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FRANCIS JOHN AND BLANCHE

Francis John Joseph (Frank) was born at Whyte Yarcowie on 29 January 1884, the eldest child of James Samuel Harford and Bridget Brady. He was baptized at St Simon & Jude's on 5 February 1884.

We know little about him and I did not meet him except when I was a small child and I have no real memory of him. After his separation from Blanche she made it clear to everyone that they should not have anything to do with him. This makes the reconstruction of his life through whatever we can locate about him all the more difficult but also all the more important.

We know little of his early days but as the eldest he would have been required to help his father on the farm as soon as he was old enough. We have been fortunate to obtain his school record which is not flattering but is consistent with the times and the conditions they lived under.

Frank was admitted to Whyte Yarcowie School in September 1892 at the age of 8. His younger brother James Thomas started at the same time. The school register shows he was number 240 and that they lived three miles from the school and also that their father was James and his occupation was "Farmer".

Except for his first year, Frank's attendance record was not good. He had 106 days in the last two quarters of 1892, 33 days in 1893 none in 1894 and 41 in 1895. So in four years he had 180 days of schooling. He left school in April 1895 at age 11 and this was probably when the family moved to Cockburn. He has not been shown as reaching any level of schooling including Grade 1 and as a result he probably did not read or write properly.

At Cockburn there are reports of the family's participation in the annual sports of the Cockburn Grand United Order of Oddfellows for the years 1897 through to 1900. In 1897 Frank was shown as second in the Boys Race Under 15¹. He would have been 13 years old. In 1898 Frank was again second in the Boys Race.² A J Harford was second in another handicap event and this may have been his father James although he was about 45 at the time. In 1899 it was reported that in the Pig with Greasy Tail event "*Caught by F. Harford at the slaughterhouse one mile distant from the sports grounds.*"³ In 1900 an M. Harford won the Girls race. This was Frank's younger sister Mary Gertrude.⁴

Frank moved to Broken Hill with his family about 1901. He was 17 and probably immediately started work in the mines. He lived with his parents at their home on the corner of Gypsum and Newton Sts.

There were two articles referring to Frank in the newspapers in 1905. At this stage Frank was 21 years old and working as a Trucker in the mines. The first article indicated he was Secretary for a dance social a role we saw him in later at Broken Hill and also at Kangaroo Island.

¹ Barrier Miner 26 May 1897

² SA Register 4 June 1898

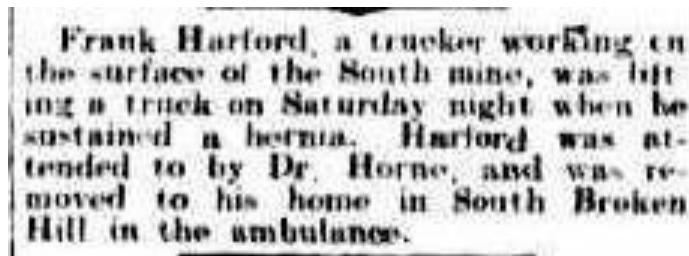
³ SA Register 5 June 1899

⁴ SA Register 30 May 1900



Barrier Miner 1 September 1905

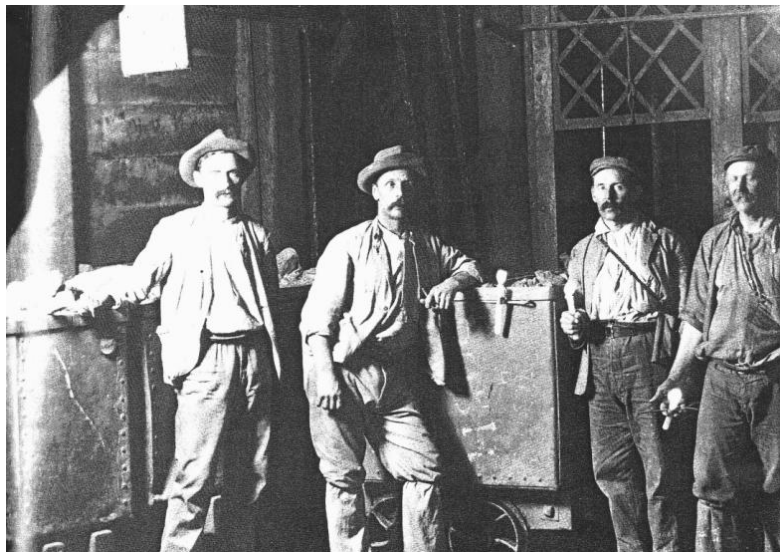
The second shown below indicates that he was injured at his job at the South Mine:



Barrier Miner 13 November 1905

Truckers were mine workers used to push trucks of ore or waste around the surface or underground mine levels. These trucks often weighed as much as one ton. Often the first surface or underground work mine workers did was trucking. Truckers needed a few skills but the work was monotonous and physically demanding.

In 1906, truckers were paid a wage of seven shillings and six pence a shift. They used to work eight hours a day and six days a week. There were three shifts and these were rotated so that a trucker would be on the midnight shift one week and the next week would be on an afternoon shift and so on. It was heavy work and not the kind of work one would want to make a career out of.



Truckers at Broken Hill

The earliest **electoral** record we have of Frank is the 1906 Electoral Roll which shows Francis John Joseph at Gypsum St which is the address of his parents, i.e. the corner of Gypsum & Newton Sts. His occupation is shown as Miner. There was no entry on the 1908 Roll and on 1909 his entry had changed to Newton St with the occupation of Trucker. This address is actually the same place as shown on previous Rolls because of its corner location.

On 5 January 1910, Frank married Blanche Maud Parsons at the Cathedral at Broken Hill. Frank was 26 and Blanche was 19, having been born in Adelaide on 21 December 1890. We are very fortunate to have photograph of the wedding party as it is the only photograph I have seen of my grandfather.



Wedding of Frank and Blanche 1910.

Groomsman rear right is brother George Norbert Harford. Bridesmaids were Blanche's sisters Grace and Winnie

Blanche's parents were William Edward Parsons, Gas Fitter, and Barbara Hamill. William was born in about 1846, we believe in England. He was the son of Thomas and Jane Parsons. William is reputed to have arrived in South Australia from Western Australia on the ship "*Orange Grove*" on 6 January 1883. We believe he was already married and he brought his wife (and family) with him.

Barbara Hamill was born on 22 March 1858 in Glasgow, Scotland to parents Alexander Hamill and Elizabeth Loan. Barbara may have been baptized the same day as the source record

makes reference to "High Church" (perhaps of Scotland), Glasgow, Lanark, Scotland. We do not have any further information about her family or whether she had siblings.⁵

Barbara applied to emigrate to Australia in 1882. At the time she was shown as a 22 year old Domestic Servant and she secured a passage on the ship "*Clyde*." The ship record is: Entry No. 142 Hamill, Barbara; Nationality: Irish; Classification: UKF (United Kingdom Free)

The "*Clyde*" departed from Plymouth on 23 February 1882 and arrived at Port Adelaide on 6 June 1882, a voyage of some 101 days. Comments on the voyage reflect that the conduct of the single females was moderately good; single women good with a dozen or more exceptions, four or five being very bad.

Twelve months after arriving in Adelaide, Barbara found herself pregnant in 1883, and gave birth to a daughter Winifred Caroline Hamill on 15 March 1884. No father's name was recorded and the Informant registering the baby's birth on 28 March 1884 was Janet Scott, Hon. Sec. of the Retreat, Avenue Road, North Adelaide.

The birth took place at the Walkerville Retreat for Women. This was also known as the House of Mercy and it was founded in August 1881. The first resident was admitted in January 1882. The institution provided shelter and care for unmarried mothers and, after the birth, their babies. A laundry, established in 1883, became an integral part of the home providing an income to assist in the cost of running the retreat as well as an occupation for the women in residence. By 1884, 16 girls and 7 babies were accommodated. It was operated by the Church of England at 175 Stephen Terrace, Walkerville. In 1922 it was renamed The House of Mercy & Retreat for Women.⁶

In 1885 Barbara required admission to the Adelaide Hospital suffering from "*Enteric Fever*" (Typhoid Fever). The hospital records indicate that she was aged 24 years, born in Glasgow, arrived on the ship "*Clyde*" and had been in the colony three years. Barbara gave her occupation as Servant and her address as Bowden, South Australia, and listed her religion as Church of England. She was admitted to the hospital on 14 May and discharged on 8 June 1885.

On 16 March 1887 the S A Register reported that an *Ephraim Noye was charged on information from Barbara Hamill with leaving his female child without sufficient means of maintenance. Mr W V Smith for complainant, who applied for 10/- shillings per week. Order granted, defendant also being ordered to pay the costs of the trial, Three Pounds Eighteen Shillings.*"

In the year following his daughter's birth, on 5 October 1885, Ephraim Noye married Helena Frederica Russell. He was 24 years of age. Barbara's court win against him was short lived as Ephraim died two months later on 2 May 1887 at his residence at Cross Roads, Unley.⁷

Blanche Maud Parsons, Barbara's second daughter, was born on 21 December 1890 in Gratton Street, Adelaide (Gawler Ward). Her birth certificate records William Edward Parsons, Gasfitter, as her father.

⁵ Most of the research & following Information on William Parsons and Barbara Hamill provided by Jenny Carollo

⁶ Anglican Church/Church of England Homes

⁷ SA Advertiser 3 May 1887.

The 1890 edition of Sands & MacDougall Directory recorded William Parsons as a Plumber/ Gasfitter residing at O'Halloran Street, Adelaide (near Gilbert Street). The 1891 edition showed him as living in Sturt Street. It would be reasonable to assume Barbara and her two daughters were living with him.

Two years later, in 1893, a third daughter, Barbara Grace Hamill was born at Broken Hill, New South Wales. Winifred was aged 6 and Blanche 3. No father's name was recorded.

Barbara had two more daughters born at Broken Hill. In 1896 Helen (Nellie) Hamill was born and in 1899, Jessie A Hamill. No father's name was recorded for either birth.

Tragedy struck the family in January 1901 when Jessie died at just two years of age. William Parsons was recorded as her father on her Death Certificate. Jessie was buried in Broken Hill Cemetery in Catholic Section U, Grave 11.

A much happier event took place on 29 April 1905 when Barbara's eldest daughter Winifred Caroline then aged 21, married Frederick Bartlett, aged 29, son of Thomas Bartlett, at St Theodore's, Church of England, Rose Park, South Australia. Interestingly, Winifred stated on her marriage certificate that she was the daughter of Alexander Hammill (sic) when, in fact, this was the name of her grandfather.

Electoral Rolls for 1903 and 1906 show that William and Barbara Parsons lived at Newton Street Broken Hill. This was the same street that the Harford family lived in. William's occupation was shown as Plumber.

In 1908 William Parsons passed away at the age of 62. He was buried with his daughter Jessie in Broken Hill Cemetery. After his death Barbara moved to Chrystal St where she is recorded on the 1909 Electoral Roll.

Barbara's second daughter, Blanche Maud married Francis John at the Cathedral in Broken Hill on 13 January, 1910. The photograph of the wedding party shows the very elaborate dresses and headwear being worn in 1910. The wedding party consisted of Winifred Bartlett and Grace Parsons as Bridesmaids, Frank's brother George Norbert John was Best Man and a groomsman who we cannot identify. There were two flower girls. Frank's occupation was shown as Mine hand and Blanche's as "Private Life".

Given Barbara was Church of England and an unmarried mother of four living daughters, together with the strict Catholic rules of the day, her prospective mother in law Bridget would have seen to it that she had a full and proper instruction in the Catholic faith. She would also have made her acutely aware of the responsibilities this carried especially in relation to their children and their religious upbringing. Certainly, Blanche became a staunch and unwavering Catholic throughout her lifetime.

Blanche's sister, Barbara Grace, aged 19, soon followed suit marrying 38 year old James Ryan at St Augustine's Catholic Church Salisbury, South Australia on 20 June 1912. The witnesses were Henry Ryan, Labourer, of Bowden and Ellen Heffernan, Housekeeper, of Salisbury. James' occupation was given as Carter. Barbara's name shown on the marriage certificate is "Grace Barbara" and her father is recorded as William Parsons.

Grace would have also taken the appropriate instruction in the catholic faith and continued to actively practice it. Her daughter, Thelma, later became a Josephite nun.

In July 1910 Barbara Hamill was one of a number of people who applied for the lease of a Homestead Block at Waterworks Hill and Williams Street, North Government Reserves. There were 143 applications for the 254 blocks available.⁸ The Western land Board sat in Broken Hill over a week in August 1910 interviewing the applicants. Barbara's application was successful and she was listed as receiving the lease to block no. 3535.⁹

In the 1913 Electoral Roll Barbara is shown as living at William St. She is also shown on the 1915 and 1916 Rolls. At this time Frank and Blanche were also living in William St at the corner of Warnock St. It would seem very likely that Barbara was living with them.

It appears that Barbara Hamill had not enjoyed good health for many years. A photograph with her daughters and grand children, which we have dated as 1914, shows a gaunt figure of a woman who does not look well.



Barbara Hamill and daughters

**Grace with Thelma, Nellie(Helen), Francis Edward, Florrie, Joyce & Phylliss Bartlett,
Barbara, Winnie & Glenn Bartlett, Blanche with Joyce**

The Barrier Miner newspaper of 20 February 1915 recorded:

" PARSONS, Mrs.

A fund of six pence was set up for Mrs Parsons of William St West Broken Hill as this woman has been crippled up with Rheumatism for 25 years.

Mrs. Nolan was the organizer.

There was twenty sixpences in the fund up till today".

Barbara's deteriorating health resulted in her being admitted to the Home for Incurables at Fullarton, South Australia on 27 July 1915. Her next of kin were recorded as Mrs. J Ryan, Seventh St, Bowden and Mrs. F Bartlett, Glen Osmond.

⁸ Barrier Miner 30 July 1910.

⁹ Barrier Miner 19 August 1910

The Home for Incurables was founded on the 23rd September 1878 and it was incorporated on 23 October 1879. Its mission was to provide care for those who were suffering from a crippling disease, where there was no prospect of a cure. The sum of £2000 was raised and spent on an eight-roomed wooden house, on nine acres at Fullarton. The first admissions were on the 17th October 1879. By 1881 there were forty-four inmates and a staff of nine. In 1981 the Home was re-named Julia Farr Centre after a founder of the Home.

During the time Barbara was at the House of the Incurables her fourth daughter Helen (Nellie) died on 22 October 1916. She was just 20 years of age. Twelve months later Blanche submitted a Memorial Notice to the Barrier Miner of 27 October 1917. It read:

"PARSONS Memory

*Nellie Parsons died 22 October 1916
Sister B & F Harford"*



Helen (Nellie) Parsons

Barbara Hamill or Parsons as she was now known passed away at the Home For Incurables on 20 April 1917 aged 56 years. At the time of her death she was survived by her three daughters, Winifred (Mrs. Bartlett), Grace (Mrs. Ryan) and Blanche (Mrs. Harford) and twelve grandchildren.

Blanche ordered the funeral from FJ Siebert, Undertaker, and the burial took place on Sunday 22 April 1917 at West Terrace Cemetery, Adelaide. Barbara is buried in the Church of England Section.

It is highly likely William Parsons is the father of all of Barbara's five children although we do not have documentary evidence. However, they never married most likely because he was already

married and had another family. His relationship with Barbara would have been discreet, yet difficult, bearing in mind the mores of the era.

Frank and Blanche had their first child, **Francis Edward**, also called Frank, on 26 October 1910 in Broken Hill. At some time after Frank Jr. was born, Frank and Blanche went to Adelaide. Frank's name appears on the 1913 and 1914 Adelaide Electoral Rolls although Blanche is not registered there. (Note: the SA Library does not have Rolls prior to 1913). The address shown is 9 Bowen St which is in the Central Business District. His occupation was given as Labourer. Interestingly, Frank's name also continues to appear on the New South Wales Rolls for 1913 and 1915 as did Blanche's with the address shown as Gypsum St so they lived there with Frank's parents, James and Bridget as well as their other children. With his name appearing on two Rolls it seems Frank did not bother too much with the bureaucratic niceties of Electoral Rolls.

Broken Hill had a history of torrid industrial relations with BHP the dominant employer consistently adopting a hard line in all wage negotiations with the unions. There were three and a half thousand men working for BHP in 1907 but by that year the mines richest ore had been exhausted and while there was more ore to extract, this would incur higher costs. The focus on profits would always be at the expense of the miner's wages.

BHP had always been a favourite employer of the people because it was large and consistently provided work. However, in 1909 it went into a six month Lockout and this turned people against the company. This is understandable given the large number of workers and their dependents who relied on the company for their livelihood.

There were a few alternative small mines and an alternative employer, Zinc Corporation was established in 1905 with the objective of re-treating old waste dumps to recover valuable zinc. However, there were technical issues with the separation process and it took two years to solve these. Also, the stockpile to be retreated was always limited and an alternative had to be found. and by 1911, Zinc Corporation began mining underground. However, BHP continued to dominate the employment market.

BHP was not a generous employer at any time. In 1906 the miner's received a twelve per cent wage increase but it was their first pay rise in thirteen years. It was paid because the company had the capacity to pay because ore prices were at very high levels. Wages at that time were 5 Pounds per fortnight. Underground contract workers could earn 8 Pounds per fortnight but until 1916 there was no guaranteed minimum for a contract shift and many saw their earnings slump.

The work was also dangerous and some workers took extra risks to obtain higher earnings. Safety was also not high on BHP's agenda and there were many accidents, casualties and deaths. For example, thirty men were killed in 1913. There were also issues with the fine dust caused by the introduction of pneumatic drilling. Incidence of "the miner's complaint" or dust related diseases increased. It was not until the 1920 Chapman Commission that radical changes were introduced. These included watering down of drills, firing of explosives between shifts, effective ventilation and compensation for affected men.

In 1909 BHP tried to reduce wages to pre 1906 levels which it called a "bonus". However, at that point the unions had never been stronger and more militant and there was widespread community discontent at the continuing poor living conditions in the town. In 1908 world metal prices had slumped and BHP was taking action to ensure profits could be

maintained. Matters were not assisted but the provocative arrival of fifty Sydney policemen in November 1908 and also the employment of strike breakers. There were many violent incidents.

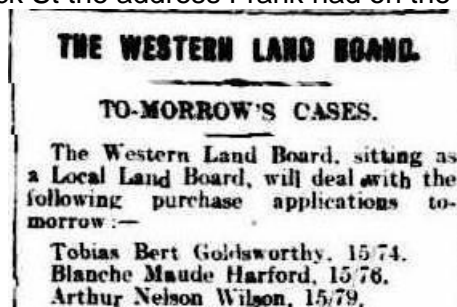
It seems clear that Frank could see the continuing poor employment prospects of working in the mines. We do not know whether this led him to go to Adelaide or whether there was some other reason. In 1913, Blanche was pregnant with their second child **Joyce Mary** who was born on 17 December 1913 at Queen's Home, Rose Park.

This was a private maternity hospital which had the land on which it was built donated by the South Australian in 1900. It opened on 24 May 1902, the birth date of Queen Victoria. It later formed part of the Queen Victoria Hospital in Fullarton Road. This would have been the newest and most modern maternity hospital in Adelaide and Blanche would have received the best of treatment which she always expected and generally demanded. Joyce's Birth Certificate shows Blanche's address as Hampton St, Goodwood

Frank and Blanche returned to Broken Hill and in 1915/16 showed the address for Blanche as corner of Long Street and Warnock Streets. Frank's address was shown as the Corner of William and Warnock Streets. These addresses adjoin one another and they were clearly at the same place. Long St was a very short distance away from the family home at 171 Newton St and is virtually an extension of Newton Lane.

James Thomas and his wife Annie were living with them so the house would have been very lively as James and Annie had two children and Frank and Blanche had three. Their third child Andrew Colin (Colin) was born on 15 March 1916. There were two under two years old and the house would have been a small miner's cottage.

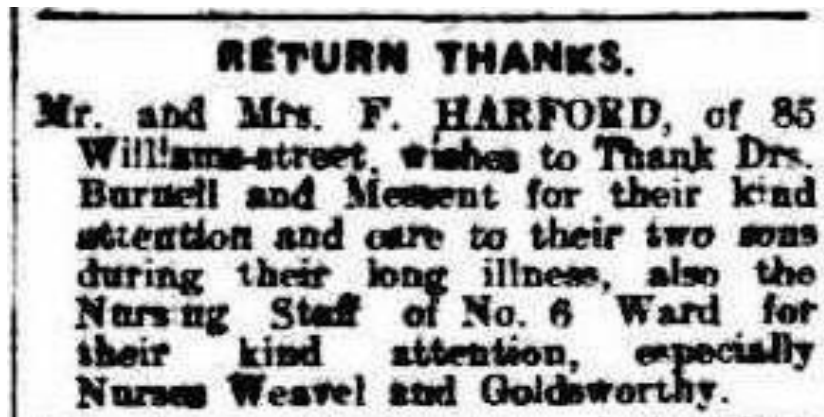
From the article below Blanche applied to the Land Board for the purchase of their property. Land owned by the Western Land Board was leased in perpetuity at nominal amounts. Improvements such as the building of a house could be made without altering the underlying rent. The house could later be sold with the purchaser meeting the ongoing rent commitment. It appears that Blanche had leased a block and erected a house for 18 Pounds. This was on the corner of William St and Warnock St the address Frank had on the Electoral Roll.



Barrier Miner 16 September 1915

Frank and Blanche's names do not appear on Broken Hill Electoral Roll after 1919. **Patricia** was born in Broken Hill on 12 March 1919 and my father Colin said that after the 1918 Miner's Strike they decided to go to Kangaroo Island. Other writings refer to this strike as 1919/1920 but whatever the precise timing the poor working and living conditions and general instability of the employment market would have been sufficient to lead them to leave Broken Hill. With four young children Frank would have sought more security than he presently had working in the mines.

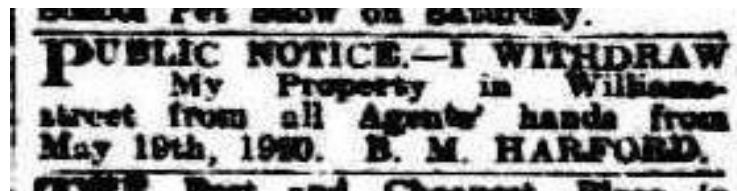
There are two newspaper items that indicate that Frank & Blanche were still in Broken Hill in early 1920. The first was an advertisement thanking doctors for attending to the illness of her two sons:



Barrier Miner 14 February 1920

This advertisement also confirms their address on the corner of William & Warnock Streets.

The second advertisement was in May with Blanche withdrawing their property from agents. This was probably because she had already sold it herself.



Barrier Miner 19 May 1920

Kangaroo Island

The Harford's went to Kangaroo Island in about mid 1920.

The first record we have is when Frank Sr. applied for and obtained a job with the District Council of Kingscote. He applied for the joint positions of night-man, caretaker and day-man. He was paid 5 Pounds per week.

This was not a very inspiring occupation and the night-man usually was involved in the collection of sanitary pans from outhouses at a time when there was no reticulated sewerage systems in many places. This role can be confirmed by the appearance of Frank before the Council in December 1920 to ask the Council to instruct residents to use disinfectants in sanitary pans. The council resolved to put a notice in the local newspaper. At the same meeting Frank also offered to erect a shelter for the cart free of charge if the materials were supplied. This offer does not appear to have been taken up.

Frank's job with the council did not last particularly long. On 26 November 1921 he resigned giving one month's notice from 18 November 1921. It appears that Frank may have been pushed into resigning. In 28 May 1921 he had been instructed to keep a "*time book to be produced when requested, recording all work performed*". There must have been some reservations about what he was doing. At the November Meeting, The Council Chairman gave a resume of what had occurred in the letting of the Kingscote Hall. Frank was sent for and he handed in the keys and the books and stated that for the rest of his employment he would obey the Chairman's instructions in every detail. The Council accepted his resignation.

We do not have any further details of any possible irregularities that may have occurred. However, we do have an advertisement for a Dance at the District Hall at Kingscote on 1 October 1921 which shows F. Harford as "Promoter". It seems that he could well have had some conflict of interest between his roles as Promoter and Caretaker of the hall perhaps involving payment for the hire of the hall.

During 1921 from July to October, Blanche participated in ten rounds of a Euchre Tournament, the results of which were reported weekly in the local newspaper, the KI Courier. Edna (Frank Jr.'s wife) told us that Blanche was an avid euchre player and she used to play every day when they moved to Merbein later. Blanche finished fifth in the Tournament which had twelve players. There was a dance social to celebrate the tournament and Blanche received a Box of Soaps for her fifth place. We have noted that Frank was not one of the gentleman players. There was a further tournament in 1922 in which Blanche participated coming in at the same position. Once again there was a dance social to celebrate.

There were two newspaper reports in 1922 involving Joyce who would have turned nine in that year. The first involved an accident at home. Running down the passage she ran into Frank who was carrying a cup of hot tea and she was scalded. At the time the community was trying to make a case for a resident doctor. Frank and Blanche placed a "Thank You" paragraph in the newspaper. The second event involved Joyce winning "*the tiny reciter's class*" at a recital run by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She would have been nine at the time.

Frank Jr. attended Kingscote State School along with Joyce and Colin although Colin said that he started school at Kingscote in 1922. We know Frank was there in 1921 as he was placed second in the KI A & H Society Annual Show for "*Homework Books*" for Grade IV. He would have been 11 at the time which by today's standards is quite old for that level.

In 2 December 1922 the Muston Salt Lake News carried a report that "*Mrs. Peach was giving up the boarding house and moving to the city*". It seems that with this vacancy the Harford's and in particular Blanche took over the boarding house. We had been previously told by Joy Hillier (Frank Jr. and Edna's daughter) that Blanche had done this work and this had also been confirmed in the book by Beverly Overton on the Salt and Gypsum mining industries on Kangaroo Island which referred to a "woman called *Francis Hartford*" as also running the boarding house.

The boarding house was owned by the salt mining company and various families were contracted to run it during the summer. This was the time of the peak seasonal work of scraping the salt from the salt pans and it brought an influx of workers. The contract was let annually and the successful applicant (usually a family) ran the boarding house for the term agreed upon and supplied three meals a day for the seasonal workers. It was not unusual for there to be well over one hundred men to be fed three times a day.

Many of the local married women, young ladies and older girls helped in the boarding house. Some of the women even set up small catering services from their own homes, supplying meals for ten or more of the salt scrapers. It should be remembered that in those days at Muston Salt Lake there would have been no electricity and no refrigeration.

There was a small township on the shores of the Salt Lake. Most of the houses were small galvanized iron huts. The walls and ceilings were lined with whitewashed newspapers or recycled hessian bags. These were recycled salt bags that had been used many times before. Many of the floors were dirt and bag mats were placed over them. The dirt floors and the soil outside were packed down with regular watering to help reduce the dust and this wetting helped to keep them cool in summer.

Everyone went to church so that there was a large enough congregation and it did not matter which denomination of church it was. The ladies of the Salt Lake township were very self reliant and they all had great fun and enjoyed good companionship. Social activities included church, picnics, dances, plays and card games. Euchre was quite popular with regular tournaments being held and Blanche would have been a keen participant.

The Muston Salt Lake News recorded some of the events in which the Harford's were involved. For example, the edition of 27 October 1923 mentions that a Fancy Dress Ball was to be held on that day. Novelty events included ballroom dances and moonlight waltzes. *"A good floor is guaranteed as Mr. Harford is preparing it. The proceeds will go to local school funds."* The following 3 November edition thanked Frank for the excellent floor that was provided and mentioned Mrs. Harford as "Pierette". In 1924 a further Fancy Dress Ball was held and the newspaper reported that Miss Patty Harford won the best dressed girl's prize of a box of chocolates and the best dressed boy prize winner was Colin Harford. He was awarded 10 shillings and 6 pence. Whatever they wore would have been made by Blanche.

Blanche was always known to be keen on dancing. There were occasions when Blanche had taken to her bed or not arisen because of some ailment (or simply to get attention). When she found there was a dance on in the evening she would be miraculously cured and would be the life of the party right throughout the night.

On Eight Hour Day 1924, Muston held a sports day. The Harford children all participated. Joyce won the Girls 10 to 14 race and was second in the Ladies Open Handicap. Colin was second in the Boys under 10 race and also second in "Apple Eating". Frank off 6 yards was second in the Men's handicap. Later, on 14 November 1924, Joyce won prizes for Grade Four Needlework and Knitting at the Island's Show.

Muston Salt Lake School was opened in 1919 so the Harford children would have gone there in 1923. It was officially called Muston School. It was a small school with an enrollment fluctuating between twenty and thirty children and in 1924 there were 20 to 30 families living at the Salt Lake. School hours were 9am to 3.30pm. Most children went home for lunch because the school was close to their homes. It was considered a treat to be able to take your lunch to school.

An empty house was made available for the school. It was made of galvanized iron and had four rooms of which three were lined, one with boards, one with bags and one with fluted iron. The exposed situation near the lake and the flat roof did little to make conditions comfortable in winter or summer. The furnishings were long backless desks, a table and chair for the teacher and a school cupboard made of kerosene boxes stacked and hung with cloth.

For transport, most families owned a horse and buggy. Transport for town outings was often provided by the Salt Company often using the steam train and its salt trucks which could carry a large number of people.



Muston Salt Lake 2008 showing remains of old works.

It is not clear how long the Blanche had the boarding house contract for, but at best it was for the two seasons of 1923 and 1924. It is clear the children were at Kingscote School by the end of 1925 and most likely earlier once the 1924 summer seasonal work peak had passed.

There is an odd newspaper reference on 22 September 1924 to an auction of some furniture "*On account Mrs. F Harford*" at Arthur Daw & Sons, Saleyards, Kingscote. The items for sale were "a three piece bedroom suite, 8 piece dining room suite, Oval Table, Sideboard, all in Oak, also Double bedstead and Spring. This is superior furniture."

It is hard to imagine this furniture being used in the Salt Lake conditions but it may have been. It is also difficult to understand why it would be sold unless they had been able to rent a house in Kingscote that was fully furnished. We will never know!

We are sure of the move to Kingscote because Colin was in a school Concert at Kingscote District Hall in December and on 12 December 1925 Blanche was one of a number of ladies thanked, through a newspaper article, by the school for their assistance in making the school concert a success.

In December 1925 Frank would have turned 15 and approaching 16 and Colin would have been approaching 10 by the end of the year. This seems to put an appropriate date on the school photograph which has the three of them in it. Patricia would have been 6 or 7 and had probably not started school. She is certainly not named in the photograph. It is of interest that in this photograph, Colin does not appear to be wearing any shoes!



Kingscote School Group, c-late 1920's

TEACHERS:- U. H. Pearce, V. Gunn, E.M. Sundberg

BACK ROW:- Ron Adams, Jack Saunders, Francis Hartford, Marsden Chapman,
Frank Chapman, Sid Letton, Frank Rowe, George Waller, Murray Lenthall, Marj Murton,
Edna Anderson, Pearl Sharpe, Ina Sundberg, Kath May, Vera Waller, Joan Murton,
Eric Cook, Albert Waller

MIDDLE ROW:- John Anderson, Hilda Bell, Edna Bell, L. Boxer, Doris Snelling,
Alice Chapman, Phylis Wiadrowski, Sadie Murton, Violet Burgess, Charles Anderson,
Francis Edwards, Ken Cook, Lewis Chapman, Ross Rowe, Klem Edwards,
Vic Gasmier, Clarence May

FRONT ROW:- Colin Bell, Gordon Ransom, Stanley May, Fred Christopher, Elwyn Leahy,
Colin Harford, Douglas Lenthall, Lesley Lovering, Ralph Bell, Eric Sundberg, Fred Buckland,
Doris Burgess, Gwen Uren, Joyce Hartford, Madeline Leopold, Alice Letton, Archie Lovering,

Kingscote School Late 1920's

We do not know where the family lived at Kingscote. We have been told that Frank (and perhaps Joyce and Colin) were picked up by the Bell girls in a horse and gig at their house called "Sunnyside" a little out of Kingscote between there and Cygnet River. The Bell girls are in the photograph. We think Sunnyside is the name of the house they lived in rather than a town.

We believe that Frank was at school in 1926 as he is named in a Children's Fancy Dress Frolic at Kingscote Hall in July of that year as "*Uncle Sam*". However, it would be very likely that he would have left after that year. He would have achieved Grade 9 level.

Merbein

We have had some difficulty in getting clarity in the timing of the family's move to Merbein in Victoria. The Electoral Rolls have not been much use because Frank tended to ignore his legal requirement to keep the information up to date. For example, when they came to the Island they did not appear on a Roll until 1925 with the address of Muston when we know they were at Kingscote from 1920 to 1922. They also appeared on the 1926 and 1927 Rolls still with the Muston address when we know they had gone back to Kingscote.

However, they do not appear on Rolls after 1927 and it appears that, as advised by Colin, they went to Merbein in 1927. This is consistent with the last newspaper item we have which showed the results of sports held at American River on 8 January 1927 in which Colin and Patricia were first and second in the School Children's race. One newspaper article suggesting a later date, indicates that "*F. Harford*" participated in a Euchre tournament over a number of weeks in 1929 with the final evening on 21 September. Blanche was not listed as a participant. This may have been Frank Jr. but we do not believe that it was.

Frank and Blanche both appear on the Victorian Electoral Roll for 1931 with the address given as Merbein Racecourse. Given the lag in publication of these Rolls they would have been there at least in 1930.

It is of interest that the newspapers also recorded the names of people staying at the Ozone Hotel at Kingscote. On the night of 8 January 1927, the day of the Sports, a Mr. Harford was staying at the hotel and we presume this was Frank. He also stayed there on 23 April 1927, twice during 1929, three times during 1930 and three times during 1931. We believe that Frank Jr. stayed on the Island when the family went to Merbein. He would have left school and got a job. We can only presume that Frank Sr. was visiting the Island perhaps to see Frank Jr.

Details are sketchy about Frank and Blanche's time at Merbein and Mildura as are the facts around where and when they lived there. We have some insights provided by Edna and some of Colin's letters but little else. It was before we were born and Frank and Blanche had separated by the time we were old enough to know who they were.

We know that Patricia, Colin and Joyce started at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School at Merbein on 31 January 1928. This was the first year that the school was open. According to Colin, they initially went to Merbein West and Merbein South State Schools before the Catholic School opened. They are most likely to have attended both schools in 1927 as they would have been moving around. The school records show that Joyce was 14 and in Year 6. Colin was 11 years of age and Patricia was 8.



Our Lady's School Senior Grades, circa 1929

Joyce c1929 Third from left

By 1930 when Edna came on the scene only Patricia was living with Frank and Blanche. We believe Colin went off to school at Douglas Park in 1929 and we believe Joyce had gone to boarding school with the Sisters of Mercy at Geelong. Enquiries to the Mercy Archives in Melbourne have not been able to confirm this.

In about 1930 Frank Jr. took Edna to visit Frank and Blanche at Merbein. At the time they were living in a two or three room tin shed on the banks of the river. The two Frank's would go off catching rabbits. It was during the depression and with little work rabbits provided a source of food and some income from the sale of skins. Sr. Grace Rogers from Merbein told us that Frank worked on a station near Mildura trapping rabbits, staying in the shearer's quarters. She said that this should not be seen as a sign they were poor. The fact was there was little work around and rabbit trapping offered a source of food and money. She said that many people made a lot of money from the activity.

Blanche would stay in bed till after lunch. A man would come in and Blanche and he would play cards. He also brought a bottle of beer. Edna would have to cook the dinner. Another man would often join them.

In 1931 when Joy Hillier was only a baby Frank took Edna to Mildura for six months. They stayed with Blanche at a Boarding House quite near the Church. Joy was left at KI with her grandmother but she later joined them and they stayed in Mildura a further three months.

Frank and Blanche had arguments at this time and as time wore on these would have become more serious. Frank was uneducated and could aspire to nothing more than laboring. During the Depression jobs were hard to come by and he would have made little if any money. Blanche was demanding and as Patricia was growing up would have wanted a better place to live. To that point after more than 20 years of a marriage Blanche and her children had not been provided with a stable household environment let alone an appropriate place in which they could live.

The further education of Joyce and Colin appears to have been paid for by the Church at the instigation of Blanche and her aspirations to have one or more of her children as active members of the clergy. Frank would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to meet her demands. They would have been well beyond him.

We know Frank kept and used to train and ride a racehorse, hence the Merbein Racecourse address on the Electoral Roll. Edna was charged with the duty of feeding it while Frank was away with Frank Jr. catching rabbits. Blanche has also told Joy that Frank was a terrible gambler and she had had to sell wedding presents to pay his gambling debts. (Perhaps this is the explanation for the sale of furniture on Kangaroo Island.) Edna has confirmed that he raced a horse on the Island but we cannot substantiate Blanche's gambling accusation.

We have been told by Eila (Colin's wife) that the marriage lasted twenty seven years and that implies a separation in 1937. We have no other information or facts to confirm or deny this.

While unreliable, the Electoral Rolls show Frank and Blanche at Merbein Racecourse in 1931. There are no other entries at Mildura for Frank on the 1934, 1937, 1938 and 1941 Rolls. However, Colin appears on the 1938 Roll Supplement which is the first Roll he could appear on after reaching voting age. Both Colin and Blanche appear on the 1939 and 1941 Rolls at 144 12th St Mildura. Patricia was too young to vote in 1938 and was 21 in 1940. She missed the 1940 Roll and we expect she could have gone to Melbourne with Joyce.

Colin and Blanche left Mildura in 1941 and it is probably no coincidence that Frank returned soon after. The following are details of his Electoral Roll entries:

1943, 1945, 1947, 1950, Eaglesham St Mildura. Labourer
 1951, 1952 Benetook Avenue, Mildura. Labourer
 1955, 179 10th St, Mildura, Labourer. This property has since been redeveloped
 1956, Morpung Avenue, Nicholl's Point. Labourer
 1961 Morpung Avenue, Nicholl's Point Labourer

Benetook Ave Morpung Ave are both streets that contain small fruit blocks. Colin went to Mildura every year to see his father. I have a vague memory of one such visit. My sister Mary recalls that in about 1958 Colin and Eila took her to Mildura to visit Frank. They stayed at Frank's place for only one night where it was apparent that he was living with a woman. Eila insisted that they leave the next day and get separate accommodation at a B&B in the town.



1941 Blanche with Colin & Frank Jr.

Frank died at Mildura on 21 December 1965 at the age of 81 years. He was still at Nicholl's Point at that time. Elizabeth and I drove Colin to Mildura for the funeral which was on Christmas Eve. On arriving I had a sleep as we were driving straight back to Melbourne after the funeral. Elizabeth and Colin went to the Undertaker and saw Frank without telling me. I was very upset and still am to this day that I did not get the chance to see him.

There were two Death Notices in the Mildura newspaper one placed by Colin: *"Beloved father of Colin, Francis, Patricia and Joyce (Dcd)."* The second notice was:

"Francis John. Beloved friend of Louisa, Betty, Joyce, Margaret, Melva, Ron and George. RIP"

The funeral was small but there were a three or four women there who were crying and obviously very upset with Frank's death.



Francis John's Grave Mildura

Colin married in 1941 and Blanche moved to Melbourne and lived with Patricia although at various times she lived with each of her children. In Adelaide after Frank had finished building his house he converted the garage into a place for Blanche to stay. We believe Blanche also stayed with Joyce and John at Charnwood Road St Kilda in the late 1940's.

Blanche and Patricia went on a holiday to England in 1952. They sailed on the Strathnaver. They returned by ship the same year. We are not aware of who paid her fare but it was probably Patricia who had a successful modeling career.



1953 Blanche, Frank Jr. Joy Hillier & Twins



1952 Strathnaver Harfords & Overends



1957 Blanche at Patricia's Wedding

We have fond memories of Blanche & Patricia attending school concerts and being over complimentary about John and my looks and singing ability. We were always very pleased they

came. In 1955 Colin moved the family to Oakleigh and built a flat out the back for Blanche. It was a small one bed/sitting room with an adjoin kitchenette. She did not impose on our space inside the house and it was always nice to spend time sitting and talking with her.

In 1957 Patricia married Michael Koczur, one of the nicest men one would ever like to meet and also a very competent builder. He built a house at Templestowe including a flat for Blanche. This did not work.

After a number of years Blanche who was already very demanding became more so. Michael was a foreigner and he was never good enough for Patricia. When we visited we often left abruptly as the conversation became heated. Ultimately, we chose not to visit and avoid the potential conflict.

There was no holding Blanche back and in 1975 she made another trip to Europe on the Ellinis, aged 85. She went as part of a tour group but with no other family member. This was very controversial given her age and Colin and her had words as he tried to prevent her from going.



Blanche On Ellinis 1975

In 1980 Patricia died of breast cancer and Blanche spent her latter days at Kingston Centre in Cheltenham. She died there on 12 February 1982 at the age of 92 years. She is buried at Templestowe cemetery.