



## Remembrance Day 11<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Alison Halliday on Jack Joshua and Margaret Gunn

*Life, history and research are full of gaps. We have seen the importance of filling in gaps through the recent recovery of bodies of the soldiers at Fromelles in France. Many of the bodies have been identified, thanks to the use of DNA testing, and we can only imagine how much this must mean to their families.*

*The important thing about gaps is that that they are framed by a boundary and can therefore act more as a net than a hole. In telling you about two more people on the Mt Wilson War Memorial I am attempting to fill in some of the gaps in our collective community knowledge and construct some of the threads that actually build up that net which catches history.<sup>1</sup>*

*I am indebted to many who assisted me to do this research including the families of Jack Joshua and Margaret Gunn, the government resources, volunteers within various community organisations and a range of other individuals.*

### Life of Jack Joshua

On the War Memorial J.M.J. Joshua refers to John Michael James Joshua who served in WWI.

The Joshua family had an association with Mt Wilson from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, being associated primarily with the property *Campanella*. John Michael James was the son of John and Annie Elizabeth. He was known as Jack and was the eldest of their three children. His father John was one of the subscribers who contributed to establishing the War Memorial, in the list as drawn up in 1923.<sup>2</sup>

In tracing out the properties held by the Joshua family we are dealing with portions 40, 57 and 65.<sup>3</sup> Portion 40 was to be the site of *Campanella*. It was owned by the Sydney barrister Matthew Henry Stephens. Stephens was one of the 'founding fathers'<sup>4</sup> of the European settlement of Mount Wilson who built a house<sup>5</sup> which subsequently burnt down in the 1930s. Stephens sold the portions to John Joshua in 1898, along with portion 65.

This latter portion was originally part of a free grant to Alexander Bowman in June 1879 under the Volunteer Force Regulation Act of 1867 which he sold, in the same year, to Stephens. In 1924 John Joshua transferred both properties (65 and 40) to his wife, Annie Joshua, for reasons we don't know and she retained them until about 1938. For most of those years *Campanella* had been a guesthouse run by Bessie Knight Brown (from Mt Irvine). Annie Joshua sold both properties to Harry Cottrell-Dormer who was listed as a theological student. Until 1951 both properties had the same owner.

While portion 40 (*Campanella*) remained intact, portion 65 was subdivided into two lots and those too were later sub-divided.

The Joshuas also owned portion 57, which is now owned by Wendy Holland. This was owned by Annie Joshua from 1911 until 1939-40 when it was transferred to her son John Michael James, who is listed as then living in Temora as a Garage Proprietor. He held it until 1946 when Jack Gunn bought it.

There is a story of Annie Joshua trying to persuade the postal authorities to have the post office and exchange transferred to her property in 1915.<sup>6</sup> In the end she did not succeed as the move from its place in *Beowang* was seen as being far too costly. From the associated map it appears as though this proposed new post office location was Sylvan Close.

Photography is a vital part of the historical record. We are lucky, of course, that many of the earliest property owners were wealthy enough to own photographic equipment and embraced the new technology. The Historical Society has a photo of a building on Sylvan Close taken c. 1920 when John Joshua was the



owner. There is also the story from Tom Kirk about his mother preparing for her wedding there, remembering that she worked at *Campanella*. Coincidentally, photography is to play an important part in the life of John Michael James, who is from now on to be referred to as Jack.

Jack was born in 1893, his sister Eva in 1902 and the youngest child, Lilac Caroline, was born in 1908. All three children were born in Sydney. Jack spent the first years of his life at Mt Wilson but was then sent away to boarding school. He went first to St Josephs College for a brief time, then to a boarding school at Mt Victoria for four years and finally to Camden Grammar School for three or four years. After leaving school he had about a year at home in Mt Wilson before going to a property in the country, presumably to work as a jackaroo, for three years. This was organized by his father through the Bank of New South Wales. After that he went to Sydney and then to the irrigation settlement at Leeton where he worked in a variety of jobs, including as a mechanic in the local butter factory and in a garage. Then, as he is recorded to have said, 'it was time to think about going to the war'.<sup>7</sup>

## His war record

On the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1916 Jack enlisted and, at that time, his father gave 'Mt Wilson, Bell' as his own address. Jack was 23 years and 2 months old. He was a bit over 5' 10" tall with an identifying scar on inner calf. He was already a trained motor mechanic when he enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Flying Squadron with rank of Private and by 1<sup>st</sup> August 1917 he was a first class air mechanic. We know he took two things to war

with him.<sup>8</sup> The first was a riding crop, which may have given rise to the family thinking he was in the Light Horse. This crop, with its original Turk's



Head knob and plaiting, is a treasured family possession which was available for viewing at the 2010 Remembrance ceremony. He also took a camera, one small enough to 'reside in his hip pocket for the duration'<sup>9</sup> and his collection of war photos is held in the National Library. His war photos include those of airmen and their planes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> squadron, visiting bi-planes from England and France, captured German planes and more general scenes such as crashes, equipment and activities on the ground.<sup>10</sup>

On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916 Jack left from Melbourne on *Ulysses*. By August 1917 he was in France, after completing his training in England, and attached to the 69<sup>th</sup> Squadron. A few months later, on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1918, he was sent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron.

He had two misdemeanours while enlisted. The first was on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1918 when he left a lorry unattended and the second on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1918 for exceeding the speed limit. He was given seven days penalty for each. His record notes that at this time he was paid nine shillings per day.

At the end of the war he was sent to Scotland to work before repatriation where, from April to October 1919, he undertook a fitter and turner course. The engineering company, Robey and Co Ltd, Lincoln, Scotland, wrote the following reference for him:

*The above mentioned man was employed by our firm from 11/4/1919 to 8/9/1919 during which period he was engaged in the fixing of Machinery, shaftings and the testing of steam engines and his work and conduct were satisfactory.*<sup>11</sup>

During this time he was on full military pay and was issued with one suit and one pair of overalls. Jack returned home on *Ascanius* in November 1919.

## Life afterwards

On returning to Australia<sup>12</sup> after WWI, Jack went back to the country and held various jobs including irrigation mechanic, engineer and motor salesman. The land title of Lot 57 provides the information that he continued working as a motor mechanic after the war. It also appears as though he lived for some time in Temora. It was probably there that he met his wife, Eadie. They had two daughters, but I have not been able to trace them.

During WWII his engineering firm in Temora gained a contract with the Department of Munitions for fabrication of items from supplied plans. However, after being injured outside of the shop Jack



decided to sell up the engineering business and purchased a photographic studio in Temora. When he sold this business he returned to Sydney where he worked for a friend with a photographic studio in North Sydney before retiring. He then continued to concentrate on photography as a hobby and over a ten year period took many images of Australian flora, which is now a valuable photographic record in

the National Library Australian Flora collection known as the Joshua Collection. In 1970 he entered the War Veterans Home in Collaroy. He died in June 1974.

His younger sister, Lilac Caroline Buckley (nee Joshua) and Maurice Buckley are commemorated in the Mt Wilson churchyard with a connection to *Campanella* as stated on their memorial plaques. I am grateful to their daughter, Virginia Armstrong, who, along with her husband, attended the service and talked to me about her uncle. We discussed the family's artistic leanings with Jack's interest in photography and Virginia's mother's award winning cake decorating talents. Virginia also remembers the walls of *Campanella* being hung with watercolours, presumably by Jack's father.

## Life of Margaret Gunn

What most surprised me about 'M. Gunn' was the discovery that the abbreviated name is that of a woman. We do still tend to think of war as the work of men, yet Margaret Gunn served in WWII.

The Gunn family has a long and continued association with Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. Joe Gunn came with his family, on a journey of 14 days, in a horse drawn trap from Forbes to *Sefton Cottage* in the 1920s to work for Marcus Clark. His wife was Mary Jane Dutton. Since then the Gunn family has been intimately involved with mountain life, including the development of many of the mountain gardens. Joe's son, John, who was always known as Jack, worked for many years at *Breenhold* while living at



nearby *Cooiwoo*. The fourth generation of the Gunn family still provides expert skills and knowledge to many people on Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

Alan Gunn, the oldest son of Jack Gunn, has worked for the Progress Association for many years and on many of the mountain properties.

Margaret was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> September in Forbes and came to the mountain with her father as a little girl. She was closest in age to Jack, being the

youngest of seven children. At the time of enlistment her Mt Wilson address is a property named *Varunga*, on which *Talbingo* was the cottage. This is present day *Breenhold* and the cottage is still there.

In this photo of Margaret (left) as a young woman, with Noellie Mclean (centre) and another friend outside what looks like *Sefton Hall*, she seems happy and confident on her horse. She left school after the Intermediate Certificate at 15 years of age and went to Sydney where she lived with her older sisters and went to work at the department store Marcus Clark as a junior clerk. She was there from July 1939 to September 1941 and her reference states:

*During this period we found her thoroughly honest, reliable and straightforward in all matters.*

## Her war record

In her war record Margaret Gunn is described as 5' 3" tall, fair hair and grey eyes. The fair hair is a bit of a mystery as she has dark hair in the early photo and her sons remember her having dark hair. Margaret enlisted on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1942, but the date of her 'seniority' is 14 April 1942. She joined the WRANS as a telegraphist with the number WR66. WRANS stands for Women's Royal Australian Naval Service. She was initially engaged for 2 years, or 'for the duration of the war', and for '6 months thereafter'.<sup>13</sup>

She began her work at Harman, a naval base in the ACT, and by August 1943 she was working in Townsville, Queensland. In September 1944 she was moved back to Harman. There is a photo of her in uniform with, I assume, the rest of the telegraphists, complete with soft hat, gloves and tie. Her nickname during the war years was 'Bang, Bang'; derived, obviously, from her surname.<sup>14</sup>



She was assessed at the end of 1942 and in January 1946 and on both occasions her character was ranked as 'VG' and her efficiency as 'A'. On 13 April 1945 she was granted a good conduct badge and in May of that year she was made a leading telegraphist.



Margaret disembarked on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1946 from Rushcutters now as Mrs Pollock.<sup>15</sup> On discharge she was paid 6 pounds 10 shillings civilian clothing allowance; 18 pounds 17 and sixpence in lieu of 30 days re-establishment leave; and 11 pounds 19 shillings and 1 penny in lieu of 19 days accrued leave. She was also paid a war gratuity of 31 pounds 10 shillings. Her service papers state that she was:

*...a good operator and reliable leading hand of watch who possessed keenness and power of command and whose cheerfulness and even temper united a good effect on the WRANS in her charge. Signed P Ross, Second Officer in WRANS, 7 Jan. 1946*

During her time in the WRANS she must have met John Pollock (number S/8780), a radio mechanic by 1944 and shown as having worked at Harman. He was not demobilised until February 1947. John was born in Newcastle England on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1921.

**Life afterwards**

Margaret and John married on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1945 at Mt Wilson. After they were both discharged, John began a career as a school teacher, starting at a little one-teacher school at Booligal (near Hay) and then to Yarrabandai (near Condobolin). By 1960 they were settled in Campbelltown.

They had three sons: John William born in 1946 (Canberra), Christopher James in 1951 (Katoomba) and Anthony in 1963.

During the years of John teaching in country towns Margaret sometimes taught sewing at the schools. She picked fruit and helped with charity work, especially the CWA of which she was a member for 25 years. She enjoyed playing tennis and was keenly interested in the sports and activities of her sons. She had seven grandchildren and loved to watch them play. Margaret died on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I'm aware that my information is incomplete so I ask all of you to please let me know if you have any more details about these two people or any others on the War Memorial who may be elusive or relatively unknown to us. My email is [alisonhalliday@gmail.com](mailto:alisonhalliday@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> The list of subscribers is in the brief history of the War Memorial on the last page.

<sup>3</sup> The information about the land titles is from research carried out by the Historical Society at the Land Titles Office.

<sup>4</sup> His name is listed on the plaque on the stone seat on Founders Corner at the junction of The Avenue and Mt Irvine Road.

<sup>5</sup> The Historical Society has photographs of the house—a single storey timber house with attractive gardens.

<sup>6</sup> This information was sourced at the archives of Australia Post by the Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup> Oral history record ORAL TRC # 121/35 (728302) at: <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn728302>>

<sup>8</sup> This information comes from Jack Joshua's niece Virginia Armstrong.

<sup>9</sup> Records held in the National Library of Australia. Oral history record at: <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn728302>>

<sup>10</sup> From the catalogue summary of the National Library of Australia.

<sup>11</sup> From his official war record documentation.

<sup>12</sup> Records held in the National Library of Australia. Oral history record at: <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn728302>>

<sup>13</sup> From her official war record.

<sup>14</sup> The photograph and much of the information from her time at war and afterwards is from her son Bill Pollock to whom I am most grateful for sharing knowledge of his mother.

<sup>15</sup> If a woman married while still enlisted then her war record was catalogued under her married name.