



Frank in his late thirties

FRANK INCOLL 1875 - 1954

Frank was born in Ballarat in 1875, and married Susan Jaffray at Kyneton in 1901. He was a coach painter and travelled widely within Victoria and Tasmania in the course of his trade. They had a family of two girls and five boys. The achievements of their children are a reflection of their upbringing.

All did well in their chosen pursuits. Alan won a senior scholarship to Scotch College, attended Melbourne University, and was a secondary teacher and senior master for twenty years. Alice also became a teacher after attending Melbourne University, which was most unusual for women in those days. After raising her family, she taught in Papua New Guinea for 10 years. Doug also became a teacher, and spent many years training future tradesmen in woodworking and carpentry. Greta stayed home to help raise the children, as was the custom for the eldest daughter at the time. Her culinary skills were legendary.

Frank Jr also won a scholarship to Scotch, and then graduated from the Victorian School of Forestry and the Canberra Forestry School. He became Divisional Forester, a senior management position with the Forests Commission at a young age, and had a distinguished career. Jack also graduated from the Victorian School of Forestry and was highly regarded as the District Forester at Macedon for many years. Jim became a successful dairy farmer at Moss Vale, New South Wales, after graduating from Duntroon Military College in the 1930's, and a military career including service in WW2.

FRANK INCOLL

Frank was the second child of Tychicus Incoll and his second wife Margaret Nicholas. He was born at Ballarat on 8 June 1875 into a family that ultimately numbered eleven children. See "Extract of Birth" Appendix 2.

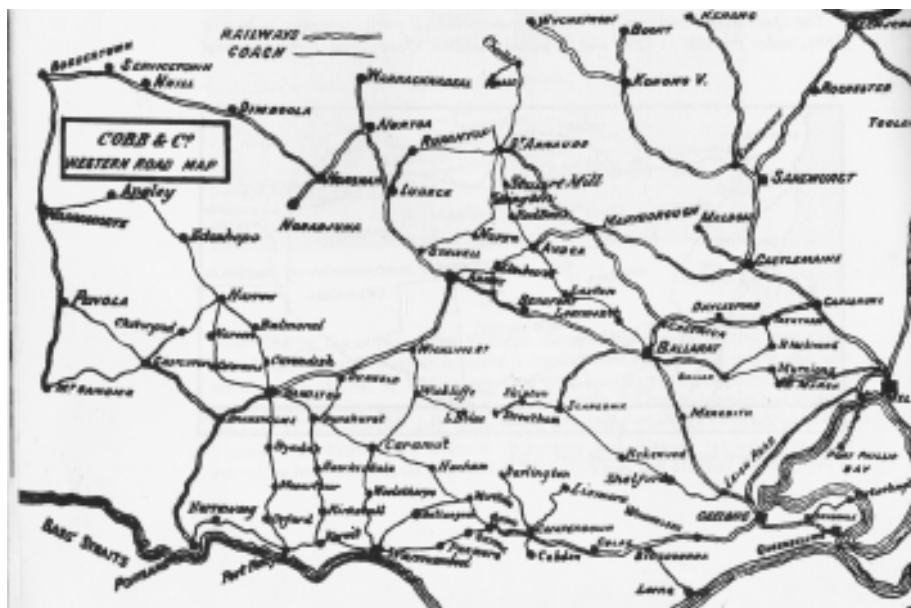
Frank's sisters were Mary and Margaret Esther, and his brothers were John, James, and Sidney. He had two half sisters, Hortense, and Louisa, and three half-brothers, Albert, Oliver and Frank Ernest, from his father's first marriage to Thirza Jennings. Frank Ernest and Hortense died in infancy. (More information - Appendix One.)

Frank became a coach painter, no doubt having served an apprenticeship while learning his trade, perhaps at Ballarat, which was a thriving regional communication centre.

Since travelling by road, rail or air these days is fast and reliable, some imagination is needed to put the work of a coach painter in perspective. Around the turn of the century the transport system was quite different. Movement by road required either horsepower of the four-legged kind, or the more common "Shank's pony", that is, on foot.

Horse drawn coaches carried passengers, freight and mail, and provided the only link to many country towns and small settlements. There was no radio or TV! Travel times were extended and variable, as roads outside the main towns consisted of unmade dirt tracks. These were rutted, dusty and uncomfortable in summer, and often an impassable sea of mud in winter. If the coach could not get through, there would be no mail, no newspapers, and no travellers.

Roadside inns to refresh the weary traveller and provide a change of horses were built at key locations. These were quite frequent in hill country. Figure 2 shows the road network in western Victoria used by Cobb & Co.



Cobb and Co routes in western Victoria

The "Lights of Cobb and Co" by Henry Lawson provides an evocative word picture of the coaching days:

THE LIGHTS OF COBB AND CO.

Fire lighted; on the table a meal for sleepy men;
 A lantern in the stable; a jingle now and then;
 The mail-coach looming darkly by light of moon and star;
 The growl of sleepy voices; a candle in the bar;
 A stumble in the passage of folk with wits abroad;
 A swearword from a bedroom--the shout of "All aboard!"
 'Tchk tchk! Git-up!" "Hold fast, there!" and down the range we go;
 Five hundred miles of scattered camps will watch for Cobb and Co.



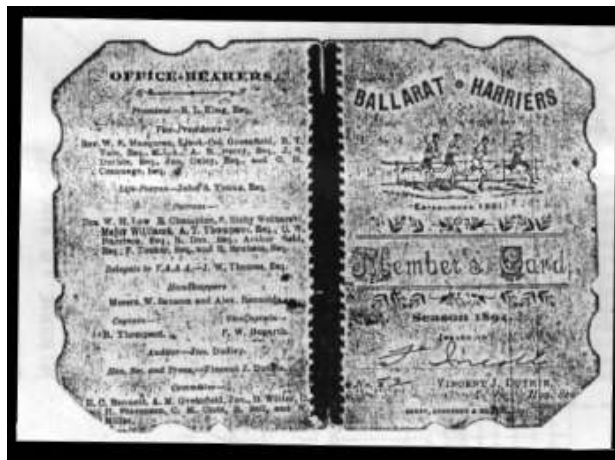
Horse drawn coach - of the Cobb & Co era, at Hurstbridge

As with motor vehicles today, owners took great pride in the appearance of their horse drawn vehicles, which they decorated to reflect their social position and wealth. In the days before spray painting, the distinctive touch was added using layers of lacquer and varnish, gold foil, and extensive hand painted line work.

Competition between owners for personalised decoration was intense. Cobb & Co was known for the scarlet livery of their coaches, which required considerable maintenance. This work required great skill and a fine touch, and was the livelihood of Frank Incoll.

Frank was an amateur athlete, and a member of the Ballarat Harriers in 1894 when he was 19. He was placed in a heat of the Stawell Gift about this time.

A handwritten note on a family paper shows that Frank lived at Yea in 1899. He married Susan Jaffray in Kyneton in 1901, at the age of 25. Susan must have travelled to Melbourne for the birth of Alan Seddon, on 3 March 1902, at Brunswick East.



Ballarat Harriers membership card from 1894



Susan Jaffray
Taken by A Flegeltaub Ballarat



Frank aged 32
Taken by Crummonds, Burnie, 25 Sep 1908

The young couple

Margaret Jaffray (Greta) and Francis Sydney were born at Yea in 1903 and 1904 respectively. The family moved to Birregurra, where Alice McGregor was born in 1906. Birregurra, a town on the Colac-Lorne road, was the site of both a coach depot and a railway station. It is shown on the map, Figure 2.

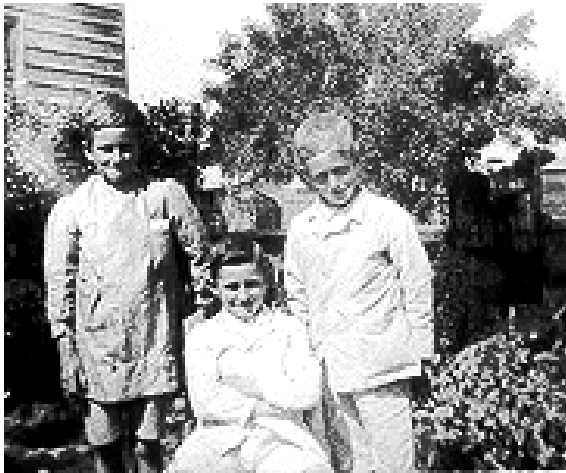
The next move was to Burnie. James Stewart arrived on 14 Sep 1907, followed by John Andrew on 9 Feb 1909, and Douglas Manners in 1910.

So eight children arrived in 8 years, and in 1910 they were all under 8 years. Susan must have been a busy lady, without the convenience of hot water taps, disposable nappies, washing machines or electric power.

When this was combined with two moves of all the household goods and chattels over quite long distances, including the trip to Tasmania by coastal schooner, Susan's workload can only be imagined. This would have been quite an adventure for the older children. The family was fortunate that at a time of high infant mortality, all the children survived and grew to become healthy adults.

They turned out in their Sunday best for the family pic shown below, which would have been about 1914, when Frank was 38. This was a providential age to be, at the outbreak of the first world war.

Three of Frank's brothers, John Valentine, John Francis Gorham and James Nicholas, and his nephew John Francis all served overseas in the 1914-18 war. Fortunately, all returned home.



Left: Jim, Doug, and Jack;



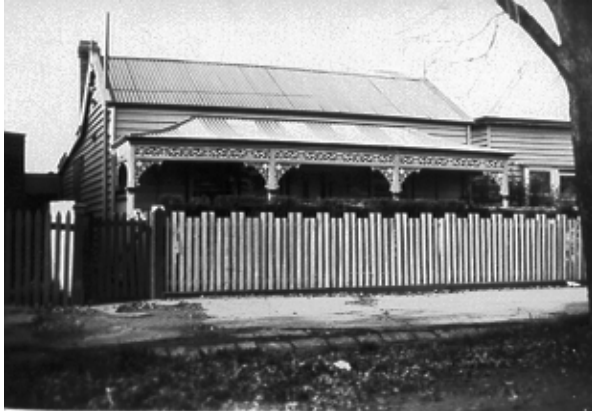
Right: most likely Alan, John, Alice, Jim, Greta & Frank, about 1909 before Doug arrived



Figure 4: Frank, Alice, Alan, Greta, Frank Jr, Susan; Jack, Jim and Doug, about 1915

The family returned to Melbourne about this time. Susan had despaired of journeying about and her influence was responsible for the purchase of a house at 18 Verdon Street, Williamstown. She would no doubt have been amazed that 18 Verdon St, a "3 bedroom house on 493 square metres" was sold on 6th April 2004 for \$675,000.

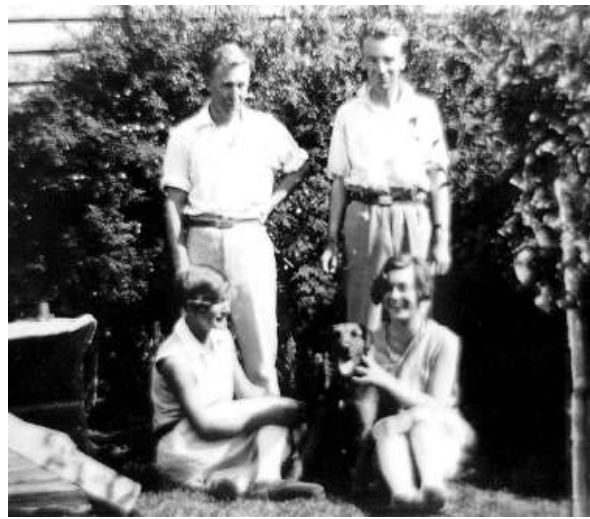
Due to Susan's influence and ambitions for her children, and possible some help from the Lodge, Alan won a scholarship at Scotch College senior school in 1917.



Left: The house at 18 Verdon St, Williamstown. -

Right: Extensions to the rear of Verdon Street, probably to provide quarters for Jim and Sid. Doug - pictured, rear. (Photos: Bev Yeates)

The era of mechanisation was accelerated by rapid development during the first war, with Henry Ford's T-model and other motor cars soon appearing in large numbers, and displacing the horse and carriage as the primary means of transport. The occupation of coach painter was subject to change at this time, and pressure to find other work. However Frank was still listed as a coach painter on Alan's marriage certificate in 1929.



Two images, same location, probably Williamstown 1930 (?).

Left: Frank; Right, Alan, Harry, Alice, Ellwy.



Family tableau: Doug; Frank Jr. age 16; Greta; Jim, no other details given



Left: Jack; Center Jack Doug Jim early 1920's Right: Jim, Frank, Doug. Pics: Bev. Yeates

Next came the economic depression of the thirties, which may well have been a factor in Frank's departure for the country. He left Melbourne to live and work with Jim on a tobacco farm at Pomonal. The property was located south of the Moyston - Hall's Gap road, against the state forest in the shadow of Mt William.

The farm was established on a 'selection purchase lease' of crown land in the Parish of Moyston West, in the name of J S Incoll about 1934. While the outlook was scenic, the ground was poor, and the tobacco crop was afflicted by blight.



Tending the crop Judy MacLean (nee Incoll) pictured

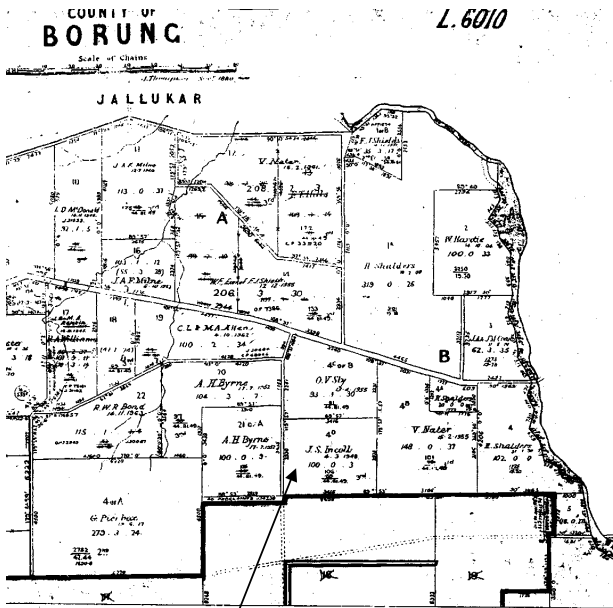


Persons in mature crop may be Jim and Judy
Photos: Judy McLean

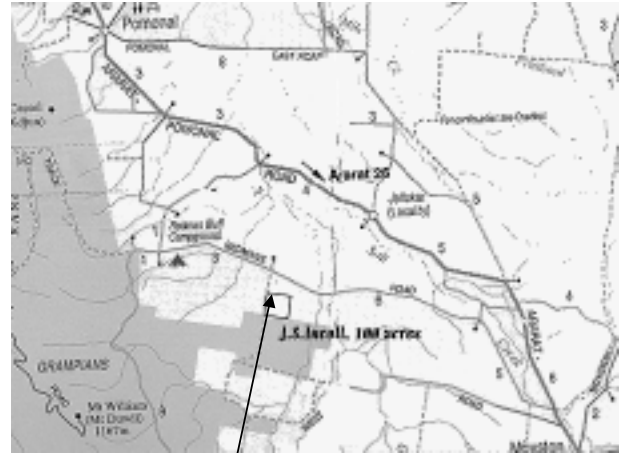
To cap it all, the family was burnt out in the disastrous 1939 fires. I recall Frank describing how he survived the fires by seeking refuge in the dam. Jim and his family left for greener pastures; Frank stayed at Pomonal.

The house, rebuilt after the bushfire, had four rooms, a kitchen, sleepout, lounge room and bedroom. The kitchen had a wood-burning stove set in a mud brick fireplace on the exterior wall. Dead timber from the nearby forest was used as fuel. There was no electric power; a kerosene lamp provided light.

Rainwater from the roof was collected into one 1000-gallon tank - not a vast reserve in a low rainfall area. A shed 20 odd metres behind the house from the farming days stood empty and unused, apart from the pit toilet at the eastern end. There were one or two large eucalypt trees near the house. The buildings were located in a clearing of about five acres.



Allotment 4D as selected



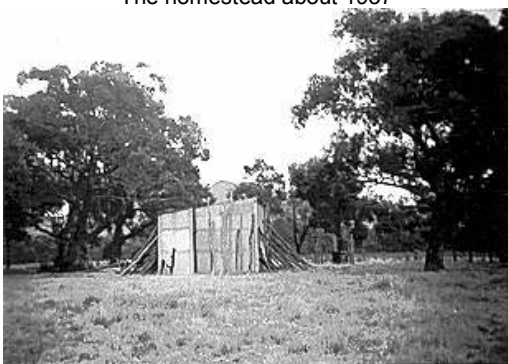
Approximate location of the selection



The homestead about 1937



in 1953



shed at rear



Mrs Incoll, at Stawell with Rod and Phillip about 1943

Long before it became the thing to do, Frank lived pretty much a sustainable low energy life style. He grew his own vegetables, against the odds, as water was scarce and the birds, kangaroos and emus took their toll.

Thin wooden poles of bush timber topped by metal cans and connected with string, stood erect in the garden as sentinels to alarm invading predators. Frank used to ride his bike 11 miles along sand tracks to the Pomonal store each week for stores and mail.

Susan lived in Melbourne. My first childhood recollection of her was on a visit to the Fry's house in Hawthorn with Alan about 1943, when she would have been in her seventies. Mrs Incoll was sitting in her favourite spot - inside a brick fireplace from which the stove had been removed. She sat on a cushion within the vacant space, facing the bricked wall opposite her seat. There was enough room for her to knit or read. To a small boy, it seemed a very sensible arrangement.

The photograph is with Rod and Phillip at Stawell about 1943. During this visit, Susan taught Rod how to get a cork out of a bottle with a looped piece of string, a lesson never forgotten and used since! This grand lady passed away on New Year's Day, 1945. Dad took me to Melbourne in the train when he attended the funeral, and I had my first ride in a tram out to Alice and Harry's home at Hawthorn.

My earliest recollection of grandfather was while the family were living at Stawell. He rode his bicycle the 35 km to Stawell from Pomonal, and stayed with the family at 4 Wimmera Street several times. The bike was a large black heavy framed BSA with no gears. It had a rack on the back to carry his bag.

When he arrived in mid afternoon he immediately took to a pile of red box firewood, which had just been delivered with the axe. It was split and stacked in the shed by the time Dad arrived home several hours later. Frank would have been around 70 at this time.

Alan also cycled to Pomonal, sometimes accompanied by Peter. Once they went by horse and dray, a trip that took all day. On one occasion, Peter recalls cycling via Halls Gap, bush bashing up over the Mt William saddle, and down to a track that got them to Frank's before dark. He also recalls failing to see the single strand of wire stretched between the posts across the gateway, an upsetting experience.

The family shifted to Horsham in 1948. Dad acquired his first motor vehicle, a light green Hillman Minx TG-055, from Wilson and Bolton Motors in 1952. He decided to visit his father and wrote asking for a road and track update. A map duly arrived, drawn in pencil on the back of an envelope. I went along for the ride. I remember some navigation problems; there were more tracks on the ground than on the map. Also, the Hillman tended to lose traction on the sand drifts approaching the house. I then realised why Dad had taken me!

Frank was in the vegetable garden at the front of the house and saw the car coming. He met us at the front fence and said, "You've got a Ford!" He had lost his hearing years ago; so Alan wrote a note saying no, it was a Hillman. To Frank it seemed all cars were Fords because he then said "Oh! A Hillman Ford!"

Alan wrote a note asking his father about his health - how are you? Frank said "All right now. I had a tooth ache last week and had to pull the tooth". Further enquiry revealed he had extracted a molar with a three-inch nail and a pair of pliers. He was a tough man.

Frank visited 53 McLachlan St, Horsham about 1950, when he was about 75, and shared my bedroom. I had a radio that Dad made, which used earphones. Frank was convinced to try on the earphones, and hearing music with the volume turned full on, said "That's the first time I've heard anything for years!" On being asked by note whether he could use a radio set, he shook his head. He was used to a silent world.

About 1952, during a particularly cold winter, his sons decided that the time had come for him to return to the comforts of city life. Frank spent the last two years of his life in Melbourne, living with the Fry family at Hawthorn.

One story told of him during this period is that the house of renowned singer Alan Eddy, who lived next to the Fry's, was burgled and this attracted newspaper interest.

Frank sported a flowing white beard at this time, and attracted much interest from the reporters, with a picture of him given more prominence in the daily press than the report of the burglary.

Frank died from influenza on 17 July 1954, at the age of 79. His ashes were interred beside Susan's at the Necropolis, Springvale, Agonis Section, in Bed 54, Rose 2. Whilst clearing out personal effects from Pomonal, a chocolate box full of pension cheques worth quite a sum was discovered. Frank may not have known that the cheques had a six-month life and were thus valueless. Also, the family did not realise that while the cheques had expired, their value stood to the credit of the estate and no claim was made.



The Patriarch. Frank at Macedon about 1952: Back Row: David Fry, Roger Fry, Harry Fry, Alice Fry (Incoll), Alan Incoll, Rod Incoll, Beverley Incoll. Center: Jean Incoll (Drummond), Frank, Ellwy Incoll (Nielsen) Front: Philip Incoll, Alan Incoll Jr, Bill Incoll

The children did well in their chosen pursuits. Alan won a senior scholarship to Scotch College, attended Melbourne University, and was a secondary teacher and senior master for twenty years. Alice also became a teacher after attending Melbourne University, which was most unusual for women in those days.

After raising her family, she returned to teaching in Papua New Guinea for about ten years in the late 1960s-early 1970s.

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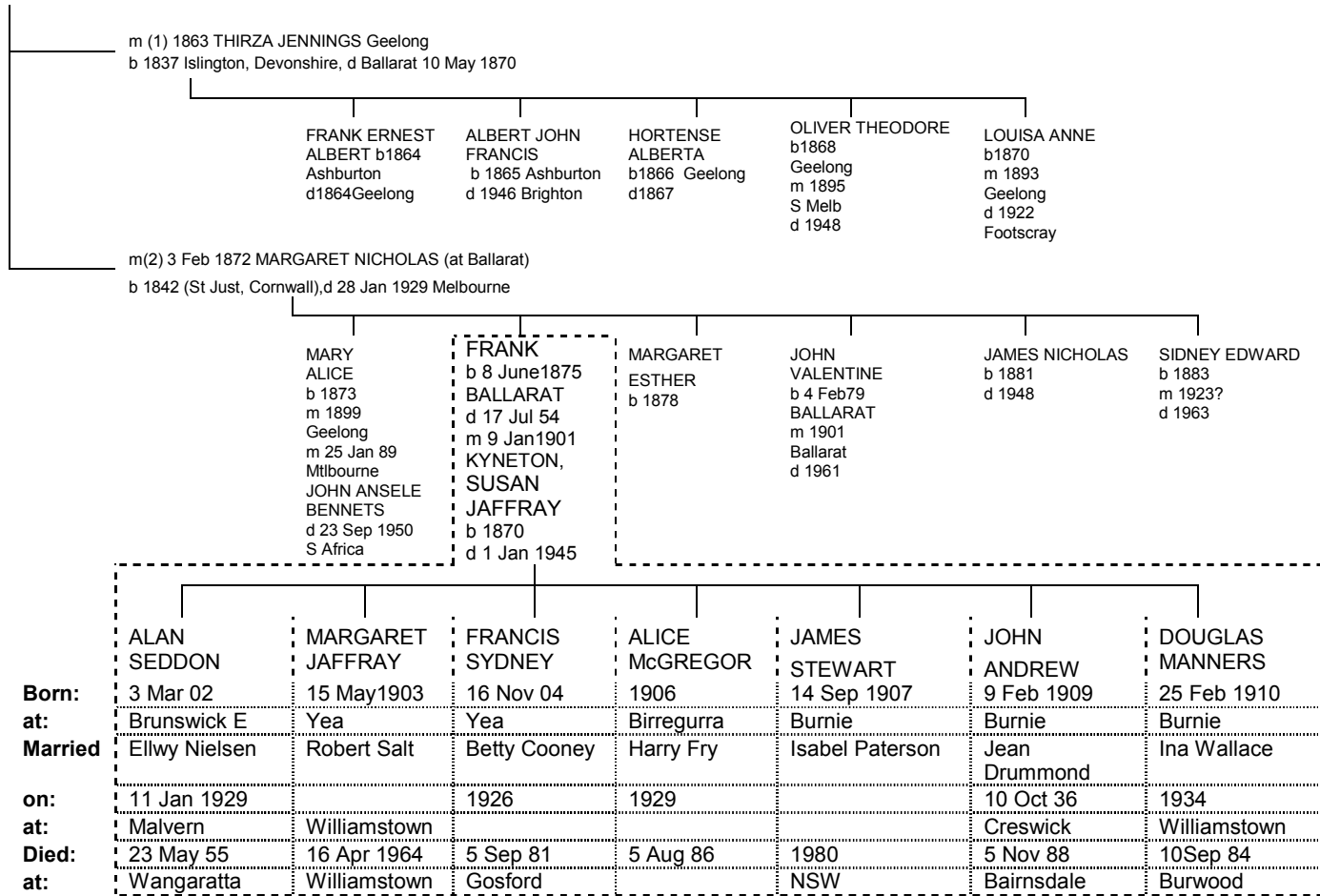
Jim became a successful dairy farmer at Moss Vale, New South Wales, after graduating from Duntroon Military College in the 1930's, and a military career including service in WW2.

The successes of the family were mainly due to Susan's influence; Alan once told Rod that he too would have become a forester, except that his mother thought that she had to find the fifty-pound bond required for the scholarship - a vast sum in those days.

The lives of Frank, Susan, and their children exemplify the virtues of hard work, self-denial and abiding by decent values, during the hard times of the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War – a living example of the creed ***Res Non Verba***, (Deeds Not Words), though they may have thought little of it.

LOUISA MARIA INCELL

FRANK TYCHICUS INCOLL
 b 22 July 1840, Stepney, London, d Kensington, Victoria 6 August 1905



This chart uses research carried out by the author, Jenny Kennedy, Douglas Manners Incoll, Ken Osborne, Cynthia Nadalin, and others. Their work is acknowledged with thanks.

STATE OF VICTORIA.

"EXTRACT" OF ENTRY, N^o 81631 -

Office of the Government Statist,
Melbourne, 26th November, 1941.

Re Application Fol. 17579/41.
MEMO.

According to the Registers in this Office,

Frank, son of
Frank INCOLB, and
Margaret " nee Nicholes,
was born at Ballarat East,
on 8th June, 1875.

The Official Number of the entry is 13665/75.

O. GAWLER,
Government Statist.

N.B.—The Fee for an Uncertified Extract or a search over any period of five years or part thereof is 2/6 for Registrations made on or after 1st July, 1853, or 1/- for those made prior to that date. A Certificate of above entry will be supplied for an additional fee of 5/-. In all correspondence bearing on the entry, the "Application Folio No. and the Official Number" must be quoted.

H. E. Dwyer, Government Printer, Melbourne.

M 2117.25—7481.

RECORD OF FRANK'S BIRTH