**The Life of Edward Joseph (Ted) Dunn**

**By Stephen Beaumont (Nephew)**

**Early Family History**

John Dunn arrived in Sydney as a convict from Thurles, Tipperary, Ireland in 1840, following a conviction for forgery. He was sentenced to seven years’ transportation and arrived in Sydney on 17th August 1840. In 1849, his wife, Catherine, and four of their five children (including Michael, aged 19) arrived in Australia to join him.

When gold was discovered in Victoria in 1851, people were caught up in gold fever and left Melbourne in their thousands. To cater for their needs in the Ballarat goldfields, John Dunn had a bullock team and wagon, carting merchandise for £20 a ton the 116 km from Melbourne. The town was famous for the gold miners’ Eureka Rebellion in 1854 when they protested against the treatment by authorities, especially the exorbitant cost of miners’ licences. The miners formed a stockade but were completely outnumbered by military and police in the ensuing shootout in which 27 men died.

In 1858, Michael married Mary Ryan, also from Tipperary, in the Victorian town of Beechworth. He went gold prospecting at *The Nine Mile* (Nine Mile Creek), the early name for Stanley, a village 10 km out of Beechworth. Their son, John Joseph, was born there in May, 1861.

In the 1970s, the author was informed by his late uncle, Cyril Dunn, that Michael and Mary took their infant son, John, gold prospecting in Melrose Gully which is understood to have been near Dunedin in New Zealand. While there is a Melrose Street and Melrose House in Dunedin, there is a high probability they went to Munro’s Gully near Gabriel’s Gully where gold was discovered in May 1861 by Australian prospector, Gabriel Read. The find caused a gold rush in Otago. [Near the goldfields lies the small town of Beaumont.] The story went that John was the first white child the local Maori had seen.

So the move of the Dunn family to the Otago goldfields would have occurred in the second half of 1861 or in 1862. Their daughter, Hannorah, (later known as Norah) was supposedly born there on 14th January 1863. However, her New Zealand birth certificate states she was born 28th March 1863 as Honora Dunne to Michael and Maria Dunne.

The recorded birth date might actually have been the date of registration and the discrepancies in spelling of names might have been a literacy issue. The recorded place of birth was Tuapeka Tokomairiro. Research indicates Tuapeka was a district that included Gabriel’s Gully and Munro’s Gully which were very much part of the Otago Gold Rush and where the Dunns had gone. Tokomairiro was the former name of the small town of Milton, just south of Dunedin. According to old reference notes, Hannorah was about 12 months old when the family moved to Sydney to join other members of the Dunn family.

Gold Rush in New Zealand

The first recorded discovery of gold in New Zealand when Tasmanian, Charles Ring, found a small amount near Coromandel in the Waikato (east of Auckland) in 1852. Further finds were made in 1856 at the top of the South Island, followed by Otago in 1861, Marlborough in 1862, the West Coast of the South Island in 1864, Thames in 1867 and Waihi in 1875.

**Edward Joseph Dunn**

When the Dunns left the Otago goldfields, they settled in Duke Street in Sydney’s Woolloomooloo where Michael’s parents lived. John Joseph married Adelaide Kate Dunn (nee Kelleher) when they were both aged 18. The couple’s first child, Michael, died in infancy and they then had four boys in a row. May and Louisa were the last two born.

As Cyril recalled, the Dunns ran a family business in the Kings Cross area of Sydney which included a horse-drawn and, later, handsome cabs. But Cyril commented that the wealth the family accumulated (mainly by purchasing houses in Woolloomooloo) was lost to a large extent when the Australian banking system collapsed as a result of the depression of the 1890s.

Edward was born on 23rd August 1884 at 151 Duke Street, Woolloomooloo, although there was a name change to the street later. All but May were born there. However, their mother died at age 28 from what appears to have been tuberculosis when Edward was just five years old. Their father remarried in 1899 to Sarah Gorman and they had two children, Cyril (1900) and Lillian (1909).

Cyril told the author that the family referred to Edward as “Ted” and that he recalled Ted left to “find work” in New Zealand in 1908 or 1909. Ted never returned and “Lilly”, as she was known then, never knew her half-brother.

**The New Zealand Years**

While the exact date of Ted’s arrival in New Zealand is yet to be established, an Edward Joseph Dunn appears in the 1911 Electoral Roll for the Westland Electorate of the West Coast Region of the South Island. It’s a reasonable assumption that this was Ted, as his occupation was stated as “miner” in the gold mining town of Waiuta. The Roll indicates he had been “struck off”, although that could relate to his moving elsewhere.

Waiuta is about nine kilometres from Hukarere off the State Highway which runs north-west from Greymouth. And the distance from Greymouth to Waiuta is 68 km. Les Wright from the Friends of Waiuta provided considerable background to the township which is virtually a ghost town these days. The daughter of an old woman whose mother ran a boarding house around the time Ted was there recalled: “There were about 100 boarders, all miners and mostly Australians. They wore brown suits, brown shoes and black bun hats – a lovely crowd of fellows.”

Les commented that many miners lived in huts and just ate at the boarding house. He added that, in 1911, nearly 300 men were employed in the mine and the vertical shaft was down six levels to about 900 feet. However, he added that, in 1912, a prolonged miners’ strike caused many to leave the town. In fact, Les suggested that, if Ted moved from Waiuta to Karangahake in the Coromandel goldfields during the strike, he would have encountered a more volatile environment.

Much of the background to the Waihi district at this time has been provided by Sue Baker Wilson, a specialist researcher in the WW1 NZ Tunnelling Company. She is particularly interested in those, like Ted, who were miners from the area prior to being recruited and attached to the Company.

From the 1914 Electoral Rolls, we know an Edward Joseph Dunn was living in the Tramway Boarding House in Karangahake, an old gold mining town just west of Waihi. Sue explained that gold miners in New Zealand were given the right to vote in 1860 to avoid the violent protests which had occurred in the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s. Any male British subject could register to vote as long as he met modest requirements such as living in a house with an annual rental value of at least 10 pounds in town or 5 pounds out of town.

Karangahake’s Tramway Hotel opened in 1883, soon after it became obvious that gold mining in the area was about to boom. In 1906, the then two-storey hotel burnt to the ground, although it was soon rebuilt. However, prohibition was voted in and the bars were closed in mid-1909, resulting in the pub becoming a boarding house. This was Ted’s residence in 1914. But in February, 1916, it burnt to the ground and the caretaker manager, Mrs Dawson (the owner’s mother-in-law) died in the fire. The two tenants escaped with burns. Ted was living and working in Waihi by this time.

Karangahake once boasted nine boarding houses, with the population peaking at 1,374 in 1911. Many of the miners were single. But the mines began to falter, with the Talisman Mine being perhaps the last to go in 1918. In the six months or so from November, 1915, 16 houses had been destroyed by fire for what appeared to have been insurance claims. While little is left of the town these days, it’s popular with tourists wanting to view the old mines and their artefacts.

Ted enlisted in the NZ Expeditionary Force on 30th May 1916. The following information was recorded on the History Sheet of his war records:

* Occupation : Miner
* Last Employer: Waihi Gold Mining Company
* Last NZ Address: Kenny Street, Waihi
* Next-of-kin: Mr John Joseph Dunn (father) 138 Duke St, Woolloomooloo,

Sydney

* NZ Contact: Mrs Donnelly (friend), Seddon Avenue, Waihi

The Waihi Arts Centre & Museum does have a limited number of records of the Time Books (wages records) of employees from the Waihi Gold Mining Company, with the Auckland Museum Library possessing a more complete set of records. Volunteer researcher for the Museum, Harriet Taylor, established from records that Ted began working at the mine on 7th January 1916 in a “party” of six miners, headed by E. C. Kennerley. He appears to have finished up on 12th May 1916, just prior to joining the army. While the wages appear to vary somewhat, it would seem Ted was paid well under a pound a day.

Waihi (pronounced “Whyhe”) is on the western end of the Bay of Plenty, two hours drive and 157 km south-east from Auckland. The town prospered because of gold mining and, by 1908, it was the fastest growing town in the Auckland Province. In 1911, its population was 6,436, but there was a mass exodus in 1912 following a major miners’ strike. The 2001 census shows 4,524 people.

Research on the Archives NZ website revealed that there was a James Donnelly of Seddon Street, Waihi who joined the NZ Expeditionary Force on 15 December 1915. He was a “surfaceman” at the time, which relates to open air mining or working on the railway. His wife was Sylvia May Donnelly. Their date of marriage on his recruitment form was recorded as having occurred on 14th April 1908, although there is a question mark on the war records and a date of 19th April 1909 was later added. NZ marriage records suggest the latter date was correct. Interestingly, she is on his recruitment application as his next-of-kin, but living in Seddon Avenue which is a main road leading into town, but becomes Seddon Street. His last abode before joining the army was Seddon Street.

Their son, Eric Aubrey, was born on 23rd February 1909. Records indicate that she was previously married to Thomas West and that she died in 1926. Her father was Clement Augustus Cornes, an Irishman and she was one of 13 children. The family was from Waihi and had mining connections.

Ted lived in Kenny Street which runs off Seddon Avenue and then runs parallel with Seddon Street.

The 1919 Electoral Roll indicates that 17 Seddon Street, Waihi was the home of Thomas, George and John Donnelly, all miners, and Mary Donnelly, domestic duties. This address may have been the family home of James Donnelly who, by 1921, was living with Sylvia at 3 Osborne St, Newmarket (Auckland). But they were living at 16 Morrow Street, Newmarket when she died on 24/02/1926 at the age of 40.

WW1 recruitment records, supplied by Harriet, indicate that John and Thomas Donnelly of the Golden Cross Hotel, Waihi were engine drivers. Whether or not 17 Seddon Street was the address for the Golden Cross Hotel is yet to be established.

Ted most likely got to know the Donnelly family through working in the mines. In a search of NZ marriage records, there is no record of a Mary M. having married a Thomas, George or John Donnelly between 1865 and 1919. They may well have all been siblings or one of the males may have been the father. So it can be concluded Ted Dunn’s friend on his enlistment form was Sylvia Donnelly.

**World War 1**

Much of the following details was obtained from Ted’s war records.

Private E J Dunn No. 26583 was recruited and posted to H. Coy 17th Reinforcements on 30th May 1916. Apart from the History Sheet details referred to above, his father and next-of-kin, John Joseph Dunn, moved from the Woolloomooloo address to 149 Paddington Street, Paddington, Sydney in 1921. Ted’s medals were sent to him in 1922.

From his medical examination report dated 22 Many 1916, Ted was aged 31, 5’ 7” tall, weighed 10 st 3 lbs and had grey eyes with light brown hair. His religion was R.C. But his teeth were considered bad, and the Examination Certificate was marked “Deferred”.

It would appear that Ted was training at Featherston just outside Wellington when he overstayed his leave in July 1916 and forfeited seven days’ pay. On 8th October 1916, he committed the offence of “Failing to comply with a Tspt order – playing cards after lights out.” He was “C.B.,”(confined to barracks) for three days.

On 25th June, Ted was hospitalised for six days at Trentham (just out of Wellington) with influenza.

Records state that Ted embarked for overseas from Wellington on 25th September 1916 and disembarked in Devonport, Plymouth on 21st November 1916. The troops then “marched into camp” at “Sling” (short for Slingshott, being the main NZ depot/camp at Larkhill, Salisbury Plain). Ted’s records indicate that he was in C Company, 5 Reserve Battalion at this time. However, it appears that, by the 7th January, he had the rank of “Rifleman” in “A” Company, 3rd Battalion of the 3rd New Zealand Rifle Brigade (NZRB)

On 8th January 1917, the Battalion left for France and “marched into camp” at Etaples on the French Coast just south of Calais. But by 13th January, Ted was admitted to the 24th General Hospital in Etaples with his papers having the notation “NYD”(not yet diagnosed). It would seem like an illness rather than a wound, but he was transferred to the Base Depot, France on 17th February.

On 24th February, Ted was posted to the New Zealand Engineers Tunnelling Company (NZETC) “In the field”. The Battle of Arras was from 9th April to 16th May 1917 and it would appear he was involved in tunnelling prior to the battle beginning. Arras is around 100 km south-east of Etaples in France.

However, on 22nd April, Ted returned to the NZRB. A week later on 29th April, he was “detached to fascine fatigue”. Another section of the records refers to Ted “rejoining unit from fascine party” on 23rd May. Some basic research revealed “fascines” were tightly bound bundles of brushwood which were carried on the nose of allied tanks to drop into deep enemy trenches in order to make a bridge for the tanks.

Ted was “killed in action” on Day 1 of the Battle of Messines, Mesen, Belgium which occurred between 7th & 14th June. On 7th June at 3:10 am, 19 bombs, made of 450,000 kg of high explosives and laid in underground tunnels under Messines Ridge (including Hill 60) by the Australian Tunnellers, were detonated. The explosion was felt in London 200 km away. Reports of the number of Germans killed by the explosives vary considerably, but a Wikipedia report suggests approximately 10,000. Thousands more were injured or taken prisoner.

The Allies immediately followed with 2,400 artillery guns opening up and firing six million shells on that first day.

Ted died that day along with former All Black, George Sellars. Other former All Blacks who were killed at Messines were Reginald Taylor (20th June) and James McNeece (21st June). The Australian Official Historian Official once recorded that, from 1st to 14th June, just under 5,000 NZ troops and just over 6,000 Australian troops lost their lives there.

In Ted’s War records, there is an entry in red which reads:

Killed in action in Field France or Belgium June 7, 1917. Buried in angle formed by meeting of Stinking Farm Rd & X road running N, into Messines past La Baosee (possibly La Basse as there is a village by that name) Farm about 150 yds S of Stinking Farm Rd & 200 yds from Moos (Could read “Mesen”) (Rept Messines 37.1)

Ted’s sacrifice is remembered, along with his fellow NZ Rifle Brigade mates who died in that area, on the Messines Ridge (NZ) Memorial at Mesen in Belgium. Depress the “Control” key on the keyboard and double-click on the following link.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messines\_Ridge\_(New\_Zealand)\_Memorial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messines_Ridge_%28New_Zealand%29_Memorial)