

Private Cleveland Churchill

- Born in 1898 and died 16th of August 1981.
- Enlisted with Australian Imperial Force on the 29th of May 1916, aged 18,
- Served with the 12th Infantry Battalion, service number 6047
- Left Australia on the 8th of August 1916 aboard HMAT Ballarat,
- Wounded, shrapnel in leg, and spent nearly 12 months in hospital in England.
- Returned to Australia aboard hospital ship HMHS Kanowna,
- Discharged 5th of January 1919
- On Return quarantined at the Quarantine Station at North Bruny because of the Spanish Flu.

I loved my Pop, I guess I was lucky, he was kind and generous and genuinely loved little children.

He had a kiosk at Barnes Bay, a small shearing shed that he turned into a little shop selling ice creams, Have a Hearts and Frolics, fizzy drinks ,Fanta and Coke, lollies, Musk Sticks, Cobbers and Freckles, pies and sandwiches that we made, lamb and pickles or similar. Sometimes we even sold roasted mutton bird.

We didn't have to worry about the council in those days.

Us kids helped in the kiosk, probably ate a lot of the profits, indeed Pop was always giving away lollies to the little ones.

He saw it as a service to the community and particularly to the people in the ferry line up.

That was the time when the ferry came into Barnes Bay, "The Melba" and I think it could only hold about 17 cars, so at Mutton Birding season and other notable holiday occasions the line-up of cars was incredible, going almost up to the little Church of Saint Peters, well past old Nigel Denne's place.

Pop lived at Barnes Bay in a very modest cottage right on the water's edge with Nan, we stayed there a lot and this was where he returned to after the war, the First World War, the War to end all Wars. He must have had his demons, but we never saw them.

We innocently used to ask him how many people did he kill in the war, and thankfully he never told us but he did show us his bashed up, shelled leg, he was still getting bits of shrapnel out of it when he was a very old man.

Elsie his daughter in law, a nurse, would take him down to the beach and wash his leg in the salt water. He was stationed in Egypt for a good while and then went to fight in France in the trenches. He told me a number of stories about Egypt, which motivated me to visit Egypt, which I did as a back packer, and I found his stories to be true.

Pop spent almost 12 months in hospital in England and we have his love letters that he sent to our Nan, very beautiful and touching, when I read them, I felt like an intruder. Even when they were in their eighties, they used to sit on the couch holding hands, they were like that to the day Pop died.

The leg did worry him, but he managed to work for the PMG on Bruny and run a small farm with some sheep, pigs, a cow for milking, and they grew fruit trees and vegetables, completely self-sufficient and of course went floundering around the bay.

Pop built a hall on his property near the road, a community hall, near the kiosk. Brilliant fairs and dances were held there and both Pop's children, Cameron and Eunice, used to play in the bands, Cameron on the drums and mouth organ, and Eunice on the piano, Jack Philips a friend used to play the Sax. Unfortunately, the hall was burnt down.

Pop went to church with Nan. They brought their three children up in the little cottage. Tragedy struck one day and their second son Spencer drowned in the Bay, Pop never went to Church again.

Pop and Nan had the first Post Office and telephone Exchange on the Island, Nan ran it as Pop was not too keen on clerical type chores.

Pop liked a beer, but Nan wasn't keen, so he had to hide them.

Even after Pop died, we found long necks around the farm, mostly hidden in tree stumps or under the main water tank, or between the bales of hay in the barn.

We all loved our Pop, he wasn't a great man in society's eyes, but he was to us, he had a generous soul and we learnt to love and respect the land, to love and nurture children, to care and show respect to people without judgment, to show hospitality to all that came through your door, and he gave to us that warm sense of family security.

And I can still see him toasting bread with a fork over the fire that he had lit for the start of a new day.

Written by Christine Churchill.