

Church Family

Sydney Church (known as George) and **Lillian** came from Gloucester in UK in 1921. At first they were allocated Lot 106 in Northcliffe, but re-located to Lot 41 in Pemberton. Lillian was midwife and owner of the Pemberton Boarding House, now the Pemberton Backpackers.

Lilian and George had four children, Reg, Phyl, Bill, and Muriel.

The following family story comes courtesy of Graeme and Donelle Church, April 2021.

THE CHURCH FAMILY

Sydney George Church (George) - father

Lilian - mother

Reginald (Reg) - eldest child

Phyllis (Phil)

William Edwin (Bill)

Muriel

Sydney George Church fought for Britain in the Boer War and WW1 and worked at the Gloucester Docks after WW1.

Lillian Church, his wife, believed that there was no positive future for her husband and her children in Gloucester so in order to seek a better life for the family she suggested that they migrate to Australia. Therefore in 1921 the family travelled to Western Australia on the Steamship Orsova. Also, on board the Orsova at that time were members of the Roche family. The sea journey was arduous as the

crew took on wet coal in Africa and this caused the ship to list at sea for several days before the boilers could be fired up enough to gain a full head of steam which enabled the boat to continue on its journey.

After arriving in Western Australia approximately six months after leaving England the Church family was allocated Lot 106 in Northcliffe as part of the Group Settlement Scheme. The family struggled to make a success of Lot 106 and so they re-located to Lot 41. Clearing the land and making a good living was very difficult and the family moved forward mainly due to the endeavours and initiative of Lillian Church who established a successful boarding house in Northcliffe.

Lillian Church was a mid-wife who was supposedly responsible for the delivery of over 100 babies in the district. She was known to have ridden a horse as far north as Bridgetown where her midwifery skills were greatly appreciated. She became known as the 'Florence Nightingale' of the area.

Lillian then bought and successfully managed the Pemberton boarding house. Today the boarding house is better known as the Backpackers situated near the Sports Club and the Pemberton bakery. Eventually Lillian moved to another boarding house in Pemberton and this building today is known as the Shamrock. Lillian's daughter Phyl eventually took over the boarding houses and then went on to lease the deli which is now known as the Source Kitchen. Most of her clients were mill workers.

Lillian and George's four children married in Pemberton. Reg married Lucy Collins and they had five children - Terry (dec.), Maureen, Lynley, Tony and Jan. Phyl married Bernard Cecil Graham (Tup) and they had two children Bobby and Joe. Tup passed away in 1952. Phyl later married Ted Loud. Bill married Della Jessie Allen whom he met in

Adelaide when on leave after training in the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland and before heading off to war shortly after. They married after the war and had one child Graeme. Muriel married William (Bill) Treacy and they had two children - Allan (dec.) and Tyril.

After a number of casual jobs in Pemberton, Bill found work at the Pemberton mill in the early nineteen thirties. However, his employment at the mill ceased temporarily due to WW11. Bill enlisted in the army and served his time at Labuan, an island off the coast of Borneo, later being promoted to Sergeant. Whilst Bill was on the island of Labuan he was informed that his best mate, Kiwi Graham, was killed by a Japanese sniper on another island.

Upon returning to Pemberton from the war Bill had little time to rest and recover from malaria as he was required to immediately recommence working at the mill. His main role at the mill was being in charge of the number two bench (sawyer). Two of his tailor outs were Charlie Kelly and Kevin Wozencraft. During Bill's last few years at the mill, he worked at the Processing Plant with Johnno Rosman. Bill's brother Reg also worked at the mill for many years as a carpenter and handyman and was very well respected for his work. The Church family has a rich history in the Pemberton/Northcliffe area with brothers Bill and Reg contributing greatly to the development of the Pemberton mill and the timber industry in general. Bill retired from the mill in 1981 at the age of 66. Reg's son in law Robert Mills continued the family tradition by working at the mill and becoming the mill manager.

Bill and Della initially lived at the bottom of town along a short row of houses between the government and mill railway lines, directly along from where the Source Kitchen is today. Reg and Lucy Church lived next door. When it was proposed that their mill houses were

eventually to be demolished both families moved further into the town. Reg and Lucy moved first, building their own house in Guppy Street. Bill and Della together with their son Graeme moved later, into another mill house on the corner of Brockman Street and the laneway alongside the Uniting Church.

Prior to retirement Bill and Della purchased their own house on the corner of Jamieson and Dean Street. This house was renovated in 2007 by Graeme and Donelle Church. Next door neighbours to Bill and Della in Jamieson Street were Buddy and Iris Fuge. Buddy and Bill were the best of friends. Buddy operated and maintained the two steam turbines which provided steam (produced from the sawdust from the mill) and subsequent power to operate the mill. One of these large steam turbines has been restored and is now on display at the new Manjimup Museum.

A number of George and Lillian Church's grandchildren and great grandchildren remain in Pemberton to this day.

GRAEME and DONELLE CHURCH

12 April 2021