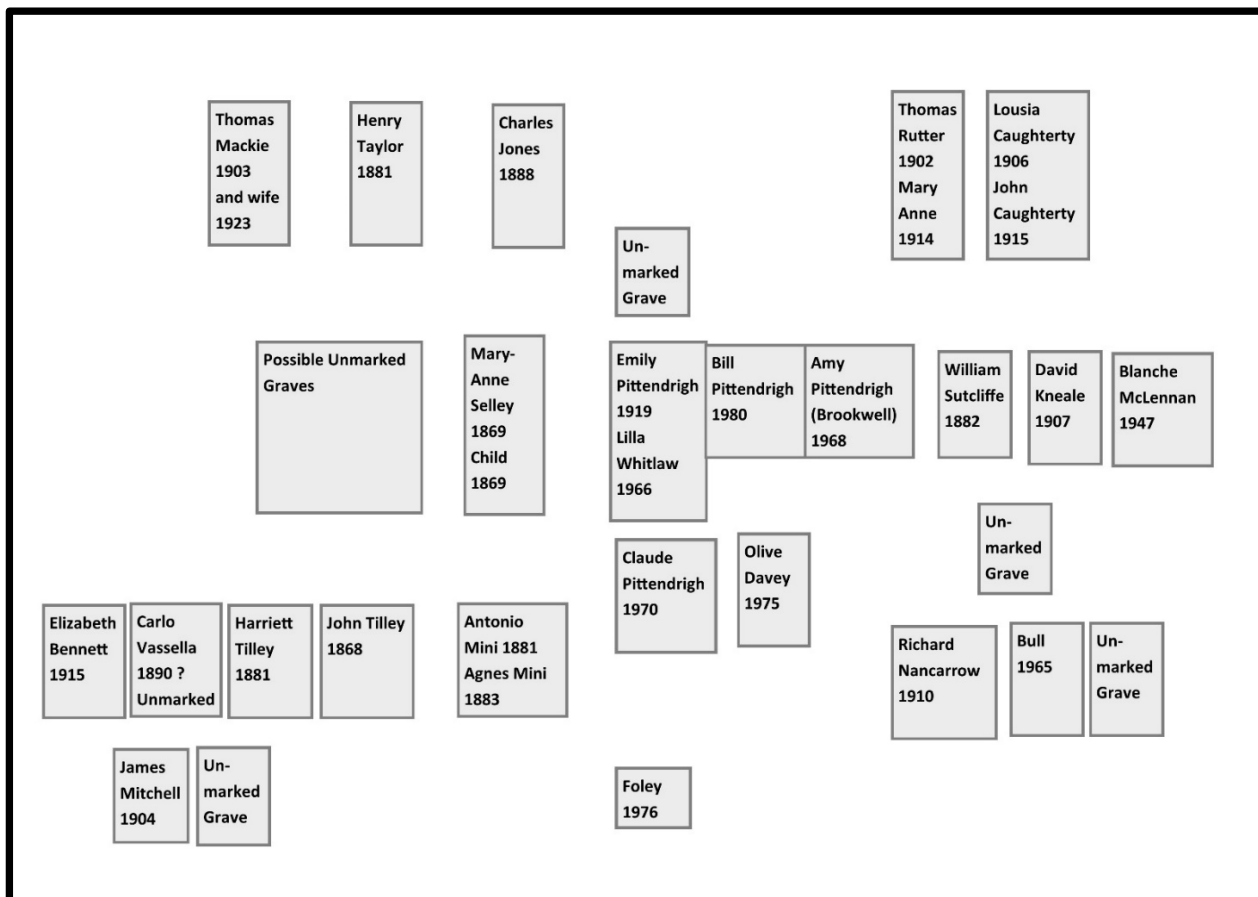


Figure 3: Map of Graves observed by Robert Baker from his 1975 Note Book.

→ Cemetery Links to Individual Graves

- Emily Pittendrigh's Grave and William Pittendrigh's Memorial
- Bill and Amy Pittendrigh's Grave
- The Graves of Olive Pittendrigh (Davey) and Lilla Pittendrigh (Whitelaw)
- The Grave of Claude Arthur Pittendrigh and Memorial Plaques of Alexander Pittendrigh and Claude Pittendrigh
- Carlo Vassella's Grave
- John Mini's Family Graves
- James Mitchell's Grave
- Allan and Flora Carmichael's Graves
- John and Louisa Caugherty's Graves

- **Richard Nancarrow's Grave**
- **David Kneale's Grave**
- **Thomas and Isabella Mackie's Graves**
- **The Oldest Tombstone: Mary Anne Selley 1869**
- **Thomas and Mary Anne Rutter's Grave**
- **Other Marked and Unmarked Graves: William Sutcliffe,
Elizabeth Bennett; Charles Jones; Henry Taylor; Blanche
McLennan; Unmarked Graves**

Link → Emily Pittendrigh's Grave and William Pittendrigh's Memorial



William Pittendrigh was born in Bathurst in 1847 and started a blacksmithing apprenticeship in 1862 with Francis Halliday, a Bathurst coachbuilder. His father Alex Pittendrigh built a property 'The Brae' on the Limekilns Road and took up gold

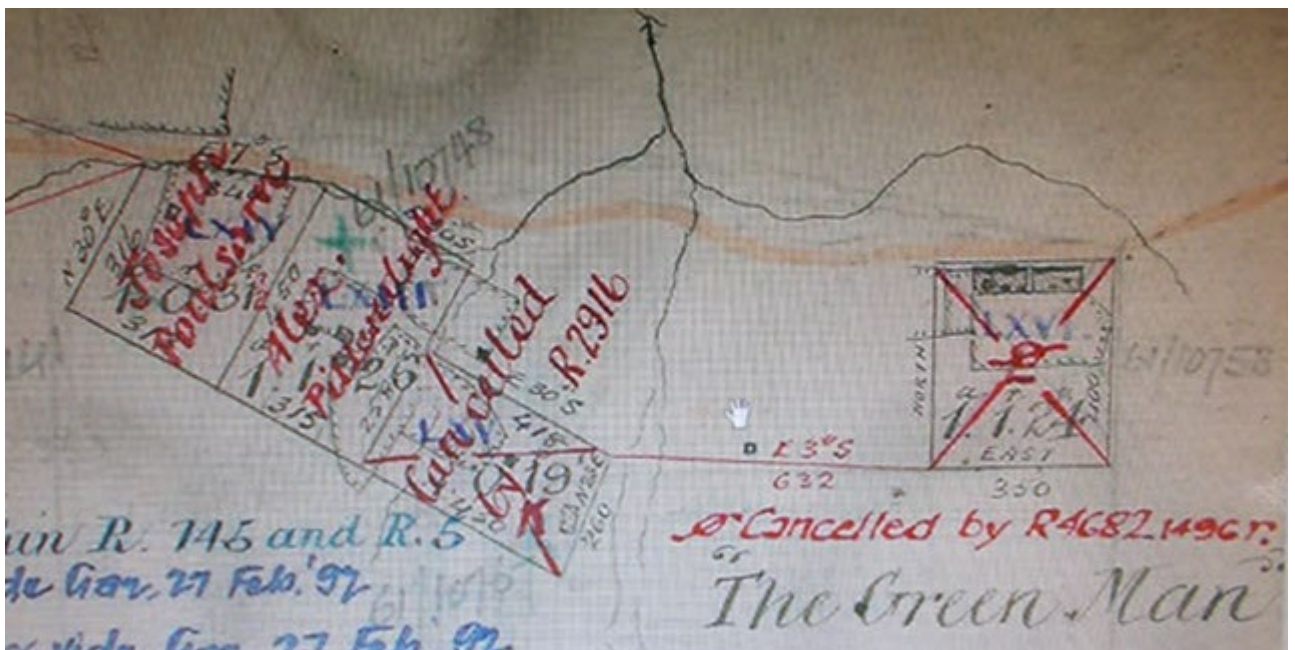


Figure 1: 'The Green Man' including Alex Pittendrigh's block in c1862

leases with his son Samuel. He was also a major supporter for the construction of a Methodist Church at Wattle Flat. William Pittendrigh purchased the Halliday Coach-building business in 1870 and relocated his business to Bendinck Street (Figure 3). There he made coaches for the next 27 years and an advertisement in 1889 stated:

“Pittendrigh and Co make coaches, sociable, buggies and village carts on premises or made to order at moderate prices.” National Advocate Newspaper, Nov 1889.



Figure 2: (Left) William Pittendrigh married Emily Jane Blackman (right) in 1874

William Pittendrigh married Emily Jane Blackman from Peel in 1873 and they had eight children: Percy, Keith, William Alexander, Lilla (Whitelaw), Olive (Davey), Emily and Claude. With rising competition from the US imports, William closed the factory in 1897 and returned to ‘The Brae’ at the ‘The Green Man’ at Wattle Flat. He opened up a blacksmith shop and carriage building premises at Wattle Flat and worked there with his sons, until 1922, when he died in Sydney. There is a memorial plaque for him in the cemetery.



Figure 3: 'The Pittendrigh and Co.' Coach-building Premises Bendinck St (1871-1897).

His wife Emily Jane Blackman (who is buried here) was the daughter of George Blackman from Kelso. Her uncle James Blackman (Jnr) was the chief constable and superintendent of works at Bathurst from 1825-1831 (Figure 4). In 1820, as an explorer, he marked the first road from Bathurst to Wallerawang, New South Wales. He later headed northeast from base camp, which was near the modern town of Wallerawang. He travelled through modern-day Cullen Bullen in the direction of Mudgee. James Blackman then 'set out' with a party of four other people to explore the country north of Bathurst. In this excursion, which took place between the end of August and beginning of November 1821, he succeeded in first reaching the river, called by the indigenous people, 'Cugeegang' (now Cudgegong), and following the river, he discovered the native locality of 'Mougee,' 'Moudgee' or 'Moregee,' or as it is known today as Mudgee. In 1822, James Blackman travelled with Percy Simpson to the Wellington District and established a convict settlement which was originally called "Blackman's Swamp". In 1846 the name of this district was changed to Orange. Emily Blackman's father, George Blackman held no government positions, but bought a farm in Bathurst in 1837 and a property at Kelso. She married William

Pittendrigh in 1874. Emily is buried in this cemetery with four of her children (Lilly Whitelaw, William (Bill) Pittendrigh and Olive Davy and an infant child). She was described in the Mudgee Guardian on Sept 17 1919:

“Mrs Pittendrigh was a lady of high attainments, who was highly esteemed and greatly loved by all who were privileged to be her friends.”



Figure 4: (Right) James Blackman who explored the Mudgee and Orange Districts and (Left) his brother George Blackman, Emily's father.

Link → Bill and Amy Pittendrigh's Grave



William Pittendrigh's son, William (Bill) Alexander Pittendrigh (1887-1980) grew up on 'The Brae' at the Green Man at Wattle Flat. In the 1903 census, his father William was listed as a miner. Bill was apprenticed at Fairfax and Sons as a lino-type operator for the Sydney Morning Herald and later learnt French Polishing, before returning to Wattle Flat to work in the blacksmith shop. He branched out into carpentry and plumbing and built up a land holding of 600 acres at 'The Green Man'. He also had properties in the Wattle Flat township.



Figure 1: Bill Pittendrigh sitting on the veranda of 'The Brae' Wattle Flat with his mother Emily and father William c1900

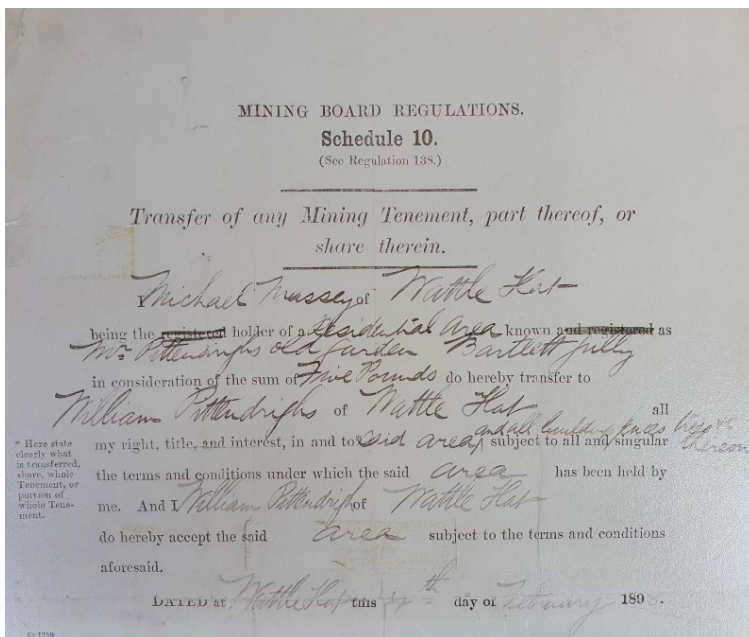


Figure 2: (Above) Young Bill Pittendrigh sitting at the entrance of an alluvial shaft at the Green Man. (Below) A mining lease transferred to his father William from a Michael Massey, in 1898, being a residential area of 'Mr Pittendrigh's old garden Bartlett's Gully'.

Bill Pittendrigh married Amy Brockwell in the Anglican Church of Wattle Flat on 19th April 1919. Amy was the daughter of John and Catherine Brockwell, a mining family living at Wattle Flat who were present in the 1878-79 Census and continued in the

district until after WW1. *The National Advocate Bathurst*, Tue 22 Apr 1919, page 2 recorded the wedding as:

“A pretty wedding was celebrated at Wattle Flat on Saturday in the Holy Trinity Church, which was artistically decorated, the contracting parties being Amy, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Brockwell, ‘Brooklyn’, Wattle Flat and William A., third son of Mr. William Pittendrigh, of ‘The Brae’, Wattle Flat. The Rev. Warren Carr was the officiating clergyman. The bride, who was given away by her father, looked charming attired in her bridal array, consisting of a white crepe de chine frock, with the customary wreath and veil, the latter being lent for the occasion by her sister-in-law (Mrs. Arthur Brockwell, of Sydney). The bridegroom's presents to the bride consisted of a handsome wristlet watch and purse of sovereigns; she also carried a beautiful bouquet, also the gift of the bridegroom. Her present to the bridegroom was a handsome set of military brushes. Miss Olive Pittendrigh (sister of the bridegroom) was bridesmaid, being attired in a most becoming frock of pink crepe de chine, with hat to match, and she carried a silver hand-bag, the latter being the gift of the bridegroom. Mr. W. H. Kneale, of Wattle Flat, was best man. As the bride entered the church, the choir, under the direction of Miss Reilly, sang *The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden*. After the service, to the strains of the *Wedding March*, played by Mrs. Carr, wife of the Rev. Warren Carr, the happy couple left the church and repaired to the home of the bride, where the usual toasts were honoured. Later, Mr. and Mrs. Pittendrigh left by motor for Bathurst, thence by train for the metropolis, where the honeymoon is to be spent. The bride's travelling costume was a brown coat and skirt, with hat to match. The presents, which were numerous and serviceable included one from the Wattle Flat Tennis Club, and another from the members of the Holy Trinity Church, Wattle Flat, of which the bride was an organist for the last 12 years. The mother of the bride wore a nice costume of black chiffon taffeta, with touches of white. Mrs. Hilton Carmichael (sister of the bride), was attired in a frock of nattier blue crepe de chine with a black hat. Mrs. Arthur Attwood (sister of the bride-groom) was also attired in a frock of bottle green taffeta, while Miss Lila Pittendrigh wore a brown taffeta frock.”



Figure 3: Bill and Amy Pittendrigh on their wedding day April 1919 at Wattle Flat Anglican Church

Bill Pittendrigh was very involved in community events and he was prominent in Wattle Flat civic life. Over time, he was Secretary of the Wattle Flat Common, Recreation Ground Management, Race Club and the Bush Fire Brigade. He was also a local correspondent for any news from Wattle Flat for the local newspapers which sometimes brought him into conflict with other residents.

I met Bill Pittendrigh in 1975, aged 88 years, when he was a resident in the Macquarie Homes, Bathurst. I was interviewing the surviving members of the old Wattle Flat families and Bill was at the top of my list. Staff had alerted me to a piece he had written in the Macquarie Homes Newsletter about the burial of the 'Last Chinaman at Wattle Flat'- Ah Hung (see The Bush Cemetery- Ah Hung's Grave <https://www.bathurstregion.com.au/bathurst-region-villages/wattle-flat/the-bush-cemetery/>)

I drove Bill to Wattle Flat at Easter 1976 where he showed me where he had buried Ah Hung in the General Cemetery along the Limekilns Road.

Appendix: Macquarie Homes Monthly Newsletter, October 1974.

The Burial of the Last Chinaman by Bill Pittendrigh

“Once there were hundreds of Chinese at Wattle Flat”, said Bill Pittendrigh, “but over the years, they dwindled away. Some died, some moved to other goldfields, some took up market gardening, some even went home to China. They had all gone but one. He lived alone in a dilapidated old shack on the outskirts of the village.

We used to see the old fellow now and again, trudging down to the post office to collect his pension, or to store for a meagre supply of tea or flour. It's seldom that he spoke to us- seldom that we spoke to him. He was a lonely old man. His name? Perhaps it was 'Ah Hung'. Or maybe John. We called them 'John'. I can't remember. It was a long time ago.

He had been dead several hours before someone came to tell me. I hurried at once to his shack and found a group of locals outside, undecided about going in. “Come on”, I cried. “Let's see what we can do for the poor man”. “Not me”, one of them said flatly “I'm not going in there!”. He turned and strode off. One by one the others drifted away. I knew they were afraid. I pushed the door inwards and entered the hut. When my eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, I saw that the interior was a terrible mess. The bed was up-ended, clothes flung everywhere, and the old man's body stripped, lying on a crumpled heap against the wall. The ground where the bed had been scraped clean. The entire place had been very thoroughly searched. What were they looking for? Gold? He hadn't done prospecting in years. Money? The man had been on the pension, receiving just enough to keep body and soul together. Well, he would need a coffin. There was no money for that, nor for an undertaker. I went home to talk it over with my sister, Olive. She agreed and if I made the coffin, she would line it for me. There would be no Chinese ceremonial for the funeral. No cortege with banners, or dragons on poles, no shrill bugle calls, no drumming on kerosene tins to frighten away evil spirits, no circular grave to fool the spirits which might lurk in the corners.

A simple oblong grave they dug for him, then they helped me load the coffin on to the sulky. The rest I must manage alone. I draped over the coffin the black cloth Olive had given me, then led the horse away from the hut, up past the recreation

ground to the cemetery. After I had read the burial service, I lowered the coffin into the grave, then shovelled the earth in on top of it.

Later, I returned to the hut to tidy up as best I could. Stacked against one wall was a huge pile of bottles, small in size but quite unusual in shape. I took one up to examine it more closely. Half the bottle was thick glass. The other half showed a small space, barely large enough to hold anything but a small amount of liquid. It was empty. I began to inspect the bottles one by one. After a while I found that for which I must have been subconsciously searching. Most of the bottles were full of coins-hundreds and hundreds of coins. It had to be sent to the Government of course. All that money. Who had a right to it? By and by I received an acknowledgement from Sydney, and sometime after that a sum of money as a reward. How much? I can't remember. It all happened so long ago."

I drove Bill to Wattle Flat at Easter 1976 where he showed where he had buried Ah Hung in the General Cemetery along the Limekilns Road.

Link → The Graves of Olive Pittendrigh (Davey) and Lilla Pittendrigh (Whitelaw)



Bill Pittendrigh's sisters Lilla and Olive Pittendrigh both married and lived in Sydney, but returned to Bathurst and Wattle Flat in later life and are buried with or near their mother. Olive was remembered to have a generous heart and to be a 'good stick'.



Figure: (Left) Lilla Pittendrigh (Whitelaw) c1910 and (Right) Olive Pittendrigh c1906 both buried here.

Link → The Grave of Claude Arthur Pittendrigh and Memorial Plaques to Alexander Pittendrigh and Claude Pittendrigh, who was killed in France in WW1



Bill and Amy Pittendrigh had one son Claude Arthur Pittendrigh (1920-1970) who served in the Australian Military Forces in WW2, enlisting in 1942. He tragically died in a car accident at Peel in 1970 and is buried in this cemetery. There are also plaques on the Bill Pittendrigh grave for Alexander Pittendrigh who died in 1863 aged one year (the year the church was consecrated), Bill's brother Claude Pittendrigh who was killed in France in WW1 and for William Pittendrigh (Snr) who died in Sydney 1925.

Claude Pittendrigh was a member of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion and died 9th July 1918, aged 37, from wounds. He is buried in the British Cemetery at Crouy, France. His brother Keith Pittendrigh, who was in 7th Field Artillery Brigade, returned to Australia, 11 May 1919. Cousins, Private Edmund Pittendrigh was killed in action, 22 August 1915, Corporal Norman Pittendrigh of 1st Battalion was killed in action on 6 August 1915, whilst Corporal Robert Pittendrigh of the 13th Battalion, died of wounds on 29 August 1915. The Pittendrigh family made a great sacrifice for the nation.

Link → Carlo Vassella's Grave



Carlo Vassella died from gangrene in his leg as a result of a mine accident on August 24, 1890. According to Higgens (1990) p.97 he was prominent in Sofala civic life and, being literate in four languages, helped his compatriots assimilate into Australian life. Honora Ireland remembers her father saying that the 'Italians' would come into the store with one pointing out items and his companion repeating the words in English. Carlo did not trust the gold escort and would walk to Bathurst to



Figure 1: (Left) A prosperous Carlo Vassella photographed c1880 after the success of the OK Mine at Wattle Flat (Right). His passport issued at Chur, Switzerland, in October 1860 stated his destination as Australia. He is described as possessing an average build, blonde hair and green eyes.

cash in his gold (once, followed by a man, he gave him the slip on a sharp curve on Wyagdon). With a Scottish wife, he spoke English at home, but his son Jim Vassella said that the only Italian he could remember clearly was “*abbottonare i pantaloni*” (button up your pants). Before he was married in 1876, his purchases from Smeed’s store in 1865 record a simple bachelor’s life on the goldfields (beef, sugar, tobacco, candles, salt mutton, flannel shirt, cheese and rice; see Figure 2).

| Date | Description | Price |
|--------|---|----------------|
| May 10 | 3 1/4 Cheese 2 1/4 1 lb Candles 1/4 | 4 1/2 |
| | 6 lb Sugar 3/4 1/2 lb Currants 1/4 1 lb Rice 1/4 | 6 |
| | 1 Flannel Shirt 1/4 | 1 1/2 |
| 19 | 1 lb Sugar 1/4 1 lb Cheese 1/4 1 lb Currants 1/4 | 1 1/2 |
| 26 | 1 lb Sugar 1/4 | 1 8 |
| 26 | 1 lb Sugar 1/4 | 2 11 |
| 27 | 1 lb Sugar 1/4 1 lb Currants 1/4 1 lb Rice 1/4 | 6 6 |
| 30 | 1 lb Sugar 1/4 | 1 8 |
| June 2 | 1 lb Sugar 1/4 | 2 3 1/2 |
| 3 | 1/2 lb Cheese 1/4 1 lb Candles 1/4 1 lb Sugar 1/4 1 lb Rice 1/4 | 8 4 1/2 |
| | 3 1/2 lb Mutton | 3 1/2 |
| 6 | 20 lb Beef | 4 2 1/2 |
| 8 | 3 lb Beef | 7 0 |
| 9 | 1 lb Cheese 1/4 | 9 8 |
| 10 | 20 lb Beef 1/2 1 lb Sugar 1/4 1 lb Rice 1/4 | 11 0 |
| 12 | 1/2 lb Tobacco 1/4 | 4 7 |
| 13 | 20 lb Beef | 1 0 |
| 16 | 1 lb Beef | 3 11 1/2 |
| 17 | 6 lb Sugar 1/4 1 lb Candles 1/4 1 lb Rice 1/4 | 6 0 |
| 19 | 4 lb Beef | 1 0 |
| 20 | 20 lb Beef | 2 2 |
| 23 | 17 lb Beef | 3 6 |
| 24 | 6 lb Sugar | 3 0 |
| 27 | 9 lb Beef | 1 10 |
| | Total | £8.9.10 |

Figure 2: Carlo (Charlie) Vassella’s entry in Smeed’s General Store’s Day Journal, May 1865. The basic items purchased were beef, tobacco, rice, sugar, cheese, candles, plums, currants and a flannel shirt. The account totalled £8.9.10 in July and was settled fully on July 26 1865.

One story told by Ted Reilly was that before Carlo Vassella died, was that his father John Reilly, uncle James McKinney and others were yarning on a log outside the old Prospect Inn near the Church of England when they spied an unknown woman in a black dress gliding down the hill from Sofala into Vassella's place. John Reilly was minding the house whilst the Vassella's were away, so they quickly went up the hill to check, but could not find any trace of the woman. Who was this woman dressed for a death? The speculation remained after his sudden passing. After his death, my grandfather Charles Vassella (Jnr) had to leave school, at 12 years old, to go mining to support his mother and family, despite his teacher, Mr Gratter, coming to beg his mother to let him continue his schooling, since he showed rare scholarship.

On his death bed in Bathurst Hospital (where there was a strike on in August 1890), he made his 11yr old son swear on the Bible that he was to be buried in an unmarked grave in the Wesleyan cemetery and if 'they' came to have him reburied in the Catholic cemetery, he was to be reinterred back here. My grandfather never knew who 'they' were, but Carlo's brother, Giacomo, had gone back earlier to Poschiavo to see his aged father. Carlo's body was brought back here from Bathurst to the Wesleyan Cemetery by the Bathurst undertaker W. S. Hodge for burial and John Caughterty (who is buried here) was the acting minister.



Figure 3: The children of Carlo and Ellen Vassella (Mitchell)-Their nick-names are in brackets. Agnes ('Boob') Charlie Jnr ('Scotty'), Jim ('Nick') and Maude ('Nugget'). Charlie Jnr was my grandfather, and they were all born at Wattle Flat and attended Wattle Flat Public School.

After Carlo died, Ellen Mitchell remarried in 1896 to Sam Dunn, from Northern Ireland, who was a great supporter of the Wattle Flat Orange Lodge and a lay preacher in the church. He planted an orchard of fruit trees in the front yard of the Vassella house on the right of the Sofala Road beyond the old Prospect Inn and 125 years later the remnants are still there producing fruit in the Spring. In the late 1890s, Jim Vassella remembered the Vassella family becoming 'like gypsies' moving around looking for gold in the Central West (such as residing in Gulgong), until long-term work was found at the new oil shale mines at Newnes in around 1901.



Figure 4: Ellen Mitchell and her second husband, Sam Dunn, who were married in 1895 and lived in the Vassella house at Wattle Flat till c1900. The remains of the orchard he planted are still visible from the Sofala Road.

Link → John Mini's Family Graves



The graves of Therese Tilley (left) and Antonio and Agnes Mini (right). John Tilley's grave adjoins his daughters. He was the first husband of Isabella Mini and died in 1868.

John Mini married Isabella Mitchell after the death of her first husband John Tilley in 1868 (who is buried here). Their 7-year-old son Antonio died by breaking his neck falling from a haystack on their Wattle Flat property in 1881 and his two-year old daughter Agnes died in 1883. John Tilley (who was Isabella's Mini's first husband) died in 1868 and daughter Therese Tilley in 1883 aged 14 years. Sadly, John Mini's oldest son Jim died in France in 1917 from shrapnel wounds and his third son Achilles Mini died tragically in 1924. His only grandson James Arthur Smith, the only son of his daughter Alma Mini, died in 1942 from a bombing mission over Germany. Alma Mini married Cyril Spencer Smith in the Wattle Flat Wesleyan Church in 1915.

Ted Reilly cut wood for his old neighbour John Mini and he remembered him well as a very thoughtful and quiet man who kept a sharp axe for the job. John Mini would say, with his Italian accent, that mining along the Big Oakey Reef was a 'dif-fic-ulty'. Les Gratter remembered on the inside wall opposite the front door of Mini's house, a photo of Garibaldi, the hero of Italian civil war and unification. The Mini's were

innovative, introducing the first reaper and binder into the district to harvest their wheat from the paddocks surrounding their farm below Whalans Hill (Figure 11). In 1898 John Mini sold the Big Oakey Mine to English investors (Big Oakey Consolidated Gold Mines) and continued managing the mine, whilst investing in agricultural development (such as Figure 11). He sent his son Achilles to South Africa in 1912 as part of his training to become a mining engineer.



Figure 1: Jim Mini, Isabella Mini (Mitchell), Bill Mini, John Mini and Achilles Mini c1904

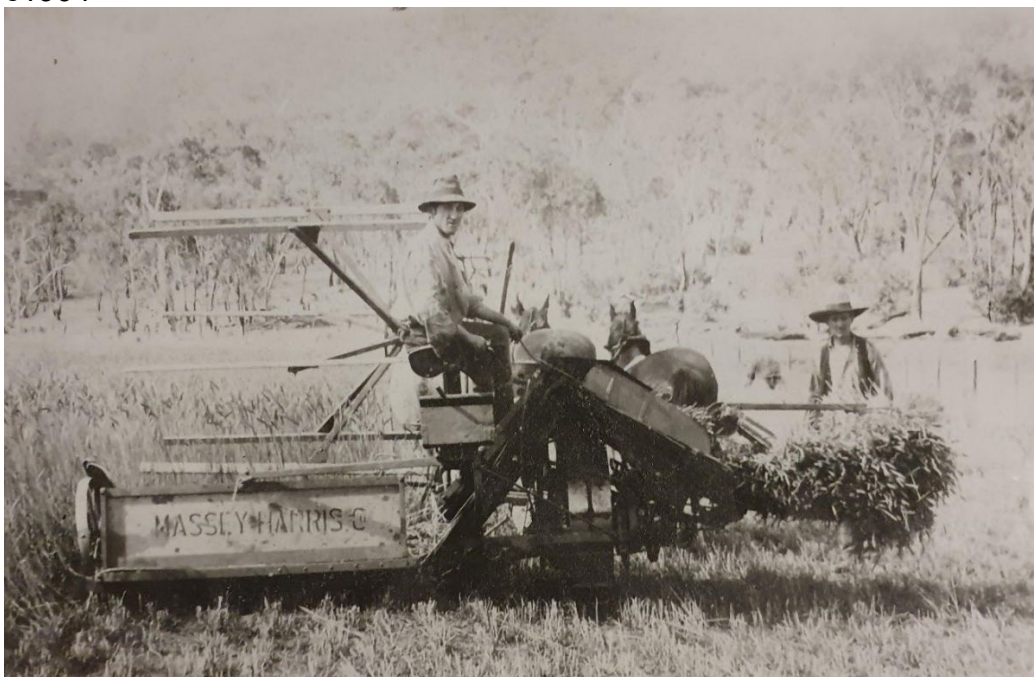


Figure 2: Jim Mini (left) and Achilles Mini (right) harvesting wheat on their property below Whalan's Hill



Figure 3: Bill Mini (who emigrated to the US in 1910 and was drafted into the US Army in 1918) and Alma Mini (who was married to Cyril Spencer Smith in the Wesleyan Church here in 1915).

John Mini remained prominent in community affairs, chairing the opening of the Wattle Flat Courthouse and Post Office in 1898. John Mini died in 1925 and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Catholic section of Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney. Isabella also died in Sydney in 1923, whilst visiting Alma, is also buried in an unmarked grave in the Wesleyan section Rookwood Cemetery.

Link → James Mitchell's Grave



The Grave of James Mitchell (Snr)



James Mitchell (Snr) brought his family by bullock wagon to the Turon in 1852 and was elected to represent the mining district in the 1873 Gold Commission. In 1846, he married Ellen Cameron from Morayshire who was a second cousin of William and Daniel Grant, Scottish industrialists and philanthropists, who Charles Dickens based his characters 'The Cheeryble Brothers' on in his novel Nicholas Nickleby. After his wife Ellen Cameron Mitchell died of tuberculosis in 1862 (buried in Sofala), James (Snr) raised his family of six children with the help of his eldest daughter Isabella. He also did a lot of the cooking for Carlo Vassella's family after Carlo died, whilst Ellen went fossicking, and Jim Vassella remembers the delicious peach pies that Grandpa Mitchell cooked. The Mitchell family lived in a house on Lot 383 above Little Oakey Creek.

Link → Allan and Flora Carmichael Graves

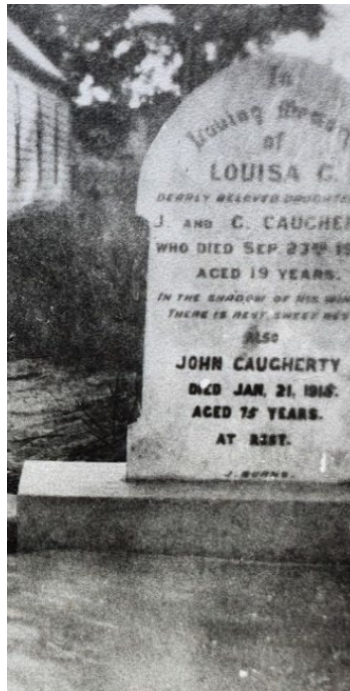


Allan McGregor Carmichael was born in Scotland in 1835 and emigrated to Australia in 1854. He went to Beechwood in Victoria, like John Mini, before coming to the Turon around 1861 with his wife Flora. He and his family lived at Wyagdon and he was a farmer (the remains of the chimney can still be seen from Sofala Road). He was innovative and NSW officials came to observe his wheat farming practices. A daughter, Hannah Carmichael, was a pupil-teacher in the public school for four years. He died in 1915 and, four days later, his wife Flora passed away. The coffin-bearers were J Cox, J Mckinney, C Wilson and W Bright and the pall-bearers D McAlister, C Watts, K Pittendrigh and L Thompson. Mr Robinson from Bathurst attended the graveside funeral. His death is recorded in the Mudgee Guardian as:

“On Friday, 13th instance, Mr. Allan Carmichael passed over to the silent majority, at his residence at Wattle Flat, having attained the ripe old age of 82 years. He was a very old resident of the district, and was most highly esteemed and respected by all who knew him. He was honorable and led a religious life sometimes inclined to be facetious, having upon several occasion remarked that had he been present when Saul, the son of Kish, was sent into the fields to gather in his father's asses, he would never have left nine behind.’ The remains were interred in the Wesleyan burial ground, Wattle Flat, encased in a remarkably handsome covered coffin with white and gold enamel ornaments over embossed velvet. The funeral obsequies were conducted by Mr A. Taylor, undertaker, Sofala. The Rev. Mr. Robertson, of Bathurst, officiated at the graveside.” (*Mudgee Guardian* Aug 19th 1915).

Allan and Flora Carmichael are also buried with their children, one year old George, 1868 and Flora in 1871.

Link → John and Louisa Caugherty's Graves



John Caugherty was a miner and later a dairy farmer, living opposite the Church of England. He was an acting minister of the Wesleyan church. He presided over the funeral of Carlo Vassella and was a witness to the burial of James Mitchell. He had two daughters and was very strict with them. Les Gratter remembered Jessie Caugherty delivering a quart of milk for sixpence to households. John Caugherty used to brand his cattle hip to tail with CAU. Les laughed 'it was the largest brand you had ever seen'. Sadly his other daughter, Louisa tragically died at the age of 19 years, and is buried here.

Link → Richard Nancarrow's Grave



Richard Nancarrow was born in Cornwall, England in 1861 and arrived as an assisted migrant to Sydney in 1877. He married Emily Bromley in 1886 in Sydney. According to Neary (p.59), he was the first man to bring bees over the Blue Mountains in 1894. He arrived at Wattle Flat and selected a stand at Musgrave's farm, bought land at the foot of Wyagdon Hill and with courage and industry soon became a wealthy bee-farmer. Les Gratter said his father had financially supported Nancarrow and invested in his business which soon paid dividends. He died tragically and unexpectedly in 1910 at the age of 48yr leaving a wife and 11 children.

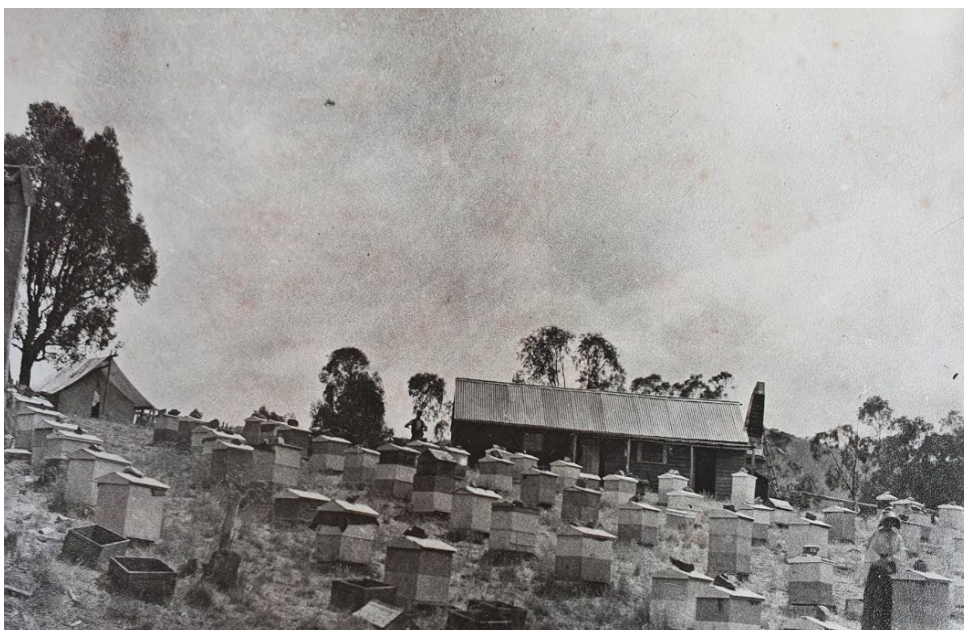


Figure 1: Bee-farming became an important industry at Wattle Flat as agriculture replaced mining as a major industry for the village. The Nancarrows were leaders of this industry in the district.

Link → David Kneale's Grave



David Kneale and his wife Esther were born and married on the Isle of Man, UK and emigrated after 1880, ending up in Wattle Flat. He was a miner and later a farmer (an apiarist) with property behind the Church of England and in Kneale Street. He was a witness to the funeral of Carlo Vassella. A daughter, Catherine, died in 1909, and a son, David John died as a result of an accident at Wattle Flat on June 6th 1916.



Figure 1: A daughter Catherine Kneale, born in 1881 died at Wattle Flat in 1909 and may be buried in this cemetery at this site.

Link →Thomas and Isabella Mackie Graves



Thomas Icely Mackie was born in 1836 on the 23,000 acre property of Thomas Icely at Carcoar. His father came to work for Icely from Jamaica, West Indies, although the Mackie family was originally from Scotland. He married Isabella Ogilvie in 1868 when she was 14 years old and they had 12 children. He was listed as a miner and they lived behind Crawford's house on a ridge above Big Oakey Creek.

Link →The Oldest Tombstone: Mary Anne Selley 1869



The oldest original remaining inscription is for Mary Anne Selley who was born at Barnstaple in Devon, UK in 1812 and died 17th December 1869. Her husband was James Selley, a farmer, who in the early days was the town's first supplier of butter from his farm on the Surface Hill Road. He was listed also as a publican in 1872 (Hodge 1998) and later farmed at Wyagdon.

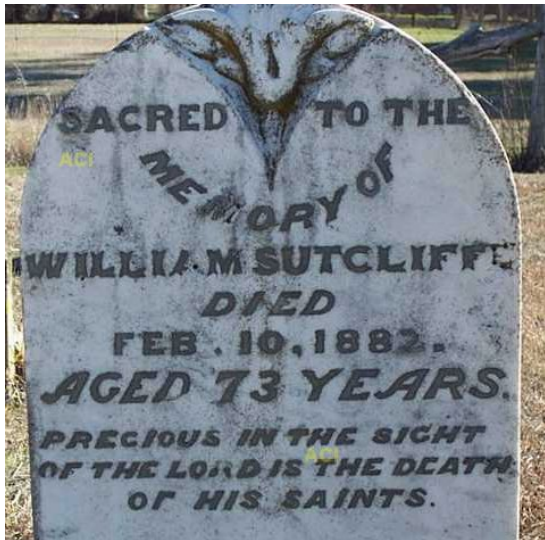
Thomas and Mary Anne Rutter's Grave



Thomas Rutter, who was buried here in 1902, was a miner recorded in the 1872 Grenville Post Office Directory and the 1891 Census. He, with his wife Mary Ann and children, probably lived down Solitary Lane behind Ireland's General Store. He was employed intermittently at the Solitary Mine and in old age probably fossicked in Solitary Creek. A son was an office bearer of Sons of Temperance that would meet in a building behind Bright's place (where the Fitzsimmons lived in the 1970s).

Other Marked and Unmarked Graves

William Sutcliffe's Grave



William Sutcliffe was a miner who lived next to the school (where the Rural Fire Service now is) and was described by Neary (1941) as 'Holy Billy'. He was a zealous supporter and worker for this church.

Elizabeth Bennett



Elizabeth Bennett was born in Tasmania in 1830 and was the wife of Robert Bennett who came to the Turon Goldfields in the late 1850s. The Bennett's formed a large family at Wattle Flat and most are buried in the Catholic Cemetery.

Charles Jones



Charles Jones was born in Battle, East Essex in 1813 and died in 1888, raising six children in the 1870s with his wife Mary. They lived opposite Hodge's butchers below the Church of England. They were a different 'Jones' family to Walter Jones who ran a store in Wattle Flat.

Henry Taylor



Henry Taylor is listed as living by himself in the 1893 Census. Little is known of him and his story but someone paid the expense of this grave site.

Blanche McLennan



There is little known of her in the Wattle Flat historical records but could be a relative of the Kneales.

Unmarked Graves

There are a number of unmarked graves, like Carlo Vassella's, particularly young children from families and others, where the tombstones are too weathered or removed to discern the occupants. Some are also post WW2 and more recent burials, such as Furley, Bull and Ham that I can remember as wooden crosses from the 1970s, have since disappeared. In my 1975 notes, I recorded the Malcolm Bull grave next to the Nancarrow's grave and the Furley grave was located around 10m north east of the Mini graves. I remember 'Old Furley' as a fossicker in Tanwarra Creek, living out in the bush, who drove a decrepit motor bike with a side-car.