

Private Matthew Syllas VENN



The third son



Matthew Syllas Venn (police photo above) was born on 9 August 1897 at Rhyndaston, near Oatlands Tasmania, the third son and child of Matthew Venn Senior and Matilda Venn

The story of Matthew Syllas Venn is really a story intricately linked to his grandparents, great grandparents and to that of his 3 brothers and to the social and economic circumstances of the times in both England and rural Van Diemens Land, then renamed Tasmania. His story can be traced firstly through his maternal and paternal grandparents and his own parents Matthew and Matilda Venn.

As there are numerous relatives with the name 'Matthew Venn', the name 'Matthew Syllas' will be used to identify him through his story. Let's reflect on his ancestry which started in England for both sides of his family; one family emigrating to find work and a better life and the other forced to emigrate through a criminal justice system called 'transportation'.

Matthew's grandparents

- **Maternal grandparents**

Matilda's parents, George and Ellen Elizabeth Harding (Nee Paxton), both aged in their 20's, together with their two year old son William, had emigrated from Uxbridge, Middlesex, England on the *Clariella* bound for Hobart Town; arriving in March 1873 after a voyage of 97 days.

Ellen was born in 1849, in Ratby, Leicestershire, England. Her parents, Mark, a labourer, and Matilda and had grown up in the Parish of St Pancras, living at with the family at 44 Pudding Lane, Maidstone, Kent, before marrying George and emigrating.

George, along with his brother Charles and other men on the voyage had considerable experience in building railways and most were bound to be with Railways and Public Works to help push ahead with the construction of the Main Line Railway between Hobart Town and Launceston. Upon arrival, the families were accommodated at the Immigration Depot in Liverpool Street, now the Royal Hobart Hospital site and were quickly relocated to locations throughout the Midlands to supervise and build the rail infrastructure.

George and Ellen were located at Rhyndaston where, Matilda was born, followed by nine more children; four boys and five girls.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. William James Harding | 1870–1955 |
| 2. Matilda Harding | 1875–1938 |
| 3. Mark Reuben Harding | 1876–1938 |
| 4. Female Harding | 1878–1878 |
| 5. Ellen Elizabeth Harding | 1880–1962 |
| 6. William Joseph Harding | 1882–1955 |
| 7. Mary Ann Harding | 1884– |
| 8. George James Harding | 1887–1925 |
| 9. Louisa Anne Harding | 1889–1977 |
| 10. John William Harding | 1892–1910 |

The Rhyndaston area at the time was quite remote, with much of the land uncleared. The life would have been very different from what George and Ellen experienced in England.

George's brother Charles settled at 'Charlton' Ross about 20 Kilometres north of George's home. Charles eventually had three sons enlist with the AIF; George, Albert and Lionel. George was killed at Lone Pine, Gallipoli, Albert returned home after about 2 years with the 40th Battalion and Lionel, with the 12th Battalion, was killed in action during 1916; no known grave and commemorated on the Villers Bretonneux Memorial.

George Harding Junior, Matthew Syllas' uncle, enlisted in June 1918 but was discharged a month later as medically unfit due to chronic rheumatism. As a miner from Queenstown, he suffered from severe pain in his ankles, legs and arms. He returned to his wife Mary Ann and three children who were living at 157 Goulburn Street at the time.

George continued to work on the railways until his death in 1894 aged 49 years. His youngest child, John was only 2 years old, so Ellen and her family may have struggled. It is highly probable that her eldest daughter Matilda assisted with the younger children and may have taken special care of baby John. He was to travel with her and her own family to Tasmania' West Coast in later years.

After the war, and aged 69 years, however, Ellen had relocated to Evandale, Tasmania, presumably to live with her daughter. However, she moved to Launceston in 1922 living with her daughter Louisa (?), where she remained until her death in 1939, aged 89 years.

She had no doubt been adventurous in her life and experienced the joy of a very large family. However, her life was also punctured by great sadness and hardship - the death of her husband 50 years previously, her daughter Matilda (Matthew Syllas' mother) and her son Mark had passed away the year before she died, her sons John and George had also died in the previous decades and she knew the loss of two of her grandsons in World War I.



Above Right: Ellen Harding (Nee Paxton) Possibly Ellen's daughter Louisa O'Connor and her daughter Marion

- **Paternal grandparents / great grandparents**

Matthew Syllas's grandfather, also named Matthew, was born in 1828 in Cutcombe, Somerset, England.

His great grandparents, William (b. 1771, Wedmore, Somerset –d. 1870 Tynewydd, Llangeinor, Wales, aged 99 years) and Mary Venn, (b. 1800, Cutcombe, Somerset – d. Tynewydd) came from a long line of families living in Somerset, England.

William's father, also named William (1747 – 1820) and his grandfather John, (1720-) had been farm labourers in the Somerset area. William already had seven children to his first wife Elizabeth and he then married Mary Matthews. Together they had four children; one of whom was Matthew Venn. Mary's family had also lived in the Somerset region for generations reaching back to Thomas Matthews (1695 – 1752), her grandfather.

Matthew grew up in Somerset with 3 siblings and 7 half siblings:

Half Siblings – William and first wife, Elizabeth

1. James Venn 1808–1895
2. William Venn 1811–
3. Elizabeth Venn 1813–
4. John Venn 1815–1881
5. Jane Venn 1818–
6. Robert Venn 1820-
7. Thomas Venn 1822 -

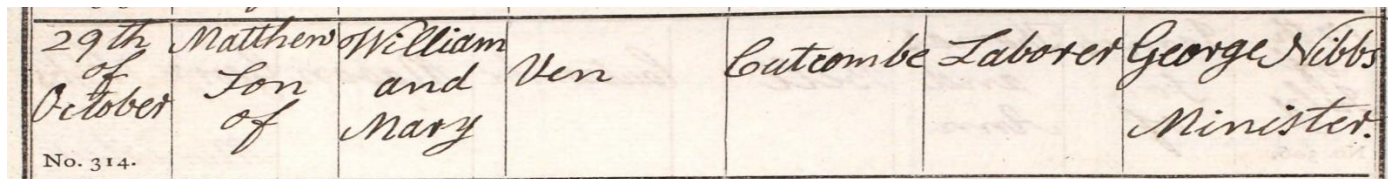
Mary and William

8. George Venn 1825–1889 (Coal miner, Wales)
9. Silas Venn 1829–1887 (Coal miner, Wales)
10. **Matthew 1826 - 1869**
11. Sarah Venn 1834–1912



Parish Church, Cutcombe

Records show Matthew's baptism at the Parish of Cutcombe Church on 29 October 1827 but with the spelling of the surname as 'Ven'.



William was first charged with larceny in 1815 aged 44 years when Matthew was 11 years old, but was acquitted. However, when he was 60 years old, William charged with larceny in the Somerset Court of 1836 and was imprisoned for 3 months. Unfortunately for William, his sons followed in his footsteps. Throughout the next few years, Matthew and at least two of his siblings were convicted of various crimes and sentenced to transportation to Van Diemens Land.

- **James Venn**

Convicted of robbery (stealing a shovel) on 29 June 1835 at Bridgewater, aged 27 and was held on the Prison Hulk Leviathan while it was docked at Portsmouth. He was sentenced to 14 years in Van Diemens Land and was aboard the *Bardaster* by late 1835, en route to Australia. He served 9 years of his sentence before he received his Ticket of Leave. He married Catherine Moffat, on March 3, 1845, in Richmond, Tasmania.

Catherine, born in Northern Ireland, had also been convicted of robbery and transported for 7 years aboard the *Hope*, arriving in 1842. Catherine was sent to the Cascade Female Factory. Catherine and James had nine children in 11 years. James died on November 7, 1895, in Castlemaine, Victoria, Australia, having lived a long life of 87 years. Catherine lived until 1902 and died in Richmond, Victoria, aged 86.

- **John Venn**

In 1836, aged 21 years, John was charged with stealing sheep, but was found not guilty. However, charged with killing sheep and selling their skins, John was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was subsequently transported to Van Diemen's Land. He awaited his voyage in Portsmouth, on board the Prison Hulk Ship *Hardy*. The convict ship *Henry Porcher* departed Portsmouth on 4 August 1836 and arrived at Hobart on 15 November 1836; taking 103 days to make the voyage. She embarked with 260 convicts. After 11 years of labour, John's Ticket of leave was granted by his Excellency the Lieutenant- Governor of Tasmania on the 20 October 1847 and he was granted permission to marry Jane Kane, a 'freewoman'.

- **Matthew Venn**

Matthew, a farm labourer, was aged 19, when he was charged in 1847 with burglary; having stolen a watch and a gun from a Mr Beaumont. He was admitted to Wilton Gaol on 9 June 1847.

After a trial at the Bridgewater Assizes, Somerset, Matthew was convicted and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, which was subsequently changed to transportation.

During this time, Matthew's father William moved the remainder of his family to Wales, presumably for his remaining sons to have a better life and to gain work as coal miners. He died on January 21, 1870, in Tynnewydd, Glamorgan, Wales, at the impressive age of 99, without seeing at least 3 of his sons again.

3605 **Venn** Matthew

Transported for... Burglary - Foot Report - very good.

Single - Stated this offence. Burglary stealing a watch and gun
fr. Brompton at Somerset

Arrested at Bridgewater April 14 August 1851. 10 Years.

Arrested 31/7/52. 6th 6 Months

Surgeon Report.

Trade	Height	Age	Complexion	Head	Hair	Whiskers	Visage	Forehead	Eyebrows	Eyes	Nose	Mouth	Chin
Iron Labour Cobbler	5' 6 3/4	23	Fresh	Oval	Light Brown	Dark Brown	Oval	Low	Brown	Blue	Medm	Medm	Medm

Native place: Somerset

Remarks: None.

6/8/52 1003. 1st 10!

on arrival 2 Years 6 Months less 6 Months

27. 9. 53 Top leave

23 Aug 54 1st 1003/1004 feloniously receiving under 5th. by letter not hard

Lab/1st + 1D/1000 P.A. 12 months 24/8/53

12/9/54 Top leave 12 months

- Top leave 9 Sept 56 -

Art self. 30 Sept 1853.

Harrison, Oct.

4/4. 1854. done 1000/1001

9.8.54 1st 1003 P.A.

1.9.54 1003 7th P.A.

23/2 days 1003

21.8.55 1003 1004

3.9.55 1003 1004

8/10/55 applying 1003 and 1004

Matthew Venn Convict Transportation Record

Mathew was described as 5 feet 6 inches tall, with light brown hair and blue eyes. He travelled, along with 291 other passengers (287 male convicts) on the three-masted wooden barque 'Pestonjee Bomanjee' in April 1852; arriving in Hobart, Van Diemen's Land, on 31 July after 104 days at sea.

¹ The *Pestonjee Bomanjee*, named after a prominent Indian portrait painter, was built for East India service, and undertook a number of journeys between Britain and Australia. In 1838 she undertook a journey from London to South Australia, carrying with her George Gawler who had been appointed as the second governor of South Australia. In 1841 her master, Captain Stead, was attacked and murdered by a gang of Chinese villagers in the Chusan Islands. For the latter part of her service she was used as a convict ship. The voyage to Hobart 31 July 1852 was under the captaincy of Captain Edward Montgomery with surgeon Daniel Ritchie aboard.



Pestonjee Bomanjee

The records indicate that Matthew undertook hard labour at various locations, including Cascades, the Vicarage, Spring Bay and Oatlands. He received his Ticket of Leave on 9 September 1856 where he finally settled in the Oatlands area. Here he met and married Hannah (Eliza) Nichols (b, 1843, Sorell – d. 1925 Bothwell) in 1860. They had 4 children together, the youngest of whom was Matthew Silas Venn.

1. John Henry Venn 1862–1876
2. Hannah Venn 1864–
3. Mary Jane Venn 1866–1941
4. **Matthew Silas Venn 1868–1953**

Matthew Senior was variously employed as a farm labourer or shepherd. He suffered prolonged illness however and eventually died, aged 43 years, from a pulmonary abscess, on 4 September 1869, just before Matthew's first birthday. Hannah was left alone to raise four children under the age of 8 years. Matthew However, 2 years later, aged 27, Hannah married again. Her marriage to Thomas Sheen occurred in 1870 at the home of Samuel Nichols, Oatlands.

Thomas, aged 35 years at the time, was also a shepherd in the Oatlands – Bothwell area.

Young Matthew Venn, soon had 4 half siblings, Thomas (1870-), Samuel (1872-), Eliza (1876 -1876) and Rosina Sheen (1880-1953).

Thomas died in 1894 and Hannah married Charles Henry Hart in Bothwell in 1897 and after his death, married Joseph Thomas Chivers, a widower (1858 – 1924) in 1907. Hannah passed away in 1925 in Bothwell, aged 82, having married four times and raised 8 children.

Matthew Silas Venn's parents

John, Henry, Mary and Matthew Venn grew up in the Oatlands and Bothwell areas with their mother Hannah and step father Thomas and half siblings. Matthew had been a shepherd in the Bothwell area, when, aged 21 years old, he was charged with larceny and sentenced to 1 month imprisonment.²

21 September, 1888.

Name.	Ship.	Civil Condition.	Offence.	Sentence.	Native Place.	Trade.	Age.	Height	Prior Conviction, if any.	District in which formerly resident.
<i>Bothwell.</i> Venn, Matthew	Larceny	1 mth.	Tasmania	Shepherd	21	<i>ft. in.</i> 5 10	Nil.	

However, a move to Oatlands, employment as a railway labourer and his subsequent marriage to Matilda proved a steady influence.

Matthew Venn (b.1868, Oatlands – d.1953 Lebrina, Tasmania) had married Matilda Harding, (nee Harding; b. 1875, Oatlands – d.1938, Pipers River, Tasmania), aged 17 years, on 16 May 1892 at her parents' home in Rhyndaston. Matilda's father George was of course still working as a railway labourer. Presumably this is how they met.



Parents Matilda Venn and Matthew Senior and (Married 16 May 1892, Oatlands)

Matthew and Matilda had 10 children in 19 years; seven sons and four daughters; with a fourth daughter, Kath who may have been born to Matthew Senior's second wife Agnes:

² Tasmania, Australia, Police Gazettes, 1884-1933

1. John Henry Venn 1893–1918 France
2. George James Venn 1894–1965 Launceston, Tasmania
3. **Matthew Syllas Venn 1897-1917 Belgium**
4. Mark Rueben Venn 1899–1968 Preston, Victoria
5. Christina Matilda Venn 1900–1966 Launceston, Tasmania
6. Eliza Heather Venn 1903–1975 Launceston, Tasmania
7. Cecil Owen Venn 1905–1972 Launceston, Tasmania
8. Amy Pearl Venn 1909–1988 Launceston, Tasmania
9. Lyell Ernest Venn 1911–1999 Lebrina, Tasmania
10. Harold Venn 1912–1938 Launceston, Tasmania
11. Kathleen Adams Venn 1926–1991 Launceston, Tasmania.

Matthew Syllas was most likely very close to his two older brothers John Henry and George and younger brother Mark, as only 6 years separated them. Little is recorded of their early years in the Oatlands District but the older boys no doubt attended the local Parattah School and eventually assisted as labourers and shepherds on the surrounding farms.

During the mid-1900's, Matthew and Matilda moved their family to Linda, a once thriving town (abandoned in the 1950's) located in the Linda Valley in Tasmania's West Coast Range, served to support the North Mount Lyell mine.

Cecil, their seventh child was born in Queenstown. There was the local Linda State School which Matthew and the younger children attended and there was employment for Matthew Senior and the older boys at the Mt Lyell Mining Company.

It proved to be an eventful but also tragic time for the family.

The 1911 Zeehan and Dundas Herald reported that John Henry Venn, their eldest son, then aged 16, was to be awarded the Royal Humane Society's Medal for bravery for attempting to save his friends, Henry Lodge and Daniel Corkery and his uncle, John Harding from drowning on February 27 1910 while swimming in a waterhole adjoining the King River, (about 20 or 30 yards across and about 16 feet deep). Both Henry and John drowned despite John Venn's brave attempts to save them. John Harding was Matilda's younger brother.

The following year, the North Mount Lyell disaster occurred; one of the greatest disasters in Australian mining history. On a late Saturday morning On 12 October 1912, a fire raged through the sombre catacombs of the Mount Lyell copper mine. The tragedy unfolded around 11.15am when a fire was reported in the pump house of the 700 foot level. Out of 170 workers, only 73 men escaped on the first day. Those that had not already died remained trapped.

The rescue effort was one of the biggest undertaken for the time. Fire crews and equipment were rushed by train in record time from Hobart and also shipped from Bendigo in Victoria, across Bass Strait. The S.S. Loongana, the ship which crossed the Strait carrying the equipment, made the crossing in 13 hours, 35 minutes – a record which stood for many years. Rescue efforts continued for four days with the last of the survivors brought to the surface more than 100 hours after their eight hour shift began.

For many workers, the alert reached them too late. Forty-two men perished on the mountain that day.



Waiting outside the Mt Lyell Mine for survivors to be rescued, 1912

The Venn family would have been greatly impacted by this overwhelming disaster for the remote and close-knit townships of Linda, Gormanston and Queenstown, as friends, neighbours, co-workers and school mates were lost in the tragedy; many with young children. We can only guess that this disaster precipitated Matilda and Matthew's move to Launceston where, by 1914 they had moved most of their family to live at Lower Piper, George Town, Tasmania.

Declaration of World War 1

When world war broke out in August 1914, Venn family was living at George Town.³

The four eldest Venn boys, John, George, Matthew Syllas and Mark were keen to enlist; although Matthew and Mark were respectively only aged 17 and 15 years.

Several of their childhood mates from Rhyndaston, had already enlisted. The Dwyer brothers, George and Michael, enlisted as sappers with the Light Railway Operating Companies of the AIF. The Venn brothers would also have known William Wooldridge, a 20 year old, who was among the first to enlist in October 1914 but didn't live long enough to see the landing at Gallipoli; instead he contracted meningitis and was buried in a Cairo cemetery on 10 April 1915. The Tillack brothers, Leslie and Keith also grew up in the area and both were later killed in action during 1918.

³ *Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980*

George James Venn, only 20 years old at the time, was a miner and living with his parents at Mount Direction, George Town. He was the first of the brothers to enlist on 6 November 1915 at Ross with the Field Artillery. He passed the medical examination undertaken at Ross three days later.

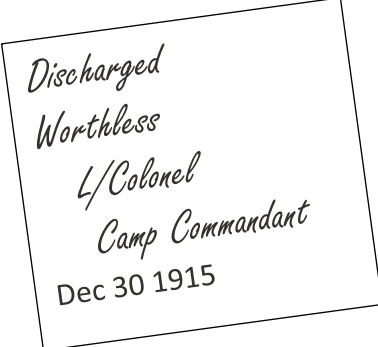
However, barely a month later in December 1915, George had absconded from the Claremont Training Camp. A Military Warrant⁴ was issued for Private George James Venn's arrest, which occurred soon after.

PRIVATE GEORGE JAMES VENN, age 20 years,

height 5 feet 7 ½ inches, fair complexion, fair hair, blue eyes; scar on back of neck (right side); wearing khaki service dress. Next of Kin, father, Matthew Silas Venn, Mt Direction, Tasmania.

George was discharged from the AIF on 30 December 1915 as '*not likely to become an efficient soldier*'.

Scribbled across the top left hand corner of on the front page of George's Attestation Paper were the damning words:



Discharged
Worthless
L/Colonel
Camp Commandant
Dec 30 1915

We can only speculate by his later record as a soldier that he disliked obeying rules and regulations. Records indicate that George then spent the next 8 months working as a miner near Lower Piper Tasmania.

At this time, John Henry Venn, aged 22 years, was working as a slaughterman and lived with his wife of two years, Hilda May (nee Williams) and his one year daughter Glory (Gloria) Elizabeth, at Rhyndaston,

John Henry enlisted with the 2nd Pioneers Battalion on 27 January 1916, a few weeks after George's discharge. He was listed as a Sapper with the No.5 Tunnelling Company, most likely due to his experiences as a miner at Mt Lyell. His enlistment papers describe him as having dark brown hair, brown eyes, with a height of 5 feet 8 inches.

John's wife Hilda and baby Glory returned to live with her parents' home at Richmond, Tasmania, while John left for training at Claremont. John listed Hilda as his next of kin. While John cleared the medical check but his embarkation was delayed due to being hospitalised during May 1916. However, by July 1916 he was promoted to Lance Corporal.

⁴ Tasmania, Australia, Police Gazettes, 1884-1933



Private John Henry Venn

During July 1916, George was involved with the possible stealing of cattle ⁱⁱ His mate Leslie Keefe was found guilty of cattle stealing and sentenced to two years imprisonment. George's mother Matilda testified. Maybe with John's encouragement and acting as a guarantor or to escape the fate of imprisonment, George was accepted again into the AIF on 2 August 1916; also with the 2nd Pioneer Battalion, Reinforcement 7. It was noted on his record that he had previously '*evaded military service*'. This time he took his Oath at Claremont Camp on the second day of August 1916

In similar circumstances, Matthew Venn and his friend Edward Williams were arrested by the Latrobe police and appeared before the Warden on Monday 2 October 1916 charged with the larceny of a gun and pair of blankets belonging to M. Clarke. Both were remanded for eight days to Launceston.

A little over 2 weeks later, on 18 October 1916, soon after his 19th birthday, Matthew also enlisted with the AIF and was assigned to the 15th Machine Gun Company, Reinforcement 10, 15th Brigade, 5th Division, AIF. He also followed his brothers and undertook training at Claremont Camp.

Times must have been desperate as Matilda immediately wrote to the Camp Commandant seeking 3 shillings per day of Matthew's 5 shillings daily pay; the reason being that 'He would only waste it' and she needed it because of her large family and her husband not earning much.

To the Camp Commandant
Claremont

Dear Sir

I am writing to ask you if you would be kind enough to arrng (sic) that my son Matthew S Venn should send me 3 shilling per day of his pay. I have a large family and their father is not able to earn much to support the little ones and if it is all payed (sic) to him he will only waste it. He is willing to have it sent to me so if you would see about it for me you do me a great kindness.

Trusting you will oblige

Yours faithfully
Mrs M S Venn

Sora

Es

OCT 10 10 10

to the Camp Commandant
Claremont
Dear Sir

I am writing
to ask you if you would be kind
enough to arrange that my son Matthew
& Venn should send me 3/ per day of
his pay. I have a large family & the
father is not able to earn much to
support the little ones & if it is all
paid to him he will only waste it
he is willing to have it sent to me so if
you would see about it for me you
do me a great kindness trusting you
will oblige

CLAREMONT
CAMP
OCT 17 1916
*
TASMANIA

Yours faithfully
Mrs M S Venn
Kingswood
Tasmania

Matthew Venn Senior wasn't earning much as he had in fact been arrested by Sergeant Court and Trooper Edwards from the Latrobe police on charge of larceny⁵

Matthew Syllas had no immediate need of the money as he had contracted measles and spent 16 December 1916 to 12 January 1917 in an Isolation Camp at Ascot, Victoria.

⁵ 1916 Tasmanian Police Gazette

Arrival in England

Both George and John Henry left Melbourne together on the A20 Hororata on 29 November 1916, arriving at Plymouth, England 8 weeks later on 29 January 1917.

Here their paths differed. During April 1917 Private George Venn proceeded with his unit to France and marched to Etaples.

John Henry remained based at Larkhill Training Camp and was appointed Acting Corporal. During this time his wife Hilda and child Glory were listed as living variously at 95 Melville St, Hobart and at Richmond, Tasmania.

In the meanwhile, Matthew arrived in Plymouth aboard the S.S. Osterley, ex Melbourne, on 11 April 1917, after a voyage of 8 weeks.



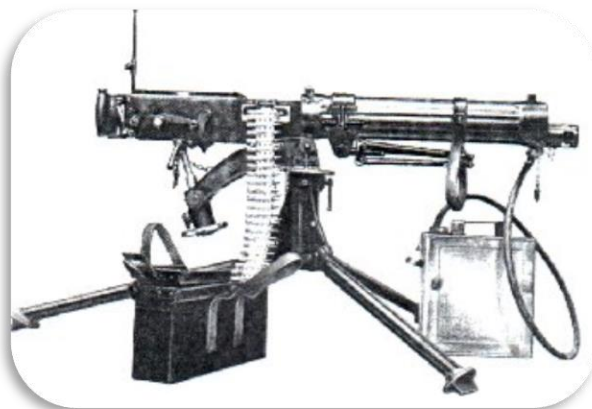
The troopship RMS Osterley being pulled from the wharf by a tug which is just visible on the right. The wharf is divided by a corrugated iron fence to the left. A large crowd of family and friends stand on the wharf.

Four days later on 15 April he travelled by train and then marched the 2 -3 miles with his fellow machine gunners from Grantham Railway station to Harrowby Camp. Grantham was a railway junction town of considerable size on the Great Northern Railway, 102 miles from London. This was the centre of the British machine-gun world. Belton Park and Harrowby nearby were the camps for transport and twelve machine gunner companies. The Machine Gun Corps were based at Harrowby, the other side of Harrowby Lane immediately south of Belton.



The camps held, at any one time, between 25,000 and 45,000 troops.

Machine gunners were usually considered to have an advantage over other troops in that they had a considerably longer period of training in England. For Matthew the training continued for 2 months His pre-service work as a labourer would have equipped him well for the Corps which required *'a man of a far higher physical standard than that necessary for an infantry soldier. He had to be well developed and sufficiently strongly built to enable him to work with, and carry, a machine gun under adverse conditions including if necessary to double or crawl with it'*.



It's no surprise that strong men were required since a Vickers machine gun weighed about 40 pounds, including 7.5 pints of the water used for cooling weighing nearly 10lb; the tripod upon which it sat 48lbs and the ammunition boxes for the 250-round ammunition belts weighed 22 pounds each.

On 16 June 1917 the unit proceeded overseas to France ex Folkestone.].

Matthew was taken on strength of the 15th Machine Gun Company, on 23 June 1917.

The 15th Battalion had suffered heavy casualties at Bullecourt in April 1917 when the Brigade attacked heavily defended German positions without the promised tank support. The battalion spent most of the remainder of 1917 fighting in Belgium, advancing to the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line.



15th Company Machine Gun Company taken in Belgium sometime before October 1917.

Meanwhile, during early May 1917 George was also near the frontline in France.

In mid-1917, the Australians were moved to Belgium as the focus of British operations shifted to the Ypres sector in an effort to draw German attention away from the French. The first effort came around Messines, on the southern flank, where a series of tunnels were dug under the German lines. On 7 June, 19 mines were detonated and in the ensuing fighting, the British captured Messines Ridge.

In July 1917, George was hospitalised in France for illness which by late July had progressed to a diagnosis of severe appendicitis and was readmitted to hospital in Rouen to have his appendix removed. George was sent back to England, to Alexander Hospital, Cosham, to recuperate.



Alexander Hospital, Cosham

Matilda wrote a letter to Major Lean dated 28 June 1917

Dear Sir

My Son Matthew S Venn left Victoria on or about Feb 14 come to Victoria from Claremont Camp in December 1916 and went to Seymour Camp. I have not heard anything of him for some time before he left Vict he was in the machine gun sections. I do not know his number and his two brothers cannot find anything of him in England. Will you kindly let me know if he is dead or alive and his number and what his address to put on his letters as I am most anxess (sic) to write to him or know something about him and if his brothers are asking to know where he is.

Trusting to heare (sic) from you by return.

I am Sir truly yours

Mrs M S Venn

writing to know where he is thinking to hear from you by return
I am Sir truly yours
Mrs M S Kemmer

Mr McRobb of Mingwood
607. 15th N.G. Coy.

Tower pipes
Tasmania
June 28 6 14



to Major Lean

CORRESPONDENCE SECTION

JUL 8 1917

RRS 9.30 1/7

Dear Sir C.

My Son

Matthew S Kemmer left Victoria on or about July 14 came to Victoria from Claremont Camp in December 1916 & went to Dyerrow Camp I have not heard any thing of him for some time before he ~~left~~ left Vict he was in the Malherne gun sections I do not know his number & his two Brothers cannot find anything of him in England Will you kindly let me know if he is dead or alive & ~~his~~ ^{his} number & what address to put on ~~his~~ his letters as I am most anxious to write to him or hear something about him & his Brothers &

RR 1/1/17

At the time of Matilda's letter, Matthew Syllas remained in Belgium.

The Officer in Charge of Base Records however did respond to Matilda in a letter dated 4 July 1917

Dear Madam

In reply to your letter dated 28th ultimo, I have to inform you no report to any effect has been received respecting your son, No. 607 Private M. S. Venn, 15th Machine Gun Company, consequently it is to be assumed he is still serving with that unit.

His Postal address is as follows -

No 607 Private M. S. Venn.

15th Machine Gun Company

Australian Imperial Force,

Abroad.

Any cable report received respecting this soldier will be promptly transmitted to next - pf - kin., shown as resident at the address from which you write

Yours faithfully

Major

Officer i/c Base Records

On 30 August 1917 Matthew was absent from Roll Call for 5 days until 4 September His Commanding Officer ensured a fine of 34 days' pay, which at 5 shillings per day, equalled 170 shillings or 8 pounds and 10 shillings; a considerable amount of money at the time.

His Unit remained in the Ypres sector and subsequently took part in the fighting around Polygon Wood during the Third Battle of Ypres in September. On 25 September 1917, Matthew marched with his unit to the 15th Machine Gun Company at Camiers.

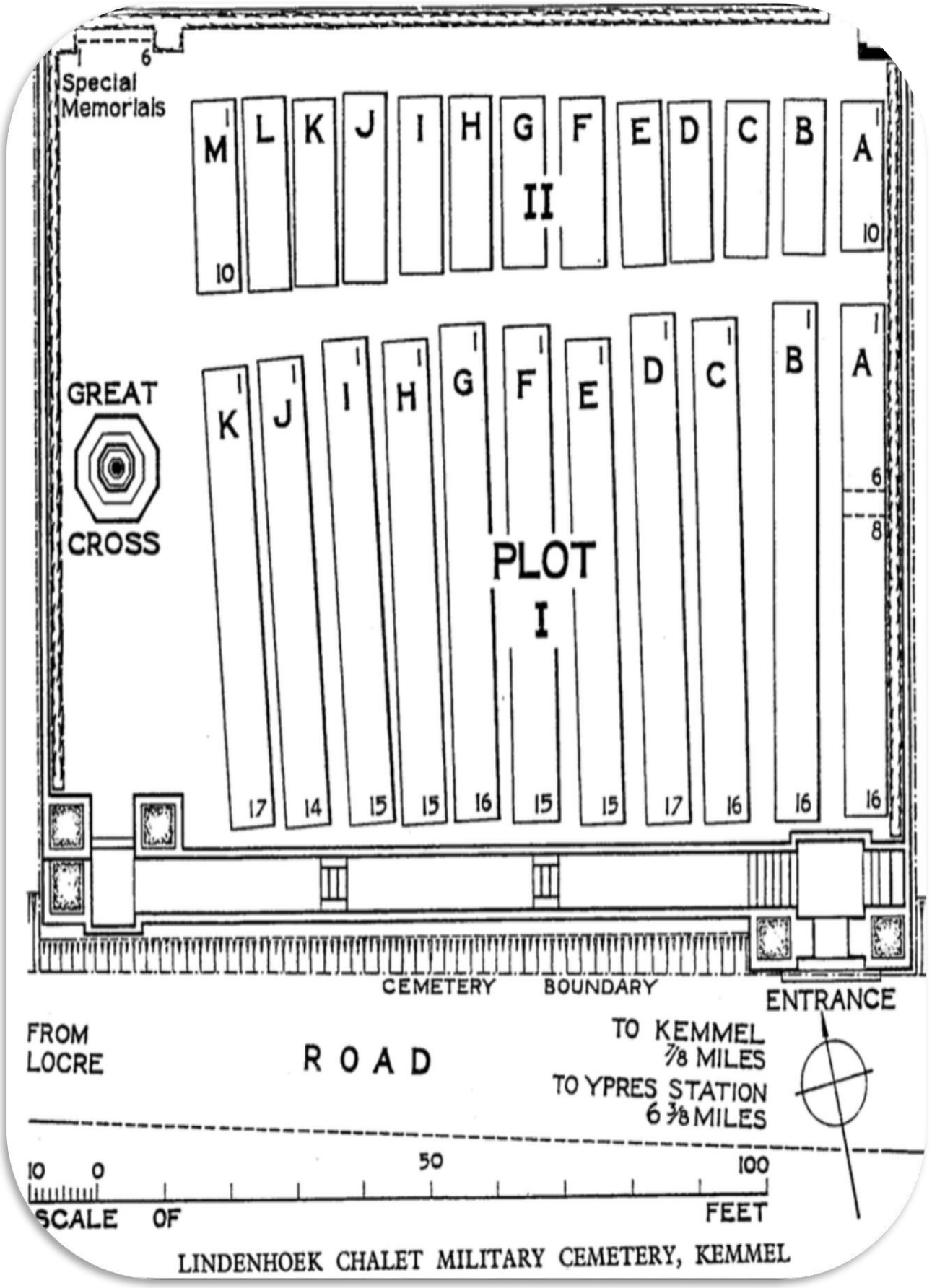
From 5 October 1917 he was in the thick of battle at Messines Ridge, Wytschaete, Belgium and

In November 1917, the battalion was withdrawn from the line for a three-month rest, spending the winter around Templeux-la-Fosse and Hollebeke.

In the meanwhile, during November 1917 both his brothers John and George were admitted to hospital at Bulford with venereal disease; John for a total of 123 days treatment and subsequent demotion to Private and George for 6 days.

In early December 1917, while John was in hospital in England, Matthew was killed in action on 15 December 1917, aged 20 years.

It was Day 1235 of the war and the memorable date when the Bolshevik government in Russia signed the armistice with Germany, suspending hostilities on the Eastern Front.



Matthew Senior received the cable and must have been devastated by the news.

The family put the following notice in the Tasmanian Daily Telegraph:

VENN— Matthew Syllas third oldest son of Matthew and Matilda Venn, of Piper's River, died of wounds received in France December 15, 1917, aged 21 years and four months. 'Died for King and country and you and me.'

Daily Telegraph (Launceston, Tas.: 1883 - 1928) Saturday 12 January 1918

The family later arranged the following inscription on Matthew Syllas' grave:

“UNTIL THE DAWN OF A GREATER DAY GOOD-NIGHT DEAR SON”

The first burials were made in the cemetery in March 1915 and it continued to be used by fighting units and field ambulances until October 1917. It was enlarged after the Armistice when over 100 graves were brought in from the battlefields surrounding Kemmel.

Matthew lies with 315 other soldiers of the First World War buried or commemorated in the cemetery. 67 of the burials are unidentified, but there are special memorials to six casualties known or believed to be buried among them:

- United Kingdom (282)
- Canadian (15)
- Australian (10)
- New Zealand (8).

Matthew is not the youngest to be buried there – Private Vodden from the Welsh regiment was only 16 when killed in 18 August 1915.

Meanwhile in England, on 14 and 16 January 1918, George was cited on an offence for refusing to obey an order, forfeiting 4 days' pay. Matthew Syllas' death would have caused enormous grief for him.

Back in Australia, younger brother Mark Rueben Venn clearly falsified his age on his Attestation Paper. He enlisted at Parattah and stated his date of birth as 8 September 1896 instead of 1899. His father was listed as still living at Pipers River and records show that either he or Mark had amended the dates on the form.

The record also indicates that Mark had already been rejected as unfit for service on the grounds of varicose veins.

Mark, the tallest of the four brothers at 5'10" was eventually accepted and spent the next 3 months in training at the Claremont Camp. While in camp both his parents, together with his brother John's wife Hilda as a witness, gave their permission for him to enlist and provided his correct age as 19 years.

While allowing her son Mark to enlist, Matilda was again writing to Major Lean in a letter dated 14 February 1918:

Dear Sir

Just to ask you if you can tell me anything concerning the death of my son Gunner Matthew S Venn. No 607 Machine Gun Coy. And the particulars as to the Battle he died in and what part of France and when I will receive his belongings

Trusting to hear from you at your earliest

I am Sir

Yours Faithfully

Mrs M. S. Venn

By 28 February 1918 Mark too was on his way to England, aboard A71 HMAT Nestor, disembarking at Liverpool on 20 April 1918.

While Mark was crossing the Atlantic Ocean, John Henry Venn was again declared fit for frontline service. He proceeded overseas to France with the Pioneer Training Battalion.

On 6 March 1918 the Unit proceeded to the front.

His wife Hilda requested assistance in locating John. A letter was forwarded from the Officer Base Records, AIF on 17 May 1918 to Mr H. J. Johansen, c/- Messrs Fenton and Co. Hamilton Tasmania, stating that "(No. 3204 Acting Lance Corporal John Henry Venn) was admitted on 19/10/17 to hospital sick' and provided an address (2nd Pioneer Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, Abroad) where he might be reached.

Back in Tasmania, Matilda had started to receive, from early April, a war pension of 14 shillings per fortnight as a result of Matthew's death. On 8 April 1918 Matilda wrote to Major McLean inquiring again about Matthew Syllas' belongings:

Major lean

Dear Sir

Just to ask you if you could let me know about my son's belongings Gunner M S Venn 15th Machine Gun Coy killed in France 15th Dec 17. A week ago I received postcards and 9 letters and 1 (?) book a short piece of comb and one penny. The letters and postcards were some of the many I had sent to my son Will you let me know if possible why I did not receive (sic) his kit bag as other mothers have got all belongings of their boys and I know had letters from the front telling me that there are many things in the kit bag that he intended to send to me

Trusting to here (sic) from you as early as possible.

I am Sir

Yours faithfully

Mrs M S Venn

Major Lean was prompt in his response to Matilda advising that he had no personal effects of Private M S Venn. And none had been returned to date He explained that kit bag is not returned to the next-of-kin, only articles of sentimental value which are extracted.

Sadly her letters and postcards sent to Matthew together with a book, a comb and ne penny were the only belongs she was to receive.

More tragedy was to come

Matilda and Matthew Seniors oldest child, John Henry lasted 3 only months after his arrival in France. He was listed as killed in action on the 13 June 1918.

George was still in England and on hearing the news of John's death was AWOL for 2 days. He was admonished by Lieutenant Colonel Beardsmore for being AWOL and he again had to forfeit his pay.

On Saturday 6 July 1918, it was reported in the Examiner that:

Mr. and Mrs. Venn, Ringwood, Pipers River, received the sad news that their eldest son, Corporal Venn, had been killed in action. This is the second son to make the supreme sacrifice in less than 6 months.

Mark Rueben must have been informed of his brother's death while still with the 12th Battalion at Sutton Veny in England. Four days after John's death Mark was absent without leave, and lost 6 days' pay and received 96 hours detention by Major D R Brown. Three weeks later he was in trouble again by refusing to obey an order and was again awarded a loss of pay.

George was at Sandhill, England during August 1918 and was also causing havoc. He was twice AWOL from parade and twice left parade without permission.

The AIF Officers must have decided the best course of action was to send Private George Venn to France. During September 1918 he had re-joined his unit. He continued to receive fines for various offences, mainly from leaving parades and being AWOL.

By the time Mark Reuben reached France on 7 December 1918 with the 1st Australian Division Train, the Armistice had been in place for 1 month. He was appointed as a train driver but by May had reverted to driver.

George's Unit also remained in France and from February to May 1919 he was delegated escort duties. He was shipped back to England in May and returned to Australia on 13 July 1919 after 3 years and 97 days of service.

Hilda was advised by letter in 1919 that John, aged 25, was initially buried in High British Cemetery, north east of Saily-le-Sec and Corbie, but he was buried in the Villers Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

The family chose the following inscription for his gravesite

'GATHERED TO THE QUIET WEST HIS SUNDOWN SPLENDID AND SERENE TO REST'

On the 4 February 1919, a package was delivered to Richmond Tasmania, addressed to Hilda. It contained John's effects received from the field:

1 diary, 1 Testament, 2 fountain pens, 1 wristwatch and strap, 1 glove, photos, 2 YMCA wallets, cards, 2 letters, 3 religious books, various papers and 2 wallets.

Further correspondence to Hilda from the AIF during April 1919, was addressed to Mrs V. Johannsen, Stephen Street, Hamilton, Victoria.

Mark finally returned to England in August 1919 but he added to his already significant list of military offences by being AWOL again; this time for 2 days. He also missed his scheduled embarkation on

the *Persic* to return to Australia and he lost a total of 5 days' pay. There are no notes in his military records to suggest whether he deliberately delayed his return to Australia or not. The AIF managed to ensure that he was aboard the *Aeneas*, which left England on 7 January 1920.

Mark finally arrived back in Australia and his British War medal was forwarded to his address at Bridgenorth, West Tamar, and Tasmania.

After the War

- After their discharge from the army in late 1919 both George and Mark Reuben applied to lease land in the Municipality of St Leonards under the Returned Soldiers Settlement Act 1916.
- The Venn family continued to remember their sons killed in action.

VENN.—In fond and loving memory of our dear sons, Corporal John Henry, killed in France June .13, 1918 and Gunner Matthew Silas, killed in Belgium December 16, 1917.

“I often think of you dear boys,
As I saw you last at home,
But memory is the only thing
A mother can call her own.
This day recalls sad memories
Of two good boys at rest,
And those that think of them to-day
Are the ones that loved them best.

Fondly loved and sadly missed. —Inserted by their loving father, mother, brothers, and sisters, M. S. and M. Venn, Piper's River, sister and brother-in-law, C. and L Keefe, Allenvale.

Examiner (Launceston, Tas.: 1900 - 1954) Sat 12 Jun 1920

- Hilda remembered a husband and father: Glory, John Henry's daughter, never knew her father. In 1919 Hilda placed a message in memory of John in The Mercury newspaper. Hilda remarried and eventually Glory married Bernard Wilfred Castor in 1931 but sadly died at the age of 40 in New South Wales.

Mercury (Hobart, Tas.: 1860 - 1954), Friday 13 June 1919, page 1

VENN.—In memory of my dear husband and my dear Daddy, Corporal John Henry Venn, killed in action "Somewhere in France." on June 13, 1918.

Gathered to the quiet west,
His sundown splendid and serene, to rest.

Inserted by his loving wife and little daughter, Hilda and Glory Venn.

- In 1923, Matthew Syllas' younger brothers Lyell and Harold, both schoolboys, were charged with larceny and sentenced to 14 days gaol.

- Matilda died in 1938, aged 62, a month after the death of her youngest son Harold Venn. The grief of losing another son, her youngest may have been too much for her. Harold died on March 8 1938, at the Public Hospital, Launceston. Harold was married to Marjorie Venn, of Beaconsfield. The statements published in the newspapers show how much she was loved as a wife and mother.



Matilda Harding (back right) with Family – 22 Percy Street, Launceston

VENN.-In loving memory of our dear wife and mother, who passed away April 13, 1938.

The evening stars shine on a grave
Of one we loved, but could not save;
Her cheerful smile, heart of gold,
The Saviour called her to His fold.
At eve when the shadows are falling
Sweet memories, saddened with pain,
Steal into our hearts with a longing,
Could we see our darling mother again. -

Inserted by her loving husband, Matt.; daughters, .Amy, Kath. Son-in law, Edwin; and grandchildren.

VENN.-In loving memory of my dear wife, who passed away April 13, 1938, at Pipers River.

God knew that she was suffering,
The hill was hard to climb,
So he closed her weary eyelids,
And whispered, peace be thine.
The victory is won, and she heard the well done.

Inserted by her sorrowing husband and daughter, Kathleen, of Pipers River.

VENN.-In loving memory of my dear mother, also our dear auntie, who passed away at Pipers River April 13, 1938.

If we could. only see your dear face,
And see your dear old smile,
And put our arms around you,
Dear mum and auntie, just for a little while.-

Inserted -Inserted by her loving son, Cecil; daughter-in-law, Millie; niece, Amy; and nephew, George Gillies; and grandchildren, Reg, Ken, Dulcie, Cecil, Donald.

VENN.-Sacred to the memory of my beloved mother, Matilda Venn, late of Pipers River, who passed away April 13, 1938.

Resting in Jesus.

'-Inserted by her loving son, George, and daughter-in-law, Frances.

VENN.-In loving memory of my dear mother, Matilda, who passed away on April 13, 1938; also my dear brother, Harold, who passed away on March 8, 1938.

"Rest, sweetly rest." "Ever remembered and sadly missed." -

Inserted by a loving son and brother, Mark, and daughter-in-law, Clare, and grandchildren.

VENN.-In loving memory of my dear mother, who passed away on April 13, 1938; also my dear brother, Harold, who passed away on March 8, 1938. A tender chord of memory is sadly touched to-day.

-Inserted by a loving daughter and sister, Eliza, and son-in-law, Bernard, and grandchildren, Pipers River.

VENN.--In loving memory of my dear wife and our dear mother, Matilda Venn, who died April 13, 1938.

A sudden change in a moment fell
And not a chance to say farewell;
Your beautiful life came to an end:
You died as you lived, everybody's friend,

-Inserted by her loving husband and daughter and son-in-law, Matthew Chrissie and Harold Mercer, and grandchildren.

- Matthew Venn Senior married Agnes and they had one daughter and a son. Agnes passed away in 1947.

Examiner (Launceston, Tas.: 1900 - 1954), Wednesday 28 September 1947, page 6

Passed away at Launceston general Hospital, Agnes Jane, loved wife of Matthew Silas Venn, of Lebrina, and loving mother of Mary (Mrs. Burgess) and Mark Sullivan, and loved step-mother of George, Mark (King Island), Christina (Mrs. Church), Eliza (Retreat), Cecil Amy (Mrs. Shaw, Lebrina), Lyell (Lebrina), and Kath; aged 75 years. R.I.P.

Examiner (Launceston, Tas.: 1900 - 1954), Wednesday 28 September 1949, page 6

In 1951, it was reported in the Examiner that:

MR. M. S. VENN was given a party at the home of his daughter, Mrs Edwin Shaw, of Lebrina, in honour of his 84th birthday.

BORN at Bothwell, Mr. Venn worked on the Tasmanian railways and at Mt. Lyell mines. He afterwards turned to farming in the Piper's River and Lebrina districts. VENN-On October 31, 1953

He married twice and had seven sons and three daughters - Jack and Matthew, who were killed in World War I., George, Mark, Lyell, Cecil and Harold (deceased), Chrissie (Mrs. S. Church), Eliza (Mrs. V. Nicholas) and Amy (Mrs. E. Shaw). Mr. Venn enjoys good health and is very fond of gardening

Matthew Venn died in 1953

Examiner (Launceston, Tas.: 1900 - 1954), Monday 2 November 1953, page 11

Matthew Silas died at the Launceston General Hospital, husband of the late Agnes Venn, of Lebrina, and loving father of John (deceased), George, Mark, Matt (deceased), Chrissie (Mrs. S. Church), Eliza (Mrs. V. Nicholas), Cecil, Amy (Mrs. E. Shaw), Lyell, Harold (deceased), and Kathleen (Mrs. M. Sullivan). Aged 88 years. Funeral is to be at the Carr Villa cemetery.

Endnote

ⁱ Zeehan and Dundas Herald (Tas. : 1890 - 1922), Friday 26 May 1911, page 2

LINDA DROWNING FATALITY.

HEROISM REWARDED - THE ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY'S MEDAL. AWARDED JOHN H. VENN.

Sunday, February 27, 1910 was a sad day in the Lyell district. Two young lives were lost on that day, when John William Harding, aged 16, and Henry Lodge, aged 17, were drowned in a water-hole near the King River. But these two lives were not taken away without a great and heroic struggle on the part of John Henry Venn, a hoy of 16 years of age, - to save them. At the inquest on the victims, the story of the loss of the lives of Harding and Lodge was told by Venn. He said: — I am 'nipper' in the employ of the Mount Lyell M. and R. Company. I am aged 16 years, and reside at Linda with my parents. On Sunday afternoon I went with Hairy Craig, Arthur Corlett, Dan Corkery, Oscar Corlett, Henry Lodge, and Jack Jarding for a swim in a waterhole adjoining the King River, which is about 20 or 30yds across and about 16ft deep. The banks are almost perpendicular, and about 6ft above the water. We all went in for a swim, with the exception of Arthur Corlett. Harding could swim 'but Lodge could not. . Harding and Harry Craig were in the water; Henry was on the end of a log. From there he returned to the bank, and remarked, 'Who is that swimming there' I said, 'Jack Harding.' He said 'Here goes" and with that he jumped into the water. When he came up he got on Harding's back. Harding attempted to swim and sank. I dived in and got Lodge and Harding up. I then pulled off Harding. As Harding tried to swim away Lodge' caught Harding by the legs and we all sank together. I come to the surface alone. When I got my wind I dived down and caught hold of Harding round the waist. Lodge still had hold of Harding's legs, and I brought them both to the surface again. I then made Lodge loosen his hold of Harding. Harding then made a weak attempt to swim, but his face was under the water. Arthur Corlett here came to our assistance. Lodge immediately seized Corlett by the shoulder, and pushed him under the water. Corlett here got the cramp and swam ashore. I was still stragglng with Lodge. Then Don Corkery came to our assistance. Lodge caught him round the neck with one arm. With the help of Corkery I made Lodge release his hold. As I stood off for wind I missed Harding, and noticed Lodge and Corkery sink two or three times. The last time they went down. I dived again and brought them both to the surface and loosened Lodge's hold of Corkery. I helped Corkery to the shore, and feeling exhausted I crawled on to the bank and lay there unable to rise. While there I noticed Lodge come to the surface with his hands up and his mouth open. He immediately sank. When I got better I staggered round the ether side of the hole and dived in to try and find Harding. I found him, but I was too weak to bring him to the surface. The brave action of Venn appealed to Mr. A. J. Taylor, of Hobart, | who is the representative of the Royal Humane Society of Australia. Some time ago ' Mr. Taylor brought under the notice of the board the brave conduct of young Venn, and Mr. Taylor has just received an intimation that the society's bronze medal has been awarded to the boy , hero of Lyell.

ⁱⁱ Examiner (Launceston, Tas. : 1900 - 1954), Wednesday 5 July 1916, page 3

CATTLE STEALING LESLIE KEEFE CONVICTED SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS' IMPRISONMENT. Leslie Keefe, a young man, was placed on his trial at the Criminal Court at Launceston yesterday, before his Honor Mr. Justice Crisp, on a charge of having, on October 20, 1915, stolen two steers and four heifers, the property of L. J. Abra and others; and, further, with having received the cattle knowing them to have been stolen. The Solicitor-General, in opening the case for the Crown, said that last year Mr. L. Abra, Dr. Hogg, and Mr. Wm. Hogg had, in partnership, some land at Mount Direction. In June, 1915, they placed 35 head of cattle on the property. All were fire-branded "AH." On October 2 the cattle were mustered and counted. About the beginning of this year they were again counted, and found to be 14 head short. About October 20 last accused, in company with another man,

was seen by a man named Watson about 5 o'clock in the morning, driving some cattle in the direction of Launceston. He knew the accused, and particularly noticed one of the steers. Mrs. Watson also saw them driving some cattle up Landfall hill, on the East Tamar. Later on the same day accused and his companion offered to sell Gordon Luck six head of cattle which were in a paddock at the rear of the Retreat Hotel, Mowbray. Accused wanted £17 for the animals, but he eventually sold them for £16 10s. The cattle were taken to Vermont, where Mr. Luck gave Keefe and his companion a cheque, made payable, at the request of 'Keefe, to "A. Auston," or "Aunton."

The cheque was subsequently cashed at the Commercial Bank. The cattle had afterwards been examined at Mr. Luck's and identified as six of the cattle missed from the Mount Direction run. Lawrence J. Abra stated that he was in partnership with Dr. Hogg and William Hogg in regard to grazing property at Mount Direction.

In June, 1915, 35 head of young cattle were placed on the property, and branded. When mustered in October they were all right. The four steers and two heifers outside the court bore the brand of himself and partners. One of the animals was a poll heifer. On January 15, 10, and 17 the cattle were again mustered, and found to be 14 short. Five head had been recovered, in addition to the six head outside the court. At this stage the Solicitor-General stated that he had just been handed a letter, dated July 1, written by the accused to the Superintendent of Police, asking that a witness he subpoenaed on his behalf. Mr. Chambers said this was the first intimation he had had of the matter. His Honor said the accused, who had been awaiting his trial since February, had, in asking for a witness on Saturday, left it rather late. He asked accused why he had not made the request before. Keefe replied that he had not thought of it. His Honor said he could not grant an adjournment of the case, but if it was possible to find the witness asked for, he would be secured. His Honor gave instructions that the police should immediately endeavor to locate the person, whose address was given by Keefe as Invermay-road. L. J. Abra, in reply to the accused, said the cattle had never to his knowledge been running about the roads at Mount Direction. Accused-Is the road through your property a public road? Witness-It is a surveyed road. After the cattle had been examined by the jury the foreman asked what value Mr. Abra placed on the animals at the time they disappeared. Witness said he had refused £7 each for the steers and £4 for the heifers. Robert A. Watson, farm labourer, residing at Mount Direction, said that he had known the accused for six or eight months. Witness' residence was five yards from the main road to Launceston. On the morning of October 20 1916 he saw the accused and George Venn driving a number of cattle along the road from Mount Direction to Launceston. Witness was at the front door when they passed at about 5 a.m. Amongst the cattle was a red and white poll heifer, and he recognised this animal as one of the cattle outside the court that day. Accused-Do you swear those cattle outside the court are the same ones you say you saw me driving that morning? Witness-Yes. Accused-Had you ever seen them before that morning?-No. In reply to his Honor, witness said he had been working on farms since his boyhood, and has had considerable experience with cattle.

Laura Matilda Watson, wife of the previous witness, said she was driving to Launceston on October 20, when she saw accused and George Venn driving cattle along the road at Landfall Hill about five miles from Launceston. This would be about 7.30 or 8 a.m. She took great notice of four of the cattle, and identified the animals outside as those she saw Keefe driving. To his Honor-There were about five or six head of cattle in the mob being driven by accused. In reply to the accused, witness said she had known him for about 12 months. The cattle had been running in front of her place for some two days, Witness had no ill-feeling against the accused. She had never insulted him or told her children to do so. Gordon Luck, farmer and dealer, residing at Vermont, Mowbray, deposed that on October 20, 1915, between 12 and 1 p.m., he was going home from Launceston. Accused and another man were sitting opposite the Retreat Hotel. Accused asked if he was buying cattle, and said they had some for sale.

They took him to the rear of the hotel, and showed him the six head of cattle that were outside the court. Accused said they would sell the cattle for £17. Witness offered £16 10s, and this was accepted. The cattle were driven to Vermont, where witness wrote out the cheque produced, payable to "A. Austin," and also wrote out a receipt, which Keefe signed as "Austin." The cattle were branded the following day, and taken along with other cattle to Camden Plains run, Mount Barrow. Subsequently witness took Detective Mansfield and Mr. Abra to Camden Plains, and pointed out to them the cattle he had purchased from Keefe. Mr. Abra claimed them as his property. Later, witness accompanied Detective Mansfield to the General Hospital, where they saw Keefe, and witness identified him as the man who had sold him the cattle. Hugh Percy Searell, ledger-keeper at the Commercial Bank of Tasmania, Launceston. said he did not know the accused. The cheque for £16 10s, produced, made out by Gordon Luck in favour of "A. Austin" was paid on October 20 between 1 and 2 p.m. It was endorsed "A. Austin" or "Aunton." The Solicitor-General said Detective Mansfield had been sent beyond the Commonwealth on important duties, and he proposed to submit the depositions of his evidence taken in the lower court. Sergeant Hughes, of Hobart said that Detective Mansfield left Hobart on March 16, 1916 on a vessel bound beyond the Commonwealth. He had not seen him since. His Honor asked if that was all the evidence the Solicitor-General intended to submit concerning the absence of the detective. Seeing that the accused was undefended, it was his (his Honor's) duty to protect him as far as it lay in his power. He did not think sufficient evidence had been produced to justify him allowing the detective's evidence to be used against the accused. Anyhow, the Solicitor-General could consider the position during the luncheon adjournment. His Honor intimated that he did not think there was any necessity for Detective Mansfield's depositions to be put in. If the jury did not accept the evidence at present before them, they were not likely to accept anything further unless it was very material. After the luncheon adjournment, the Solicitor-General called further evidence to establish that Detective Mansfield was at present outside the Commonwealth, and unable to attend the court. In argument he was able by authority to convince his honor of the value of postal marks on letters as prima facie evidence, under such circumstances as existed with respect to Detective Mansfield's absence overseas.

Edward Gunner, Sub-Inspector of Police and Chief Detective in Tasmania, gave evidence as to the absence of Detective Mansfield from the Commonwealth. From a comparison of the handwriting, he was confident that the man who endorsed the cheque produced was the man who signed the receipt for the money for the stolen cattle. Leslie Norman, bench clerk at Launceston, proved Detective Mansfield's depositions, which were then admitted as evidence and read by witness. This closed the case for the prosecution.

The first witness called by accused was Mrs. Matilda Venn, residing at Lower Piper, who said that the accused left Mount Direction on October 10 for the purpose of going to Launceston with her son George Venn. They returned on the 22nd. In answer to his Honor as to how she fixed the date, witness produced an exercise book, and, drawing his honor's attention to some writing on the inside of the cover, asserted that her daughter, aged 15, while writing out recipes, had, by way of a joke, written a memorandum that accused had been given £4 by her mother with which to buy flour and groceries, to be delivered "tomorrow, October 19."

George Venn gave evidence to the effect that he and the accused had left Mount Direction for Launceston on October 19, and returned on the 22nd. Evidence was also given by William Patmore, Robert Knight, and Percy Jones. The accused gave evidence on his own behalf. He said he was a labourer by occupation. On October 19, in company with George Venn, he came to Launceston. They put up their horses at Patmore's Hotel, and remained in Launceston from Tuesday till the Friday, the 22nd, and then went back to Mount Direction. After a retirement of 25 minutes, the jury returned a verdict of guilty, with a recommendation to mercy, on account of accused's youth.

The prisoner appealed for leniency. He was only a youth, would turn over a new leaf and would enlist for the front. He had been in prison in connection with the charge since February 7.

His Honor, in imposing sentence, said the only thing to do was to deal with the prisoner in a way that would adequately punish him, and act as a deterrent to others. On the evidence there was only the one verdict. His Honor had not the least doubt the prisoner was guilty, and he pointed out that he had given the authorities a great deal of trouble, having broken gaol, defrauded the man who purchased the cattle of his money, and put the court and the jury to all the trouble involved in the lengthy trial. The offence of cattle stealing was regarded very gravely, indeed. He had heard judge's order imprisonment for seven or eight years, and though he did not propose to do that, he must in justice to the community and to protect the public's property, sentence the prisoner to a term that would mark the gravity of the offence. The sentence of the court would be imprisonment for two years, but the period of the term would commence from the time prisoner was first taken into custody. This was overlooking the fact that he had broken gaol. An order was made for the restitution of the cattle to their owners.

