

EVERY DAY IS BIG

THE FAMILY of JOE & MARGARET COLLINS



ENTREPRENEURS, FARMERS,
COFFEE PIONEERS, ADVENTURERS



KEN GRAY

Published by

Mission Beach Historical Society Inc.

Document H020.

Website: mbhs.com.au



This publication is copyright © Mission Beach Historical Society.

First published by MBHS Inc., in 2024.

Author: Ken Gray. *Editors:* Chris Forbes and Margaret Remilton.

Apart from fair dealing for private study, research, criticism, or review, as permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this work may be stored, reproduced, or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission. Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

A record of this title is held at the National Library of Australia (eBook) and the State Library of Queensland (Print and eBook).

The text and opinions expressed in this book are those of the author and of the people interviewed by the author and do not reflect the views of the Mission Beach Historical Society or its members.

Mission Beach Historical Society's logo is designed by Leonard Andy, copyright © Leonard Andy. The design depicts a Djiru shield with a cassowary which is the endangered, iconic flightless bird living in the north Queensland rainforests.

The histories published by the Mission Beach Historical Society are as accurate as we can make them. Few accounts of history are 100% correct and there are going to be more errors when we recall events of many years ago. We always welcome suggested edits and additions or deletions and where possible we will edit where we find we are in error. However, the oral histories we record are the words of the people we interview, and we can only alter those with the authorisations of the people we interviewed.

Cover Image

Upper image: Horse riders at Kirrama on a trip to the Blencoe rapids in the late 1920s. From Doug Unsworth.

Lower image Left: Margaret and Joe Collins with Barry and Karin. From Sonia O'Brien.

Lower Image Right: 'Dad n me' taken from *Facebook* post July 2024 ... Joe Collins and daughter Sonia on a clay pigeon shoot. From Sonia O'Brien.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
FAME	7
ANCESTRY	8
GRANDPA COLLINS	8
COLLINS FAMILY TREE	9
COLLINS-LEAHY FAMILY TREE	10
GRANDMA COLLINS	12
GRANDMA & GRANDPA LEAHY	14
MARGARET COLLINS	16
SIBLINGS OF EDGAR COLLINS	18
KIRRAMA STATION	19
JOE COLLINS – RECOLLECTIONS	26
COLLINS AUNTS & UNCLES	28
TULLY	36
MOLLY & ALWYNNE COLLINS	36
JOE COLLINS	37
JOE’S SIBLINGS	42
NEW GUINEA	53
SOUTH MISSION BEACH	59
THE LEAHYS	61
MOLLY’S SIBLINGS	62
THE LEAHY COUSINS	77
LEAHY COLLINS COFFEE	83
COFFEE TODAY	85

INTRODUCTION

When the Mission Beach Historical Society (MBHS) was founded late in 2020, a meeting was called and long-term residents were encouraged to attend. There, in the front row, was 93-year-old Joe Collins, keen to participate and contribute. Our stated aim from the outset was to capture and make accessible the district's history and interviewing our older citizens was deemed a high priority.

While Joe had not lived in Mission Beach all of his life as some of the people we planned to interview had, he had lived in Tully for his first 24 years and visited 'the beach' often. Then, after living in New Guinea for 24 years, he and his wife Margaret chose to make South Mission Beach their family home in 1976. While Margaret is no longer with us, Joe is soldiering on boldly at South Mission Beach in 2023, still creating much delight for his family and all those who are lucky enough to know this uncomplicated, intriguing and ever humorous man.

Joe has packed much into his busy 96 year life. He started his work life as a butcher and abattoir worker with his father and did that for eight years. He drove a river barge near Lae in New Guinea then worked for a gold mining company driving trucks before trying his hand at fishing without much success. His main job in New Guinea was when owning a timber mill and timber yard in the Highlands near Goroka. He and his brother, Rod, owned an old sawmill and built another one when the timber became scarce at the first location. Then they had a 180 acre coffee plantation with a coffee processing plant and between the timber and coffee business they employed around 300 workers at times.

Rod and Joe also owned a 55,000 acre cattle station at Charters Towers for 22 years and had that managed. They purchased a cane farm at Josephine Falls. When he took his family to South Mission Beach in the 1970s, Joe made a living with his prawn trawler for a number of years, traded real estate and had several investment businesses – rental sheds in Cairns, an avocado farm, and a tennis centre in Brisbane.

As with his brothers and cousins, Joe was a keen clay pigeon shooter and he still participates in the sport. He played polocrosse with his friends and relations in New Guinea and was the captain of the national team for a time. There was never much time left in Joe's day.

In 2022, with the Tully 100 Anniversary looming, MBHS Inc., President, Valerie Boll, approached Joe and recorded some recollections of his life, particularly while living in Tully. That was transcribed and part of that content is used for this publication. Joe showed Valerie a family history, *Kirrama Collins and Families*, written by his brother-in-law, Doug Unsworth.

Late in 2023, I met with Joe and he loaned me his copy of Doug's family history, a huge tome of 707 pages. This was surely the last word on the Collins dynasty! This was incredibly well researched and interesting with excellent appendices showing rich sources of information. It must be at the pinnacle of quality family histories. My first thought was that we need not do more – the job is done. Yet Joe remained keen to have us publish an account of his part of the family.

After reading that history it was evident that access to Doug's fine book would be a big step forward. A digital version would be ideal. Few people outside the Collins family have access to these printed books. They are not held in the Council library catalogue. With so much valuable history within its pages, it seemed worthwhile to make some of the content accessible and ensure that future historians will know of the book's existence.

Joe offered to provide further recollections if I made a start using what we already had: Doug's book and Valerie's interviews. It was essential to do our own research online using *Ancestry.com.au*, *Trove* and all available online sites that reveal a hint of the Collins and Leahy clan. Joe and Margaret's history is a generation below

the Kirrama story so the Leahys needed to be added to include the maternal side of the family tree. It would be a huge undertaking to research that fully with interviews as Doug did for the Collins side, so this would be an abbreviated version using what Joe could recall augmented by other family memories and material available online.

This is a large family. Mary and Edgar (Grandma and Grandpa Collins) had 32 grandchildren while Irish Catholics, Nellie and Daniel Leahy (Grandma and Grandpa Leahy), had 56. Even Molly and Alwynne (Joe's parents) had 29 grandchildren. When we document family histories at MBHS, we usually concentrate on the lives of the persons we interview and part of their ancestors, largely leaving out current generations.

Doug Unsworth in the introduction to his family history wrote:

... I came to realize that this family group had something special. Not only were they generally successful in their business undertakings and other enterprises but they had a deep sense of family with a devotion to, and love of their direct family members. An excellent rapport exists between generations and the younger generations have a respect for older family members and have a deep interest in the activities and anecdotes of their forebears. This interaction between generations really is something special and does not today occur in many families.

I must concur with that conclusion after reading all I can on the family. While life in Tully was not much fun, these family attributes are truly evident in almost every corner of this vast family. Edgar Collins was a hard man by any measure and a strict disciplinarian who took no lip from his children. Marsey would have agreed with that observation I expect, and many of the Leahys in New Guinea were tough as nails too, yet Doug described the spirit of his family well.

If we look at the family of Alwynne and Molly Collins in Tully, Joe's parents, and ask ourselves how many families of their children, cousins and grandchildren ended up living in Tully and Mission Beach, it is not a large number. None of the families of Joe Collins, apart from Joe and Margaret themselves ended up living nearby but his sons, Peter and Rod are living in Cairns today, not too far away.

Many of the descendants live today on the Atherton Tableland, at least nine such families are recorded in the Unsworth family story. Some returned to New Guinea and two of John and Anne's children have businesses there today (John and James.) It is among the offspring of Joe's brother, Eric, that we find the families who stayed or returned to Tully or Mission Beach: Marie died in Tully in 1921, Jean Collins is living in Tully and her son, Robert lives in Bingil Bay with his wife, Fiona. Robert and Len Collins and their families have many descendants living in the district and Margaret, with her husband, Kevin Pease, lives in South Mission Beach. Joe's uncles, aunts and cousins have ensured that the Collins family's presence remains strong in the district.

In her biography, *Artful Lives: The Cohen Sisters*, author Penny Olsen relates the fascinating stories of her cousins Valerie and Yvonne Cohen who owned and lived on Timana Island for many years and became notable Australian artists. Penny wished that she had known Val and Von, as they were known, earlier in life and remarked: *I came to know them best later in their lives, when their wings had been clipped ...* I wondered, had the wings of the Collins men also been clipped?

I met the Collins family or spoke to them on the phone a few times in the case of their cousin, Paddy Leahy when they were considerably older than was the case for Penny and her famous artist cousins. After a wonderful day with five of the most senior members of the family in Malanda mid-2024, I could see no traces of such *clipped wings*. Indeed, with Joe at 96 years age, Rod at 95 and Ed at 88, it was apparent that they all had *the wind beneath their wings*! The meeting was lively and fun with constant laughter and so much happy self-deprecating humour as they reflected on lives fully lived.

Joe still has his driving licence and visits his family in Malanda every Friday for lunch and returns home the same day, a four hour round trip. He is often interstate or out West participating in clay pigeon shoots and makes the most of every day. He has had three heart operations, yet always gets on his feet and makes the most of every minute of his days. As ever.

His brothers and their charming wives are no different, full of energy with utterly joyous outlooks. I watched them in action with awe ... what an example they set. Could I live with such grace into my 90s or would I be consumed by lingering maladies and become irascible as many older people do?

It has been amazing to witness how so many among this family made good in life. Many of the menfolk were successful graziers, entrepreneurs, coffee growers etc., and a large number of their womenfolk trained as nurses or teachers etc. and contributed significantly to their communities. Down to earth, hardworking people was my overall impression.

James Sinclair, in *The Money Tree*, came to a similar conclusion:¹

Perhaps the hard upbringing of the Collins and Leahy nephews received helps to explain their undoubted success in PNG. They were all good workers, careful with their cash, not highly educated but smart, with shrewd business heads, willing to take chances and 'have a go' at anything that looked promising. Their word was their bond.

This certainly is a special family and its story needs to be accessible to a wider audience, so we thank Joe for making that possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to **Doug Unsworth** for his outstanding family history, *Kirrama Collins and Family*. Without that it would have been difficult to create this history of Joe's wonderful family. The majority of the images of the family used in this publication came from Doug's book.

Joe Collins filled in many gaps and added more stories and was the other primary source of information on the family. *Ancestry.com.au* and *Trove* were always key backup sources of data to check history and find new leads and many other online information sources were useful.

Paddy and **Rosemary Leahy** aided me greatly with the Leahy side of the family and eliminated many of my errors and misinterpretations. They also pointed me to other valuable sources of information.

Rod and **Jen Collins** added much vital information and coloured in many parts of the family story as did **Ed** and **Jennifer Collins**. They were never much concerned or pedantic about what was written and seemed only to want me to ensure that the publication gave a true sense of the family history and the fun they all had during their long lives.

Max Menzel helped with edits of the Menzel family text as did **Rob** and **Fiona Lauriston** for the section on Uncle Eric's family.

Sonia O'Brien, Margaret and Joe's youngest daughter, also helped immensely with editing and images.

James Sinclair's definitive history of the Papua New Guinea coffee industry, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, was also an invaluable source of information.

¹ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P. 82.

F A M E

Many of Joe and Margaret's family achieved a degree of fame in their lifetimes and a few of those people are listed here to demonstrate the impacts that the family have had on communities far and wide.

- **Samuel Dowse.** Relative of Grandpa Collins who owned Cellars Clough Cotton Mill in Marsden, West Yorkshire. He also owned Cellars Clough House and employed 225 workers when he was in partnership with Joseph Collins.
- **Roger Williamson Wilson.** A relative of Grandma Collins who served with distinction in the British Army and was awarded military honours for his role in the Opium Wars. He rose in rank to become a Major General.
- **Dr John Vaughan Thompson.** A relative of Grandma Collins who became a British Army surgeon and was recognised as a Fellow of the Linnean Society for his natural history research publications which were used by Charles Darwin on his voyages.
- **William Frederick Webb.** A relative of Grandma Collins who became the High Sheriff of Nottingham and owned Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire, once owned by Lord Byron. William was a close friend of Dr David Livingstone, the African explorer who often stayed at Newstead Abbey.
- **John Wright.** A relative of Grandma Leahy who owned many coal mines in south east Queensland and had three Ipswich houses that have now become Queensland Heritage listed properties.
- **Albert James (Bert) Barbet.** A relative of Molly Leahy, Joe's mother. Bert was the project manager for his engineering company and led the Tully Sugar Mill project.
- **Michael James (Mick) Leahy, M.B.E.** Molly's brother, Mick, was an explorer, gold miner, photographer, rugby league player, and farmer who excelled at all he did. He was recognised with an MBE for his services to the New Guinea nation. His large farm at Zenag, which remains in his family today, produces 85% of PNG's eggs and much of its chicken.
- **James Luby (Jim) Leahy.** While Molly's brother, Jim, was not formally recognised by the nation, he certainly hit the headlines when the Erinvale Coffee Plantation became a wonder to behold in 1952, attracting a horde of investors to the Highlands. Jim was a true pioneer of PNG's coffee industry.
- **Daniel Joseph (Hagen Dan) Leahy, O.B.E.** Dan was also a brother of Molly and was a legend in the Mount Hagen district. He was an explorer, gold miner, farmer and coffee plantation owner and his Korgua Coffee Estate endures today as does his coffee factory in large part due to his astute decisions regarding their location. His contributions to the nation were recognised with an OBE.
- **Thomas Joseph (Markham Tom) Leahy.** Tom was Molly's nephew. He owned a 2,500 acre cattle farm in the Markham Valley near Lae. Tom was elected to government in New Guinea in 1968 and was honoured in citations for his contributions to PNG at its 25th Anniversary of Independence.
- **Sir Daniel Joseph (Danny) Leahy.** Danny, with his cousin, Edgar Collins, established Collins & Leahy, a company which employed 12,000 PNG people. Danny, like many of his relatives, was a formidable rugby league player. In 1970, he received the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal and, in 1992, Danny was knighted for his contributions to the nation. He was well known for his brave move to quell a riot in Goroka when PNG politician, Iambakey Okuk, died.
- If MBEs or similar were awarded to people who worked humbly and incredibly hard all their lives for their community and family to ensure that their children had every chance in life, then this family would have wall to wall awards. Joe's brothers, **Ed and Rod Collins**, and his cousin **Paddy Leahy** made considerable contributions to communities they have lived in and would no doubt easily meet the criteria such as those required for an OAM or AM.

ANCESTRY

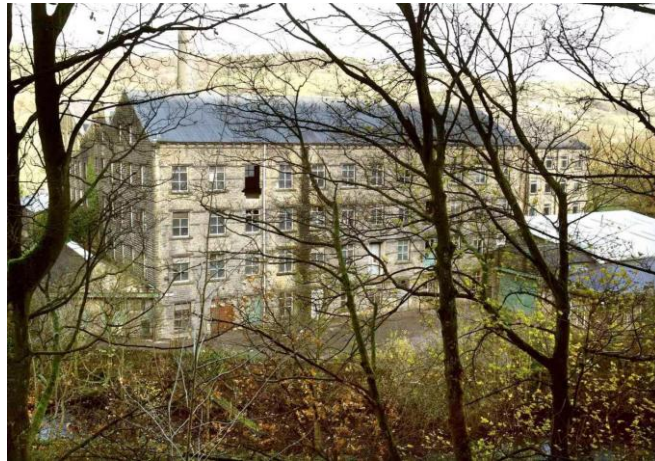
The Joe Collins family ancestry is documented in parts to 1578 online. The author of *Kirrama Collins and Families*, Doug Unsworth, found that Joe's English great grandmother, Hannah Haigh, had an ancestor, John Haigh, who was born in 1645. Joe's Irish great grandmother, Ellen Wright, has family records displayed on *Ancestry.com.au* (Fraser family research tree) reaching back ten generations to William Wright² of Essex in 1578. Most of the Wright ancestors came from Ireland, yet earlier generations were from Yorkshire and Essex.

Joe Collins has five Irish great grandparents and three English. Margaret Collins (nee Menzel) had an Irish mother and a German father, so Joe and Margaret's children are largely of Irish, German and English descent.

The easiest way to obtain an overview of the family ancestry is to split it by Joe's four grandparents.

'GRANDPA COLLINS'. EDGAR DOWSE COLLINS, 1868 – 1937.

The family trees are outlined on the next two pages. In 1844, Samuel Dowse at age 38, purchased the Cellars Clough cotton mill in Marsden, West Yorkshire. It had a 20 acre estate attached and on that he built Cellars Clough House and lived there with his only daughter Hannah after his wife, Jane died. The mill is thought to have been built in 1801.



Cellars Clough Cotton Mill prior to its recent conversion to units and offices.

In 1861, Hannah married Joseph Collins and Samuel Dowse entered into a partnership with him. They all lived at Cellars Clough House after the marriage. Like Hannah, Joseph Collins was also an only child, but his mother had three children from a previous marriage and they lived with John and Elizabeth Collins.

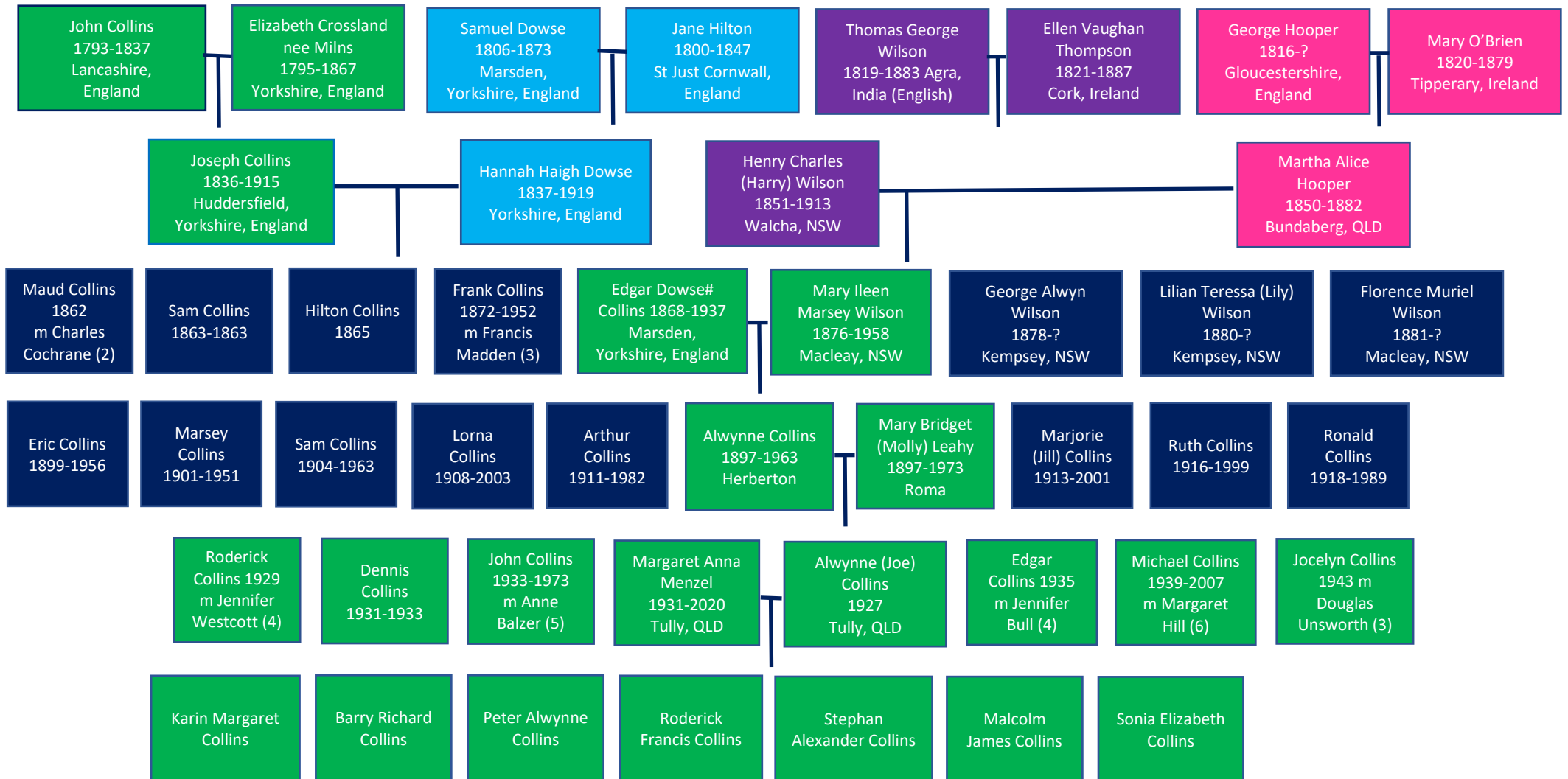


Cellars Clough House converted to units.

² <https://www.ancestry.com.au/family-tree/person/tree/179093016/person/322361936122/story>: accessed December 2023.

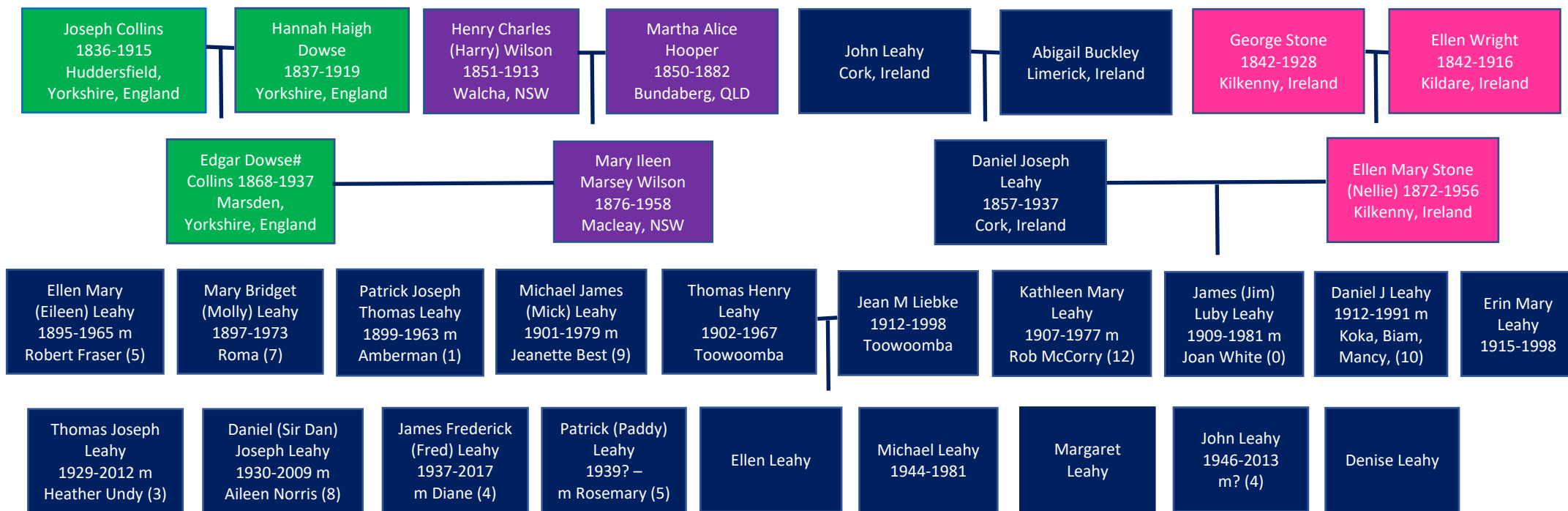
COLLINS FAMILY TREE

Abbreviated family name to Collins thereafter.



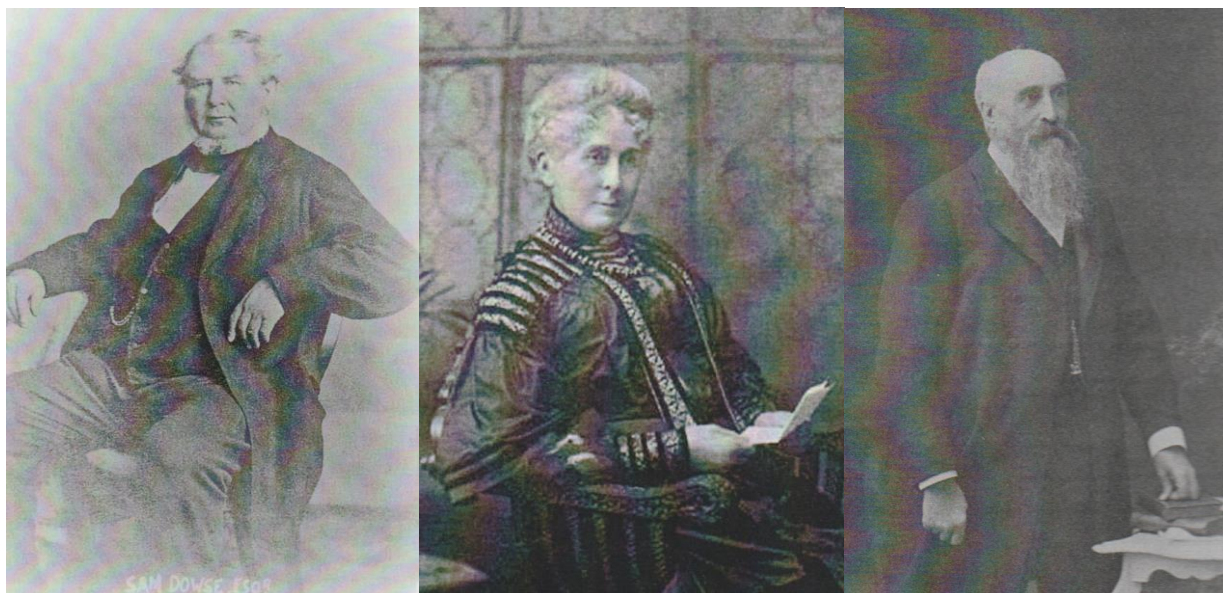
COLLINS-LEAHY FAMILY TREE

Joe's grandparents and great grandparents plus parts of the Leahy family (Daniel Leahy's Welsh family not shown).



Marsden is a small town with a population of 3,800 residents in the 2021 census, so is of similar size to Mission Beach today. It is 10 km west of Huddersfield (160,000 population) and 30 km east of Manchester. Marsden became quite a large centre for cotton and woollen mills in the 19th century. The largest woollen mill was Bank Bottom, which remains standing today and at its peak that mill had 1,900 employees. It closed in 2003.

The Dowse-Collins business was not near to that scale, yet they employed 213 workers at the mill and 12 on the estate in 1871, so the Collins and Dowse family were notable people in the town. The steam engine used in later years at their cotton mill is now featured in the Bolton Steam Museum which has the largest collection of working steam engines in Europe.



L to R: Samuel Dowse, Hannah Collins, and Joseph Collins, from Doug Unsworth, *Kirrama Collins and Family*.

Joseph Collins became sole owner of the cotton mill business in 1873 and sold it to George Firth in 1887. Firth converted it into a woollen mill. Joseph and Hannah declared bankruptcy in 1891. Apparently, an extension of the cotton mill earlier was the root cause of their financial stress. Some asserted though that Joseph was more interested in horses than his mill and he over capitalised his stables. Hannah wrote to her son, Edgar, on occasions just before her death and after being from a wealthy family in early life, she was then struggling to survive financially.

Undoubtedly, the Collins family regarded the Dowse family as socially significant because Hannah and Joseph used the family name of 'Dowse' as a given name for each of their five children and that given name has endured down the generations. The family do not refer to themselves as the Dowse-Collins family.



Edgar Collins c. 1915. 'Grandpa Collins'. Mary Wilson later 'Grandma Collins', both from Doug Unsworth, *Kirrama Collins and Families*.

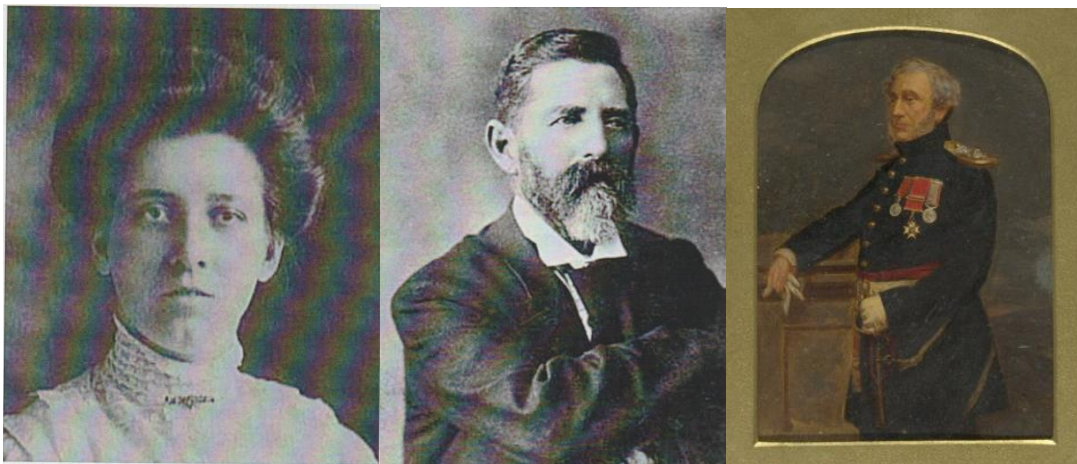
‘GRANDMA COLLINS’.

MARY ILEEN MARSEY COLLINS, NEE WILSON, 1876 – 1958.

Every family has its share of colourful characters and there are several in this branch of the clan.

Mary’s parents, Henry (Harry) and Martha Wilson (nee Hooper) were both Australian born and had four children while living near Walcha in NSW. Harry’s father, Thomas Wilson, was English, living in India before he migrated to Australia and married Ellen Thompson who migrated from Cork, Ireland.

Thomas Wilson leased the Aberbaldie sheep and cattle station on the Macleay River in partnership with others from 1845 to 1860 before trying cotton growing unsuccessfully for four years, then growing grapes for wine at Port Macquarie. He then purchased Willesbro Station on the Wilson River in 1867 and grew some grapes again. His son, George John took over the farm and it remained in the Wilson family for generations. There are several web pages and publications written about the families who lived and made wine there.



Martha Hooper and Harry Wilson, from Doug Unsworth, *Kirrama Collins and Families*. Major General Roger Williamson Wilson.

Thomas Wilson’s father, Roger Williamson Wilson, served with distinction in the (British) East India Company Army earning a Companion of the Order of Bath for his actions as a Major during the Opium Wars of 1841-42. He rose in rank to become a Major General in the army.



Dr John Vaughan Thompson Army Surgeon, Cork Ireland, c. August 1835.

Ellen Thompson’s father, John Vaughan Thompson, was also a notable man who graduated in medicine at Edinburgh University and enlisted with the British Army as a surgeon stationed in Cork, Ireland. John was born in Brooklyn New York when his father was serving in the British Army there. Dr Thompson was passionately interested in natural history and wrote several scientific papers, some controversial at the time. Charles Darwin took some of his papers while on his expeditions and Dr John Thompson was elected as a

Fellow of the Linnean Society in 1810 in recognition of his research. In 1836, he was transferred to Sydney as Deputy Inspector of Hospitals NSW.

Harry Wilson was also well known; and somewhat controversial. He was an outstanding stockman, but on several occasions was charged with crimes by the Herberton police. Due to a lack of evidence none of the charges ended in convictions. Harry was regarded as violent, especially to his Aboriginal workforce and had a reputation as a 'womaniser'. He married Martha Hooper, the daughter of George and Mary Hooper, owners of a notable 1,300 square mile property, Hawkwood Station on the Upper Burnett near Eidsvold, QLD. George was originally a market gardener from Randwick and became an alderman and auditor at Randwick Council. His cottage there is heritage listed.

The Hoopers sold Hawkwood Station to the wealthy, aristocratic de Burgh Persse family who were related to Hugo Brassey, the owner of Dunk Island in 1936. Hugo stayed with them at their Tabragalba Station when he came to Queensland in 1934.

Martha Wilson died in childbirth in 1882 at Kempsey, NSW and Harry then moved to North Queensland. His family prevented him from taking his children with him and they (including Mary Wilson) stayed with their Aunt Hannah Pollard (nee Hooper) at Warwick, QLD. Hannah Pollard had 11 children of her own so there were 15 children in all yet Mary Wilson had positive memories of her childhood.

Harry Wilson was 32 years old when he started a butchery business in the north then became manager of Gunnawarra Station west of Kirrama. At that time, Gunnawarra Station held up to 15,000 head of cattle. Harry married Fanny Perrott in NSW in 1885 and the couple returned to live at Gunnawarra.

In 1887, Edgar Collins, 18 years old and newly arrived from England, arrived at Gunnawarra as an apprentice stockman. Harry Wilson was accused of stealing cattle for his butchery in 1895 by the station owner and was dismissed. Shortly after, in 1896, Edgar Collins married Harry's eldest daughter Mary in Herberton and the Wilson and Collins families moved to Kirrama Station.

Harry and his second wife, Fanny moved further west to Forest Home Station near Georgetown in 1899 when he was appointed as manager there. After discovering Harry in bed with the governess, Nellie Duffy, Fanny fled with the children to her widowed mother. Nellie became governess at Kirrama.

Fanny returned in 1903 to Forest Home and Nellie became housekeeper at Carpentaria Downs Station, also managed by Harry Wilson at the time. In 1908, Nellie was murdered and Fanny was charged by police along with Aboriginal Billy Wilson. Billy was acquitted but Fanny was neither convicted nor was the case dismissed. The case was never resolved and Stephanie Bennett published a book in 2001, *The Murder of Nellie Duffy*. Fanny Wilson suffered badly at the hands of her husband and loved all the Wilson and Collins children. Alwynne Collins was a favourite.

Harry Wilson was dismissed from Carpentaria Downs in 1908, once again on suspicion of stealing cattle. He relocated to the Tweed River district.

Harry and Martha Wilson had three children, Mary, George and Lilian. Lilian Teresa (Lily) Wilson graduated as a nurse at Warwick in 1907 and married Roderick Beauclerc Webb. Roderick Webb volunteered for the Boer War and reached the rank of Major. In 1901, he migrated to Australia as Aide-de-Campe for the Governor of Queensland, Herbert Chermiside. The Governor's wife, Lady Geraldine, was Webb's sister. Roderick stayed in Australia when Chermiside returned to England.

After marrying, Lily and Roderick returned to England to live at Newstead Abbey in Northumbria. Roderick's father, William Frederick Webb (1829 – 1899) was immensely wealthy after inheriting many large estates from his father. In 1861, William purchased Newstead Abbey, a notable estate in Ravenswood which was once owned

by Lord Byron. William and his family were close to Dr David Livingston, the famous African explorer. Livingston often stayed at Newstead and once resided there for eight months. William Webb was a magistrate and in 1865 became the High Sheriff of Nottingham.

Roderick was not at the Abbey long before he enlisted with the Royal Fusiliers and was sent to East Africa in 1915 where he was involved in heavy fighting. He lost his life in Tanzania in 1916 and was buried there.



Newstead Abbey, Northumbria.

Lily also served in WWI as a nurse at a military hospital in London. After the war, she returned to Warwick and died in Brisbane in 1970.

Harry and Fanny Wilson had three children, Robert, Arthur and Winifred. Robert enlisted in WWI in 1916 and was taken prisoner of war in France when his Battalion was decimated by the Germans. He returned to Australia in 1919.

‘GRANDMA LEAHY’. ELLEN MARY LEAHY, NEE STONE, 1872 – 1956 and

‘GRANDPA LEAHY’. DANIEL JOSEPH LEAHY, 1857 – 1937.

In the family trees shown earlier we see that Ellen Stone (Nellie) was born in Kilkenny, Ireland. Her parents were George Stone and Ellen Wright. A search on *Ancestry.com.au* has some conflicting data but indications are that Ellen Stone migrated with her cousins (Wrights) in 1888 when she was 16 years old. That was supposedly with her uncle John Wright and aunty Elizabeth Wright (nee Wright, no relation) and their two sons Thomas and George. Their *Ancestry* record show them arriving in Queensland in 1867 so it is probable that Ellen migrated later to be a governess for her young cousins, the Wright children born in Australia.

John and Elizabeth Wright eventually had 16 children and the two eldest, Thomas and George, were tragically drowned in a coal mining disaster during the 1893 Brisbane-Ipswich floods. John was a miner in Ireland and after working for six years in the Old Tivoli Pit, he opened his own coal mine in 1873. It was at the Eclipse Mine that his sons and five others died in the 1893 floods. By 1910, John Wright owned many mines across Queensland as well as vast real estate holdings. The Wrights became the state’s largest producers of coke so were significant players in the early days of coal mining in Queensland.

The Wright family built an impressive home named Oaklands at Tivoli near Ipswich in 1898 and then they erected two other substantial homes in the same street in 1903 for their sons Andrew and John, who were mine managers by that time. These three homes are now Queensland Heritage listed properties.



Oaklands, Tivoli, Ipswich from *Ancestry.com.au*, shared by Peter Reilly 2014.³ Oaklands Queensland Heritage listed 2004.⁴

While working as a governess for her Aunt Elizabeth (“Mother Wright”), Nellie had an argument with her employer and left for Taroom and then Roma on the Western Downs. It was in Roma that Nellie met Daniel Leahy, who was a guard on the Wester Mail passenger train that operated from Roma. Daniel and Nellie married in Roma and then moved to Toowoomba.

Daniel migrated from Ireland around 1890 with his younger brother, Cornelius, who died in 1891. Daniel was born in Cork in 1857 and married Elizabeth (Liza) Eynon of Wales. They lived in Wales had four children, three of whom died at under four years old. He abandoned his Welsh family and migrated to Australia where he married Nellie Stone and had nine more children. Molly was the second of Nellie’s children.

It was Molly Leahy who was to draw her Leahy family north to Tully and that move was created by their Wright cousin, Elizabeth (Lily) who married Albert (Bert) Barbet. Bert and his family owned the large Ipswich engineering firm, F E Babet and Sons. They won the contract to construct the Tully Sugar Mill and Bert was to oversee the project, so he moved with his family to Tully, or Banyan as it was then known, in 1923.

The Barbets had been married at the Wright family home, Oaklands and in later life, Lily inherited the Oaklands house. Lily Barbet needed a governess for her children in Tully and sought help from her cousin Nellie Leahy and her daughter, Molly Leahy, agreed to relocate from the Western Downs to Tully.

³ https://www.ancestry.com.au/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/12658651/person/192147781915/media/126414d0-7548-457d-a06c-c8c593a31386?_phsrc=pti96&usePUBJs=true&galleryindex=13&albums=pg&showGalleryAlbums=true&tab=0&pid=192147781915&sort=-created. Accessed December 2023.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wright_Family_Houses. Accessed December 2023.

MARGARET ANNA COLLINS, NEE MENZEL. 1931 – 2020.

Margaret Menzel was born in Tully, her father, Franz (Richard) Menzel (1882 – 1950), was born in Germany at Coswig near to Dresden. Richard migrated to Australia in 1906 and was naturalised in 1912. He selected land near Bundaberg at Goodwood for a time and returned to North Queensland and worked near Innisfail. Later he became homesick and returned to Germany. However, Germany was not ideal for him, so he decided that Australia was better and became a stoker on a merchant ship leaving for Australia.

Richard married Margaret (Dulcie) Kelly who was born in Townsville. She migrated with her family to Australia in 1861. When her mother died, Dulcie was sixteen and still at high school. Her relatives claimed her mother's home and sold all her belongings, so she had to leave her home and school, to work on a cattle station as a governess. Dulcie left this area as a 20-year-old to work as a shop assistant at Slevskies in Tully.

The family believe that Dulcie Kelly was distantly related to Ned Kelly who came from the same county in Ireland.

Richard worked initially at cane cutting before obtaining his farm from the Deans in partnership with another German migrant, Max Wittie. He left the partnership after being informed by his concerned bank manager, who produced evidence, that he should cut ties, due to Wittie's gambling addiction. They moved to a farm at Euramo later and lived there on Menzel Road as it is known today.

A few years after Richard died in 1950, Dulcie moved up to Miriwinni on another cane farm.

Margaret first met Joe when she was at school. She had been dating Joe for two years before they were married, but they seldom went anywhere and Joe thought he was lucky that she kept dating him. When Margaret became a nurse, she and her sister Joan went to dances with their friends, and she would see Joe at the dances. Joe wanted to be married but had no money at the time until things started working out in New Guinea.

Joe said that Margaret was widely loved and did not have one enemy in the world which he could not say of himself in the tough New Guinea days. He also said that Mr and Mrs Menzel were fabulously kind and hardworking people who were always good to him.

Joe:

Mrs Menzel went to St Joseph's primary school in Townsville where she earned a scholarship from St Patrick's for exceptional English skills. She wrote an essay once and the teacher rejected it saying she could not have done that, asking who wrote it. She was made to write another essay under supervision and, to their amazement, the second essay was just as cleverly written as the first. Dick Menzel was a real nice fella and never went to the pub. He was afraid of being interned during the war, being of German descent, but was well regarded in the district and was spared that fate. He met Dulcie in Slevkies shop in Tully.

Joe and Margaret's family provided some input on their Margaret Menzel as well:

Margaret finished senior and became a nurse at the Tully hospital. Joe and Margaret were married in Tully on the 26th of November 1951. Margaret moved to New Guinea later and it was here that their very eventful life began. When she was living in Goroka in the later part of her time there, she did a book keeping course by correspondence and got high distinctions in every paper she sent in. Joe put her to work in his timber yard office doing the books. She was an active member of the Goroka Red Cross and was a great contributor to the cause. She was a wonderfully kind and thoughtful person and when she knew the local women were unwell, she would take them to the 'House Sick' to be treated.

Margaret was always on hand to help the other wives settle into their new lives. When her sister-in-law Margie Collins was pregnant, she sewed her some maternity wear. No one had sewing machines in Goroka and shops were few, especially when it came to women's needs. Before all Joes' brothers were married, they lived with Joe and Margaret for a time at Kotuni in a two roomed cabin. She cooked for them every day while keeping an eye on her three children. The kids slept in a couple of boxes and a drawer on the floor with Joe and Margaret. The men lived in the other room, also sleeping on the floor. It was a cold, wet, muddy and miserable place most of the year. People don't realise there is no summer up in the highland mountains. It's not like the hot coastal areas.

Jocelyn, Joe's sister, spent a year up there as a nurse, living with Margaret and said, 'Before all the brothers and a few of the Leahy's got married, the place to drop into was Margaret's home. She always had a cuppa and something yummy to go with it. She was like a sister to me and a dearly loved mother. Her patience, kindness and generosity knew no bounds to all who knew her. Nothing was too big or too small to tackle. She was an amazing woman and literally had no help from Joe.'

Margaret always welcomed members of the family to her home and did all she could for them. When Paddy Leahy's wife, Rosemary came up, Margaret ensured that her 21st birthday was remembered as it should be. No one else remembered to have a party.

Margaret survived the challenges of the New Guinea Highlands with aplomb and had many occasions to worry about the safety of her children and herself. Joe was away ninety percent of the time, so he thought it prudent to teach her how to use a rifle. She kept this loaded under the mattress. There were a few incidences at Kotuni and Goroka where she needed to use it to frighten off the locals at night. Another drama in Goroka was when Malcolm locked Sonia and himself in Margaret's bedroom so he could play with the rifle. He discharged the firearm but luckily it only ricocheted off the cupboard and shot back into the mattress. Margaret was frantically trying to open the door to see if they were OK. A big scolding followed before being dropped off at school that morning. When Joe was away, everyone was locked in her room every night and slept on the floor, just in case there was an attack.

When she lived in a tarred canvas house on stilts beside the Labu Lakes, she would hear the screams of the natives being taken by the crocodiles. Apparently, the locals still swam despite the crocodile threats. One night the croc came under the house, slapping its tail against the walls. It ate her dog's puppies. The incident almost caused her to lose Peter in utero at the time, and she was packed off on a plane to get medical help the following day.

The story goes that the air hostess saw her distress and gave her a very large brandy and Mum felt much better during her trip. Another incident in Labu happened when the power was turned off at midnight, as it was every night. She used to be terrified when the hour was approaching because on several occasions, she had heard someone coming around the house. Afterall, the walls were only made of tarred canvas and everyone always knew she was alone. A local started rattling the window and she screamed the place down. The villages came running but the perpetrator had fled. The villages told her the next day the man had been caught and returned to his own village.

Joe was rarely around, and certainly not in attendance when any of the children were born. He was busy working, and every day was full. He rose at 4am, with late nights every day, often after 10pm. Margaret sometimes entertained and just once, asked him if he would be home in time for the guests. He arrived as dinner was served and then promptly fell asleep over the soup.

Margaret was a fantastic cook. After living in the highland mountains and using a wood stove for years, she could whip up anything.

Dulcie and Richard had five children, Margaret, Eunice, Joan, Hope and Max.

Eunice was born 14 March 1933 and married Bill Bates who worked for the government for most of his life in New Guinea. They had two children. Her son Michael became a lawyer and later joined the Army. Her daughter Andree has a successful international business with offices in London, Japan, America and Australia. Eunice finished her senior year and after training to be a teacher taught at Tully initially, and then at Palm Island for two years and after several other posts, went to teach in New Guinea. In 2024, Eunice is living in Brisbane and is 92 years old.

Joan was born 22 October 1935 and became a nurse. She caught rheumatic fever and had to leave nursing and worked in retail in Tully. Joan married Edward (Teddy) Teitzel who was a butcher and cane farmer in Tully (next door to Joe Collins in Mars Street) They had a son Richard and two daughters, Christine and Margaret. She died in 1994 in Brisbane.

Hope was born on 05 January 1938 and married John Patane, who was a cane farmer. Hope managed their grog shop in Butler Street, Tully. They had two children, John who inherited his father's farm and Maree who left Tully to become a doctor. Hope is in the Tully Nursing Home in 2024.

Max Menzel, born 1941, was a cane grower and was later elected to the Queensland Parliament. He married Margaret Dall'Alba. Max later returned to cane farming at Miriwinni before moving to a larger farm in the Burdekin in 1995. The couple had four children, Carl, Max, Peter and Katelyn. They all reside in the Tully area.

While researching this family history, several people spoke about Margaret Collins nee Menzel. All were highly complementary, and it was evident that the women folk in this family, while not written about as often in the histories, were every bit as important as the men in terms of what these families achieved. The world was dominated by men in those times, especially in remote areas like North Queensland and New Guinea. The Collins women endured much unfairness and hardship in life and were left alone with their children for long periods in isolation without the assistance and security that many women receive. When it came time for births, they were packed off in dodgy transport to faraway places on their own. Margaret lived through all this difficulty without a murmur; she and the other stoic women in this family, were (and are) truly inspiring people.

SIBLINGS OF EDGAR COLLINS

Maud Collins married stockbroker and estate agent, Charles Cochrane, in Yorkshire. They had a daughter Marjorie and son Kenneth. Sam Collins died of whooping cough at only 11 months of age.

Hilton Collins was declared bankrupt and jailed for fraud in 1895 when many of his cheques bounced and he accumulated gambling debts. He was involved in the Boer War but his records have been lost and he may have changed his name. He told his mother in a letter that he planned to marry and he appears to have had a daughter, Joy, once heard of in Kenya.

Frank Collins followed Edgar to Australia and worked at nearby Wairuna Station as a stockman in 1903 and Kirrama Station in 1908. It was there that he met a governess, Muriel Madden, who he married in 1911. He was living in Cardwell and Mount Garnet after that as a drover and carrier. From 1925, he lived in Innisfail working as a labourer for Johnstone Shire Council until 1941. Muriel and Frank had four children, Eileen, Bernard, Maeve and Maud.

KIRRAMA STATION

Edgar Collins was born in Yorkshire on 13 October 1868 to parents, Joseph and Hannah Collins. He went to school as a boarder at the Anglican Rossall School in Fleetwood, Lancashire. Following school, one may have expected him to follow in the footsteps of his father and have a career in textile manufacture, but early on, Edgar decided to venture out and become a jackaroo in northern Australia.

What an enormous contrast in lifestyles from the plush days in England to the outback of Australia.



Rossall School Fleetwood, Lancashire. Founded 1844.

Edgar's family were good friends of Walter Scott and his brother before they migrated to Australia and selected land at the Valley of Lagoons west of Ingham. Edgar had read correspondence from the Scotts telling of their wild adventures in North Queensland and found that highly appealing. He had arranged to join them, but Walter Scott returned to England sooner than expected. Walter arranged for Edgar to work as an apprentice stockman with Harry Wilson, a highly regarded pastoralist and horseman who was the manager of Gunnawarra Station not far north of the Valley Station. This arrangement, as was the custom for migrants, meant that Edgar had to pay £100 and was provided with a job for three years and he would receive 'keep' without wages.

At 18 years of age, Edgar migrated to Australia aboard the *Orizaba*, arriving at Sydney 18 April 1887. He boarded the Warrego the next day and arrived in Port Douglas in April 1887. He then travelled by Cobb and Co coach to Herberton north of Gunnawarra.

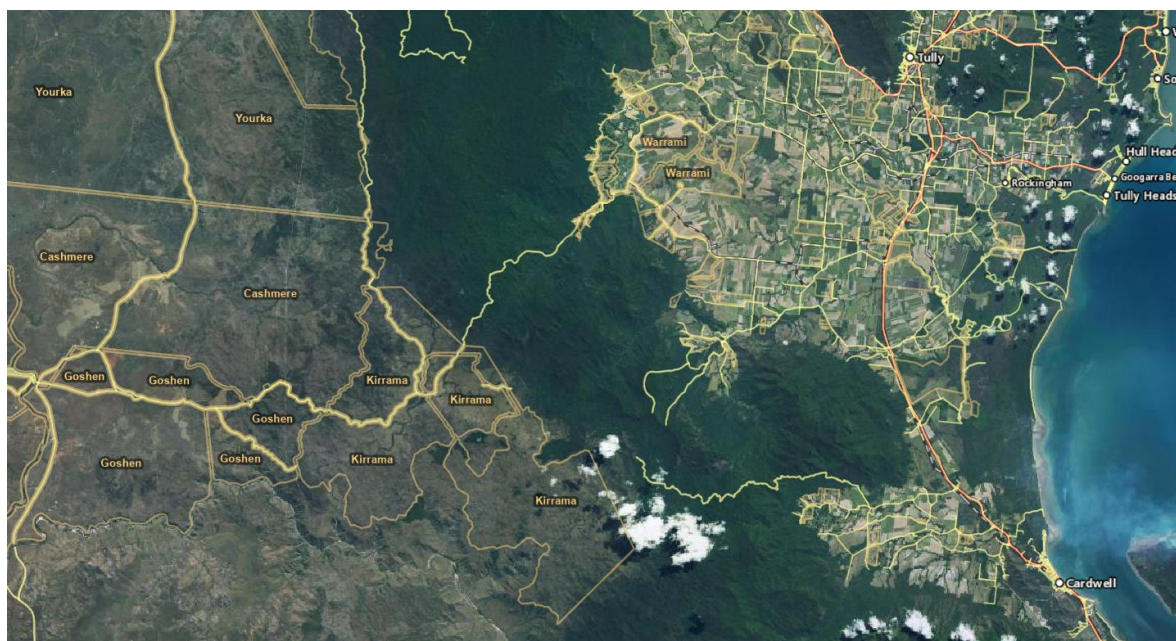
Harry Wilson had to leave his children in Warwick, NSW when he went north to start his career as a stockman and grazier. His eldest daughter, Mary, finished school at 17 years of age and went to join her father with her siblings in late 1893. By then, Edgar was an overseer for Harry Wilson. Mary and Edgar were married in Herberton in 1896. They had planned to live on land Edgar had purchased at Lower Tully, but shortly before their marriage the bank had agreed to have Harry and Edgar jointly run their Kirrama Station which is a little south west of Gunnawarra.

In the 1920s and 30s, Kirrama Station was spoken of in newspapers as Kirrama, but the spelling is now changed.

The Queensland National Bank held the Kirrama lease due to default of the previous owner. Harry had been dismissed from Gunnawarra Station in November 1895 and he and Edgar successfully applied to sub-rent the Kirrama lease starting in February 1896. After the wedding the two families, Wilson and Collins, went to live at Kirrama Station and they built a slab hut to live in.

It was always going to be a tough challenge to make Kirrama profitable and Edgar and Mary faced mammoth barriers from the start but eventually made good. There was a huge drought across Queensland from 1898 to 1902 and cattle tick infestations at that time killed large numbers of cattle. Another challenge was the early resistance from the Aboriginal people who, like anyone, did not appreciate being dispossessed of their country they had occupied for millennia.

In 1899, Harry was appointed manager of Forest Home Station near Georgetown north of Herberton. He and his family left Kirrama at that time leaving Edgar and Mary with their infant son Alwynne. In 1909, Edgar built a new cottage at Kirrama attached to a hut built by a previous owner of the property. He and Mary worked hard to develop Kirrama Station and continued to pay the Stocking Rights to the bank until they purchased the Pastoral Lease in 1928.



Kirrama Station location. Image from Queensland Globe using "Location/Property Names" layer.

Over time, Edgar acquired other adjoining properties and Kirrama was almost 200 square miles in area by 1907, or 126,400 acres (50,500 ha). That is a large station, but to place it in perspective, there are 72 stations in Australia that are of one million acres area or more.

Mary and Edgar had nine children. Alwynne was born in Herberton, Eric in Cairns and the others (Marsey, Sam, Lorna, Arthur, Marjorie (Jill), Ruth and Ronald (Bungie) were all born in Townsville.

One can imagine the level of difficult involved in childbirth at that location. Mary had to ride over the range to the coast taking two days to reach Cardwell and there she took a three day boat trip to Townsville and returned with her baby packed on her back two months later. The children were educated by a governess at the station and then went to boarding school at Southport, Warwick or Toowoomba. They travelled south by ship or, when the track came through, by train to Brisbane.

Alwynne stayed with his aunt and uncle, Lily (sister of Grandma Collins) and Roderick Webb while attending school in Warwick. Webb's sister was the Governor of Queensland's wife and this genteel family were shocked at the arrival of the undisciplined Alwynne. Alwynne's aunt, Emily Wilson, was of a similar age and was also at school in Warwick at the time. She visited on occasions and the two wild children charged about the district on horseback so Alwynne was transferred to boarding school at Southport in 1911.

In early days at Kirrama, Edgar had one European jackaroo and relied on Aboriginal labour. Once the Collins boys finished school, they returned to Kirrama to work. Alwynne stayed on a Kirrama for a while then went to Greenvale Station before being head stockman at Gunnawarra. He returned later to work with his brother Eric

at Kirrama Station. When Sam returned from school, he spent much time hunting and being at remote outposts and when Arthur returned, Sam was building a car road from Cashmere Station to Kirrama with an Aboriginal team.

Arthur managed Kirrama Station for his father until 1937 when Edgar died. He continued to manage it until his mother died in 1957 then stayed on until 1959. At that time, he moved onto his own station - Cattlevale near Proserpine. Ruth and her husband Doug Farquhar, managed Kirrama for the family trust until they purchased the property in 1962. The trust was in the names of Arthur, Sam and Ronald. Kirrama Station was later sold to the Gunn family from Texas, USA and they published a book about their lives there.⁵

When Edgar arrived in Australia, migrants from England were given land if they chose to settle. He received one square mile (640 acres) of land at Lower Tully and named it *Woodlands*. Occasionally he used that land to agist cattle during severe droughts. Later on, Edgar sold most of the land but retained some lots and bequeathed them to his sons.

The nearest station was Cashmere, 25 km away on horseback and it was one of the first stations to install a telephone line. The nearest town was Cardwell, around 60 km away, but the track across the Kirrama Range was arduous and steep and it took two days on a horse with much danger involved, so even though Herberton was over 200 km away it was the most accessible town.

The mailman came up from Carwell once a month with a packtrain to the inland stations and overnighted at Kirrama most times. Later, the stations had no mail service so they went to Cardwell themselves for mail. Packtrains with up to 25 animals lugged supplies into the stations twice yearly.

The station was located on a stock route used to move cattle to the coast, the Kirrama Track. It followed an old Aboriginal track and was used to ship gold out of the interior in the 1870s. They built stockyards for the drovers who often stayed overnight at Kirrama. Visits to and from stations were common, often with extended stays. When they went to Cardwell across the Range, they invariably stayed overnight at Murray Upper with Mr and Mrs Tom Butler.

Picnics were popular for the residents at Kirrama Station as were horse races at Gunnawarra where dances were held after the events. When at school, Alwynne and Eric learned new dances like the Maxina and Veleta and introduced them to Cardwell dances.



A day out to the Blencoe rapids for the Kirrama family – 1920s transport. From Doug Unsworth.

⁵ Barbara Gunn, *Kirrama: Life on an Australian Cattle Station*, Xlibris, 2012.



Gunnawarra Races in 1930s: Molly has the baby. To right Sam, Ruth and Arthur Collins. From Doug Unsworth. Old Kirrama Homestead from Sonia Collins.

As the years rolled on, there were many visits from family members living on the coast. Joe Collins was a regular visitor and stayed at Kirrama for extended periods. Hunting and finding wild honey ('sugar bag') was a popular past-time. Harry Wilson (Mary's father) gave Mary a piano as a gift at the very beginning which was hugely popular for singalongs at the station. Marsey was an accomplished pianist who entertained. The piano was shipped to Port Douglas and took three weeks to cart on a dray to Kirrama. There were no roads or bridges for much of the journey.

Jean Lauriston, the second child of Anne and Eric Collins wrote a memoir in 1940 recalling a three month holiday at Kirrama Station. This was published by Doug Unsworth in *Kirrama Collins and Families* and provides good insights into the lives led at the station. Jean noted that it was quite formal at meal times and children had to dress for dinner and pull out chairs for adults. She saw holes in the slab walls of the homestead and was told that they were used for rifles to fire at Aboriginal attackers in the first years the family was there. She noted that years later she and others made good friends with the Aboriginal families at Kirrama. She fondly remembered Nora and her tribe who were heartbroken when they were taken to Palm Island.

The second child of Bess and Sam Collins, Jo Rees, also wrote some valuable memories that she shared with Doug Unsworth for his family history. That too reveals much of life at Kirrama. Jo spent a number of years living at the station when Sam took the family back there from Lower Tully. Jo said that *Kirrama was like a small township with a tribe of aborigines in their own camp. It was the best place for kids. Up to a dozen cousins came for holidays often.* One reason that so many children flocked to the station and kept coming back was that Grandma Collins did not want to be interrupted in her work, so children had great freedom and could go anywhere and do almost anything without being chastised.

Jo's mother went to Kirrama to help Mary and she told Jo that she had to clean the silverware weekly (cutlery and photo frames made of sterling silver from England). She said how much she grew to hate the task. Apparently, Edgar was a stickler for etiquette and insisted on carving the meat at the top of the table. Children had to roll their sleeves down at meal time and dress in a clean shirt for dinner. They were made to sit straight and Edgar prodded them strongly in the back if they slouched. The kitchen had a dirt floor and a wood stove. Some children cooked cattle testicles, not Jo! Jo also had Nora as her minder and loved her dearly, as Jean did.

Jo observed that her grandmother was *good with the blacks, unlike some station owners.*

In 1928, Edgar protested when the Shire Boundary Commission recommended that Kirrama be transferred from Herberton Shire to Cardwell. He argued the case based on the station's road access and won the day.

Edgar Collins took three trips back to England during his life and travelled once to Japan. He took Alwynne with him to England on the first trip but swore that it was such a bad experience he would not repeat it. He

had a large library and read many books. His brother, Frank, had also migrated and stayed at the station in 1908. In his late years Edgar was alcoholic, as were many older men of his era.



Ten grandchildren and a cat pose in Mary's Kirrama garden. From Doug Unsworth.



Grandchildren enjoyed their Kirrama holidays: Mary Davis, Karney Collins, Bill Collins and Lil Collins at Kirrama. From Doug Unsworth.



Mary's garden and garden trellis (left) at the homestead (right). From Doug Unsworth.

Mary's garden was by all accounts, a wonder to behold. Edgar had a large vegetable garden with a potato patch and orchard and they were virtually self-sufficient. Water was transported from creeks nearby using a tank on a sled that was hauled by a draught horse. Later, water was pumped using an engine.

Jack ('Walkabout') Unsworth from Narragon Beach worked at Kirrama for most of 1902 on fencing and building yards and chook houses. He worked for the Cuttens at Bingil Bay after that and on his own fruit farm at Narragon Beach (in the Mission beach district).

Blencoe Falls and Blencoe Creek were always vital to the residents of Kirrama and this was a popular picnic spot for the family and their many visitors.



Blencoe Falls and Blencoe Creek.

The local Aboriginal people had a camp 500 metres from the homestead and were employed on the station. Relations between the European settlers and the people they dispossessed were not good early on Edgar and Mary had to defend themselves against attacks. Some say that after attacks the retribution was severe as it was in Cardwell at the time.

Aboriginal stockmen were highly valuable to pastoralists and when the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement was operating (1914 – 1918) two sons of Wombinoo were taken there forcibly by police. The Aboriginal people were, unsurprisingly, frightened of the police and reluctant to go with settlers to a police station to sign employment agreements as mandated. The settlers did not want to lose their workers, so there was much conflict with police. Edgar Collins persuaded these two workers to go and sign agreements and to his embarrassment they were taken into custody. That sent shock waves among the Kirrama mob and they disappeared from the station. Edgar took the first boat to Brisbane to have the transfers annulled and returned to the Hull River settlement and had them released.⁶ That was not the end of the police harassment of the Aboriginals on Kirrama Station. They were all captured by police and taken to Palm Island after 1918 and this had dire consequences for their health.



Alec Collins, long-term stockman at Kirrama. Jill takes the Aboriginal families for a ride in the new truck, 1930. From Doug Unsworth.

Doug Unsworth reported that, *The aborigines, supposedly the traditional owners, were granted ownership of the lease for Kirrama in the early 2000s.* Doug's research was impeccable, and, initially, I was unable to substantiate that. With the assistance of Collins family descendant, Rob Lauriston, I eventually found that it was partly acquired for the Badjuballa Aboriginal Corporation in December 2000. 23,000 ha was purchased for them out of the total of more than 50,000 ha owned by Edgar Collins. It is now known as the Badjuballa station.

⁶ Ronald Collins Collection, from Appendix 4.18, Doug Unsworth, *Kirrama Collins and Families*, P. 175.

The station had been purchased by Japanese interests a little earlier and they had destocked it and were planning to build a resort. Parliamentary committee members discussing the possible acquisition of Kirrama, said that three tribes had an interest in the land, but the feeling was that the farm was no longer financially viable. They said that the land was culturally notable with many sites of massacres and a burial site close to the homestead.

The Kirrama Aboriginals were resilient and a great number of them evaded police capture and returned later to the farm.



Joe, Edgar, Rod and John Collins with Hannah, 1939. Ron, Edna Grant, Edgar, Molly, Nick Svenson, Arthur, ?, ? Kirrama 1936. From Doug Unsworth.



Some of the Kirrama mob who lived near to the homestead. From Doug Unsworth.

JOE COLLINS - RECOLLECTIONS OF KIRRAMA

We used to always go there on holidays. Once a year as full adult, but when we were young, we'd go during the winter holidays from school and we always went there for Christmas. There was no bathroom and everybody went to swim down in the lagoon. Sometimes we went down with our grandpa and other times with grandma and all the daughters. Everyone swam in the nude. I loved it, really loved it. It was eighty meters long, about fifteen meters wide and had a spring board where we could dive. It was really good fun. It was slow running, a very slow running creek.

I remember we used to have a sugar bag to put for Christmas; we hung it at the end of the bed and grandma would put a knife in it and some comics and a few other things. We thought it was wonderful. We loved to get a pocket knife because we used to lose them and the other kids used to pinch them.

They'd cook very good meals for Christmas, but there were always good meals up there. They had a huge bougainvillea. The trunk was over a shed, about the same size as this [C4 theatrette], a bit longer than this and they used to have the Christmas tables there and grandpa would sit at the end and serve, cut the meat up and grandma served the vegetables, and poured the tea. And then when we had pudding, she'd serve up the pudding too.

They had a couple of 'gins' doing the washing up and cleaning in the kitchen. You don't mind if I talk like this, do you? The Aboriginals women, they were called 'gins' in those days and they'd do the house work and grandma had two or three in the garden too. They had a beautiful garden.

They had a piano up there too. To get it up there, they put it on two mules. The mules are different to horses. If you get into a bog with a horse, the horse goes mad. They jump over the top of you, but the mules just go in very slowly, like a cow, they don't jump around, you can take him out and go somewhere else, not a horse because I had them in bogs too. Grandma used to play the piano every night and we used to sing songs. It was nice.

They grew everything and they'd be watering with a watering can and that's why they pumped the water with this engine to fill the wells. He had the best garden of all the other stations around the place. Grandpa Collins he had the best garden. They grew onions and tomatoes, shallots and cabbages and lettuces and pumpkins and leeks. Grandpa also had an orchard with all sorts of fruit trees, mandarin trees, orange trees. He had another tree, he brought it from overseas because he used to travel to England and the fella who last had Kirrama cut it down - a beautiful persimmon. I didn't like them much but dad loved them and dad said grandpa brought it from overseas. He brought a seed and planted it there.

To go to Kirrama for a start, we used to have to go to Murray Upper. Mum would drive us out or Dad. They had a car, a Dodge car; Mum was the worst driver I ever drove with in my life. She never even had a licence. Anyway, we'd get out there, we'd stay the night at a place called Raleigh in Murray Upper, and the next morning early, the Aboriginals would be there with the horses and the pack horses and they'd pack all the mail, all the food and they'd have a bit of corned meat we'd eat on the way up and so then we'd go right to Kirrama.

We'd leave about 7 o'clock and we'd get to Kirrama about half past 4 or 5 o'clock. Anyway, one day we're going up there, it was raining all the way, when we got to the top of the range to a place called the range yard, we stopped there and had a bit of lunch and we were with an Aboriginal fella called Charlie Kidna and he couldn't light his smoke. He said, "it's all right, I'll light it when we get to Kirrama". We went about a mile further and he said, "I've got to have a smoke." The matches were wet, so he got off his horse, and found some dry grass and he got a couple of sticks to make fire with. He got under a log and he made a fire, got his smoke going then he smoked his pipe upside down all the way to Kirrama. Charlie was our mate and he was probably 40 or so. He was trustful, that's why grandma was sending him down. They'd send two people down, him and sometimes Fred or sometimes Jacky.

Just as in Tully, there was much work to do at Kirrama even though it was our school holidays. Our first job every morning, they had no bathroom there; we had to empty all the pot chambers and wash all the dishes and fill all

the water jugs. And we had to clean the shoes too. Everybody put their shoes outside the room and we had to clean them and then grandma came along and asked, "You clean the shoes today?" and I said, "I'm not cleaning the shoes anymore". She said, "Yes you are" and I said, "No", so she gave me the strap – it didn't hurt much – I said "No, No, No", each time she hit me so she went out to the saddle room and brought in a sack paddle strap and I said "Yes, Yes, Yes" [laugh], so I cleaned the shoes - me and a 'Gin' called Nora, she was nice too. She was always nice Nora.

That used to take us to till 10 o'clock, we'd have a cup of tea and biscuits – no, we used to drink milk - and then we could muck around 'til lunch time and in the afternoon, we used to have to go and get the goats. Nearly all the stations had goats in those days, and they used the manure for the vegetable gardens and you had to bring them home and lock them up otherwise the dingoes would kill them. So sometimes they were a mile away or sometimes two miles away so we'd bring them home every night and then we had some time to go fishing down at the lagoon. We'd catch turtles and eels.

We used to eat the turtles, not much meat on the turtles. We'd throw them on the coals and we'd just skin the eels. We did that fishing the days we had to pump water. Then to pump water, they had what they call a hot air engine, that I still don't know the principle of how it works. We had to put a fire in it and after about 15 minutes it would start to get hot; you'd give the wheel a pull and went. The wheel would just turn slowly and it had a rod on it that used go up and down on the pump; it used to go up and down slowly all day. We had to be there all day to keep the fire going and it used to pump the water to the two wells in the garden and up to the house where they lived, it used to fill the tank. That's where they got the water from, from the lagoon. While we were running the engine, we'd go down and do a little bit of fishing then we had to keep coming back to stoke the fire again.

At Kirrama, they used to make the ropes out of green hide. They'd get the hide of the bullock when they killed it and tried to cut it off without putting any cuts in the hide and then they'd put it in a tub with some mixture to get all the hair off and then they'd dry it. And then, they'd go around the edge – if they wanted a rope 10 metres long, they kept going around the skin until they had a piece about 10 metres. Then, they'd cut that off and cut another piece and they made it four plait. They'd cut four pieces and then they'd plait the rope. Some of the ropes were an inch thick and other ropes were only half an inch thick. The rounding rope was short but they also had a long rope for pulling in the wild cattle and also for towing a truck. They made whips out of the green hide and they'd plait them too. They used four plait mostly, although some professionals use six plait.

They were good days at Kirrama, hard work but my brother Rod came with me most times and he enjoyed his time there too.



Etching of homestead at Kirrama Station, from Rob Lauriston.

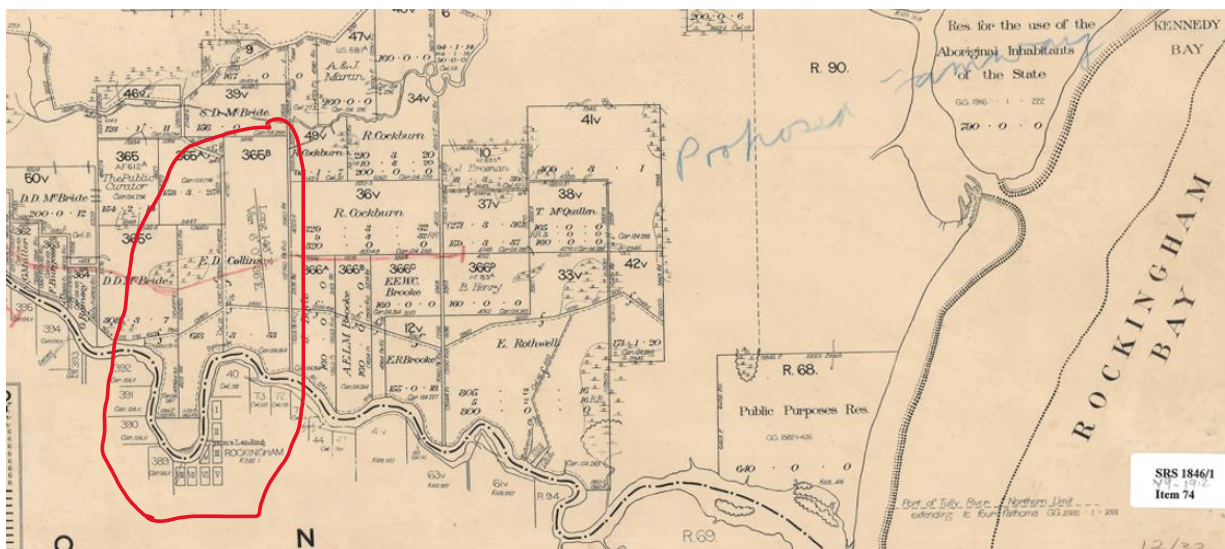
COLLINS AUNTS and UNCLES

Uncle Eric 1899 - 1956

Eric returned to Kirrama after finishing school and helped to run the station for a time. He did some droving of cattle down the Kirrama Range as well then moved to Tully in 1922. He, Alwynne and Edgar purchased the Skardon's Tully River Butchering Company at Banyan in 1923. In 1947, after Joe and Rod Collins had joined the business some years earlier, Joe and Rod purchased Eric's share of the butchery business. After the Tully Sugar Mill opened in 1925, Eric converted his farm at Lower Tully from mainly cattle to sugar cane. He married Anne Curran at Dalby in 1931 who was the first qualified teacher at Tully State School in 1927. Anne said: ... *I qualified as a teacher and was sent to Tully for my first appointment, a thousand miles from home. I enjoyed Tully immensely. It was a primitive town in those days 1927 with ten men to every girl.*



Tom Curran, Nell Curran, Anne Collins, Eric Collins (standing), Ruth Collins, Stan Curran, Dalby 1931. Marie, Eric, Jean and Ann, Christmas 1937. From Doug Unsworth.



1923 cadastral map of Rockingham Bay late 1923 showing two lots Eric Collins owned on the Tully River.

Eric and Anne lived in Tully after they married and in 1937 they moved from Tully onto their cane farm at Lower Tully that Eric had purchased from Edgar Collins. They expanded and improved the farm, but in 1956, Eric suddenly died leaving Anne and her 17-year-old son, Robert, to run the cane farm. Anne and Eric had five children, Marie, Jean, Robert, and twins, Len and Margaret. After Robert's birth, Anne and Eric took an extended trip south and Marie and Jean stayed at Kirrama with a governess.



Left: Opening Kirrama Range Road 1941, Eric and Anne Collins centre foreground. From Doug Unsworth. Right: Painting by Jean Lauriston of her trip to Kirrama when her parents were going on holiday, 1940. This was riding the stock route from Murray Upper to Kirrama. Seven year old Jean on the front horse with Eric, Marie on the second horse and the Governess on the third horse. Image from Rob Lauriston.

Marie married Don Day who had a sawmill at Mundoo and a cattle farm at Mena Creek. Jean married Jim Lauriston who had various jobs and became the Cane Inspector at the Tully Sugar Mill. They had owned a sugar cane farm for some time near Alligators Nest, Feluga. Jean and Jim's son, Robert, married Fiona Pike of Bingil Bay and they live in Bingil Bay in 2024. Robert worked as an electrical supervisor at various mines in PNG and Australia. He spent many years leading maintenance teams at gold mines in PNG, Hidden Valley which is located above the Wau Valley. He also worked at Misima Island for many years (part of PNG, located in the Louisiade Archipelago), so to some extent he followed his ancestors to that part of the world.

Eric and Anne's sons, Robert and Len Collins, have cane and banana farms together today. Len did well at school and won a scholarship to attend university but chose to return to Tully and help his brother, Robert, with the farm. They expanded into bananas and Len took on that endeavour. Len became a notable figure in the banana industry and was recognised for his leadership role in that arena from 2000 to 2009 and was effective in his quest to prevent banana imports.

Len Collins married Sharon McNamarra who volunteered for the Tully Catholic Church for almost 20 years and was recognised for her efforts by Pope Benedict XVI. Margaret married Kevin Pease who was working for Collins and Leahy at Goroka in PNG in 1966 and became Manager Transport, Hotels and Markham Farm. They returned to Australia live in South Mission Beach in 2024. Kevin's grandfather Cuthbert Charle Pease was the brother of Queensland Deputy Premier, Percy Pease who was responsible for bringing the district's first made road – to Bingil Bay in 1936. Anne Collins lived for 95 years and the Council named the Lower Tully street that Eric and Anne lived in, Collins Road.

The family have expanded their farms from the three lots that Eric owned to now own much of Lower Tully and they also have large holdings at Lakeland, near Cooktown, to expand their avocado holdings and defend themselves against Panama Disease and cyclone damage. The Collins family are now among the largest Australian banana growers with almost 500 hectares in production. The largest Australian banana producers are the Mackay family (Tully and Lakeland as well) who started their banana farms in Mission Beach in 1945, and have 1,167 hectares in bananas, avocados and pawpaws – most of it being bananas.

Leon Collins, who now leads the massive enterprise, L&R Collins, and is the Chair of the Australian Banana Growers Council, says they also produce 90,000 tonnes of sugar cane annually.

Aunty Marsey 1901 - 1951

Marsey married Gavin Clark despite her father's disapproval of the union – they eloped and her father was so miffed that he refused to ever speak to the couple again. Edgar was amazingly vindictive and cut Marsey from his will as well. Marsey was a nurse in Townsville and became the Matron at Palm Island. They had no children and moved to Perth for six years in 1936 then returned to Gladstone. Marsey contracted polio in 1951 and died. Mt Marsey in the Cardwell Range near Murray Upper is named after Marsey Collins.



Marsey Clark and Ruth Atkinson.

Nurse Marsey. From Doug Unsworth.

Uncle Sam 1904 – 1963

When Sam returned to Kirrama from school, he helped run the station for some time before he built a 22 mile road between Cashmere Station and Kirrama with a team of six Aboriginals. That took two years. He married Italian born Bessie Poletti who went to Kirrama at 18 years of age to work for Sam's mother, Mary. It was Lorna Collins in Cairns who found Bess when seeking someone to help her mother. Bess was an excellent horse rider and worked well with the people at Kirrama; she was especially close to Jill Collins.

After the couple married, they lived on the small lot that Sam owned at Lower Tully and they initially lived in the cane cutters quarters. After struggling financially on their small farm, they returned to Kirrama and their children went to Ravenshoe for schooling. Bess moved to be with them for a time and then went to Herberton with her mother during the war. Sam stayed at Kirrama.



Sam and Bess at Kirrama.

David Josephine (Jo) and Samuel Collins. From Doug Unsworth.

The family then moved to a small farm near Ravenshoe in 1945 and grew vegetables and fruit. Unfortunately, Sam became an alcoholic and died in 1963, but Bess continued living, in Atherton, until 2013 and died at the age of 103.

Bess and Sam had three children, Sam, Josephine (Jo) and David. Sam Collins junior developed an interest in bees and honey making early in life and owned a beehive at 12 years of age. He worked in the timber industry and married Ailsa Smith of Mount Garnet who worked as an accountant. Sam started an apiary business and left the timber industry later to concentrate on his bees. Jo Collins became a nurse and married John Rees from London. They met on Palm Island when John was working on the Townsville ferry. John had been in the merchant navy in Europe in his early working days. They retired at Lake Tinaroo.

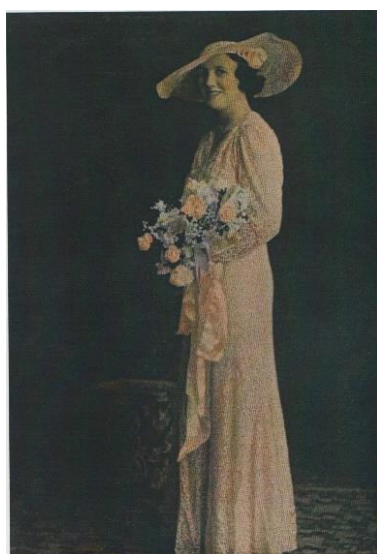
David Collins left school and worked for Copper Refineries in Townsville while he was studying science at James Cook University. He graduated with honours in maths and physics then worked at Mt Isa Mines. He then travelled overseas and met Carol Clark in 1979. They lived near London and in 2003 purchased a rainforest lot at Tarzali on the Atherton Tablelands. Carol worked in computing in London for Price Waterhouse Coopers.

Aunty Lorna 1908 – 2003

Lorna travelled after leaving school until her father said she must return home and find a job. She became a registered nurse and took a two year contract to nurse in Talagi in the Solomon Islands in 1937. She was Matron at the hospital there, but contracted malaria and had to return to Australia.

Lorna married Malcolm Davis, the Manager and Chief Chemist at Kalamia Sugar Mill in Ayr in 1939 and they had two children. The family lived in Ayr until 1954, when Malcom became ill and retired from the mill. They then lived at Kirrama while Malcolm recovered. Malcolm returned to work for CSR at Innisfail for a year and commuted to Kirrama in the weekends, where Lorna remained. He died in 1965 and Lorna lived on to the age of 95 and died in an aged care home in Atheron.

Lorna and Malcolm had two children, Lorna Mary (Mary) and Ronald. Mary also went nursing and married Tom Dixon from Bagstowe Station near Kidston, QLD. Tom was a respected cattleman and managed three family properties as well as training race horses. Both Lorna and Tom were heavily involved in North Queensland racing and Mary received many awards for her volunteering work in it. Ronald became a vet and had his pilot's licence to travel to remote stations from Cairns. He married Denise McGrath from Innisfail.



Aunty Lorna, an elegant bride in 1939.



Mary, Ronald, Lorna and Malcolm Davis. From Doug Unsworth.

Uncle Arthur 1911 -1982

In 1937, Arthur married Broghild Svensen and the couple travelled on their honeymoon and stayed for a while at the new resort on Dunk Island built by Hugo and Christa Brassey.

Broghild's family were from Norway and her title in the Collins family was Nikkie or Aunty Nik. Her father, Captain Oscar Svensen, was trading land and guns in the Solomon Islands with his brother in 1891 and the business was profitable so they purchased many plantations. In 1918, he became Consul for Norway in Brisbane.

In 1943, Arthur found the wreck of an American bomber on the Kirrama Range that had been missing for 12 months.

Arthur and Nikkie returned to Kirrama and built a home and stayed for 19 years before moving to their own property on the Don River in 1959 with their four children. Life at Kirrama was difficult for high society girl Nikki and made more difficult by the presence of her mother-in-law who disliked her intensely and was her only near neighbour. This was exacerbated by her husband's habitual drinking and long periods of absence while working the property. As a consequence, Nikki suffered with periods of depression and her children were sent to stay with relatives at times.



In the Kirrama garden: Karney, Lil, Bill and Linda Collins.

Nikkie and Bill Collins. From Doug Unsworth.

They then moved to Cattlevale, a farm near Proserpine. Arthur went to New Guinea to visit his family in Goroka in 1975 and stayed mainly with Jennifer and Edgar Collins. He had a bad accident in 1963 and was confined to a wheelchair thereafter, yet maintained his spirit and cultivated an extensive garden to supply the station.

In later years, Nikki and Arthur went to Charters Towers and stayed with their son, Bill and his wife Margaret (nee Von Wold) at Somerset Station. Their daughter, Karen (Karney), married Graham Von Wold and they also had a cattle station near Charters Towers (Gainsford.) Lilian married Peter Woodhouse who was tragically killed in a mustering accident early in life. Linda was a registered nurse and married a builder, Brian Kirby.

Aunty Jill 1913 - 2001

Jill was 8 years old when she developed osteomyelitis in a leg at Kirrama. That event showed just how difficult it was to live in such a remote location when things did not go to plan. Dr Ross, an orthopaedic surgeon living in Herberton, was called in. He rode the 206 km distance on a horse, carried out the operation and returned in 70 hours with only two hours sleep. Jill was taken back on a frame on horseback and operated on once more at Atherton Hospital. She was on crutches for two years after the event.

She married Bob Burstall in a gala event at Kirrama in 1933. They met when Bob visited his friend Sam Collins at Kirrama. Bob and his father, Harry were sugar farmers on the Lower Burdekin and in 1932 they set up a cattle farm at Trent.



Bob and Jill Burstall 1933, Arthur and Ruth Collins second row and Groom Charles Wellington with Groom's sister Olive Burstall third row. Jill (8), Marsey (2), Nell Burstall (11), 1946. From Doug Unsworth.

Jill and Bob had four children, Ellen (Nell), Jill, Marsey and Susan. Grandma Collins (Mary) fell in her Kirrama garden and injured her back and was incapacitated. She stayed with Jill and Bob at Trent and died there and was buried at Kirrama beside Edgar.

Nell married Greg Emerton in Ayr and lived in Marulan, NSW. Jill was a nurse in Townsville and married Ray Piggott in Ayr. The couple managed the King Junction Station in the gulf for 22 years before moving to Tolga. Marsey also went nursing after school and married Ian Shand in Ayr. Susan was a jillaroo at Kirrama and King Junction before joining her cousin, Ruthie, doing race trackwork in New Zealand. She also travelled to USA with Ruthie before returning to New Zealand where she met Ian. They also married in Ayr and lived on Picanniny Station near Giru, QLD.

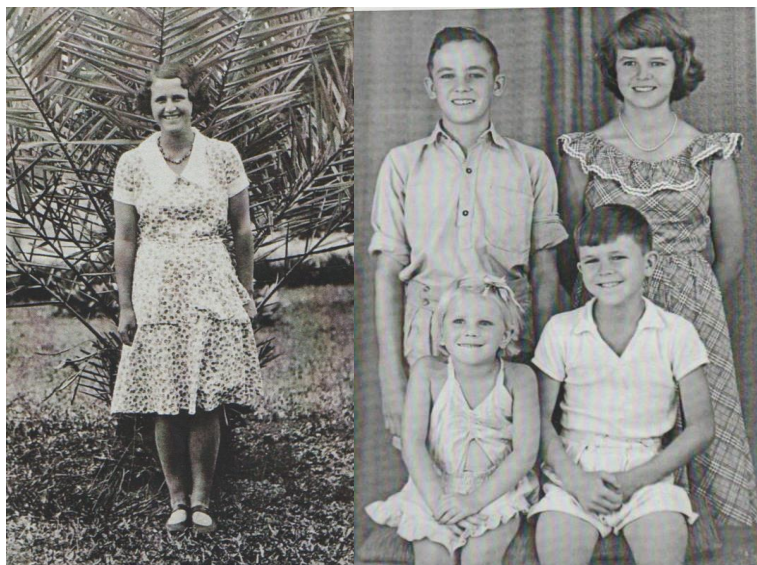
Aunty Ruth 1916 – 1999

Ruth returned to Kirrama after leaving school and married Robert (Monty) Atkinson in 1934 when she was 18 years old. Monty's father owned Cashmere and Wairuna stations nearby and Monty became interested in horse racing and rode as an amateur jockey. His grandfather, James Atkinson, was a pioneer pastoralist in the north at Mt Surprise and his sons' owned stations: Henry at Greenvale, Bob at Cashmere and Thomas at Gunnawarra.

Ruth and Monty lived on Glen Ruth Station which had been excised from Cashmere. They acquired the station in 1939 after Monty's father died then purchased Mungalla Station near Ingham. That farm was used to fatten cattle and as a stud racehorse property. The station was sold to the Nywaigi Aboriginal Land Corporation in 1999.

In the 1920s, Monty began breeding cattle that were better suited to the tropics. He eventually created the *Droughtmaster* breed. In 1956, he purchased a farm in the Markham Valley in PNG. In 1963, he purchased the original North Queensland station at the Valley of Lagoons.

Ruth and Monty had four children, Yvonne, Rob, Alan and Ruthie. Alan owned the Valley of Lagoons Station later.



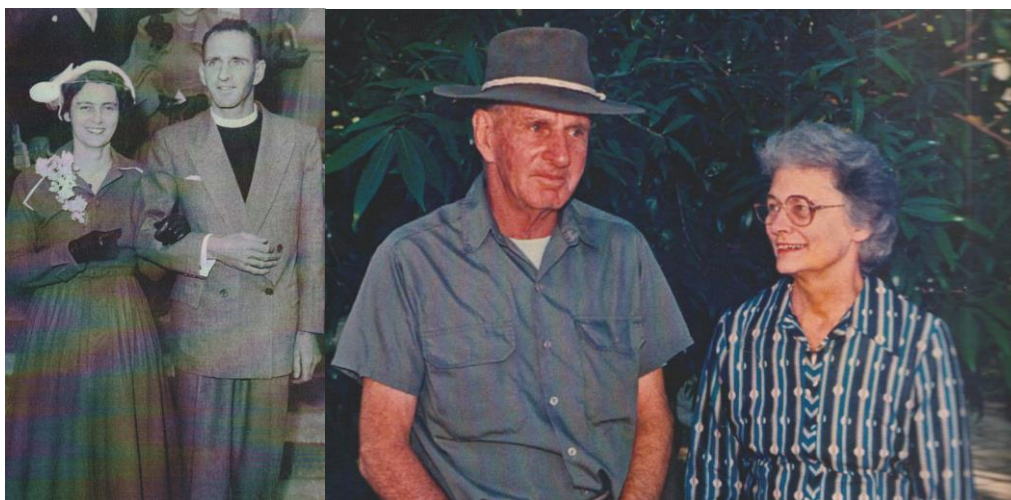
Ruth Collins at Kirrama. Robert (Rob), Yvonne, Ruth (Ruthie) and Alan Atkinson. From Doug Unsworth.

Ruth and Monty divorced in 1950 and Monty married long-term family friend Edna Grant who had stayed at Kirrama on several occasions. Ruth moved back to Kirrama with her daughter Ruthie and lived there for three years before moving back to Glen Ruth with her son, Rob. She married Doug Farquhar in 1956.

Daughter Ruthie was always interested in horses and became a jockey and had success in the USA, but she died at only 34 years age of septicaemia. Ruth and Doug managed Kirrama for a period and purchased that property in 1962. They also purchased nearby Goshen Station and managed both properties from Kirrama. Kirrama was sold in 1972 and they moved to live at Goshen.

They purchased Katandra Station next from Rob Atkinson senior and lived there until Ruth died. Doug remained at the station until 2001 when he sold it to Rob Atkinson's son, Robbie.

Uncle Ronald (Bungie) 1918 - 1989



Enid and Ronald wedding Toowoomba 1953.

Later in life. From Doug Unsworth.

Ronald was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1942 and lived in Mackay then in Atherton. Reverend Dr Ron Collins married Enid Weller in 1953 in Toowoomba. The couple lived in Mareeba then shifted to Ayr in 1961 then to Atherton in 1965 when Bungie retired.

Ronald immersed himself in botany and specialised in the study of orchids. In retirement, he went on many expeditions to Cape York with friends in search of new species and had an orchid named after him. He was given his nickname, Bungie, while at Kirrama.

Enid was a popular and highly active woman and qualified with a degree in accounting then in economics. She created an accountancy business and was a key member of the Red Shield Appeals on the Tablelands. She also served as a Councillor for two terms at Atherton Shire Council.

Ronald and Enid had three children, Jennifer (from Enid's first marriage), Alban and Mark. Jennifer became a nurse and married then divorced and moved to Mission Beach with Edwin Staier. Alban travelled extensively around Australia and did not marry. Mark followed in his Mum's footsteps and became an accountant and worked for the Mackay Electricity Board then for Queensland Nickel. He married Janette Green and moved to Brisbane and in 1996 he joined Western Mining Company.

TULLY

MOLLY AND ALWYNNE COLLINS

By 1923, Molly Leahy was in Tully working as governess for the Barbet's four children. Her family moved north living at Murray Upper for a time before returning to the Western Downs.

That year, Alwynne Collins also moved to Banyan (later to be Tully). He was working in partnership with Edgar and Eric Collins in the butchery business as well as running their Lower Tully farms. Alwynne sold his Lower Tully farm to concentrate on the butchery. The butcher's shop was moved from Banyan to Tully and from the images below we can see that this was one of the early buildings on Butler Street.



Tully River Butchering Co opening Butler Street, no adjacent buildings. Same shop centre right now among many shops. From Doug Unsworth.

Molly and Alwynne were married in Townsville in December 1925 and Molly lost her first child through miscarriage. Alwynne was born on 12 September 1927 in Townsville. He was called *Wyn* at the start but soon became known as *Joe*. When asked how the name change occurred Joe said, *Well dad used to be a kangaroo shooter and so when I was born, he said I was all arms and legs like a baby kangaroo, so he called me his little Joe*. And that was how it stayed for Joe's entire life.



Alwynne, Tully 1924. Molly, Tully 1925. From Doug Unsworth.

Alwynne operated the butcher's shop and slaughter yards until he sold it in 1951. He was involved in many community associations such as the Tully Branch of the Graziers Association (President), Tully State School Committee (President), Tully Chamber of Commerce, Tully Gun Club (President) and was a cattle judge at many agricultural shows across the north. He was a member of the Volunteer Defence Force in WWII and served for one term as a councillor on the Cardwell Shire Council.



December 1950 Edgar 15, Joe 23, John 17, Rod 21, Alwynne 53, Jocelyn 7, Molly 52 and Mike 11. From Doug Unsworth.

Leisure time for the family was short yet they went shooting, fishing and camping and often camped with friends and family. The children often spent holidays at Kirrama and visited friends and relatives far and wide, often with the Wilsons in Milla Milla.

Early on, Alwynne had a speed boat named Tully then in 1930 he had one named Miss Banyan. He raced them at Innisfail and Flying Fish Point. After selling the butchery, Alwynne started farming and tried a few different experiments starting with cattle fattening. His boys cleared the scrub on the farm using dynamite and stored the sticks under a bed in Mars Street. They warned Molly once, *If this house is ever in a fire, get out as fast as you can and start running.*

Alwynne was never a faithful husband. Molly discovered one of his affairs early on and left with Joe and Rod to stay with friends and family for four months before returning to Mars Street. Alwynne had an almost life-long affair with Alice Philp of Townsville and that started before he married. He paid the college fees for one of Alice's children despite saying he could not afford to do the same for his two youngest children. Alice remarried in her 70s after Alwynne died of heart failure in 1963, aged 65 years.

Molly lived on and often visited her sons, brothers and nephews in PNG. Molly was also active in her community and did much fundraising and organisation of events. She was a keen gardener and often walked and trekked to the top of Mt Tyson once with her boys. She died in 1973, aged 75 years.

JOE COLLINS

Joe's memories of his Tully childhood are far from the usual happy ones most children have:

The thing I remember most about being a kid in Tully was getting the belt all the time. That wasn't funny. We didn't have time for fun, we had to do jobs all the time, except when we went looking for the cow – that was the excuse to get out of the yard, when we went looking for the cow.

The property was originally just 3 bedrooms and a kitchen. It was a quarter of an acre block and we had a vegetable garden, all the time and sometimes we had cows; you used to have to get the cows and milk them, make your own butter. We also had to wash the clothes. Washing the clothes was an angry day. No one stepped out of the line with Mum, otherwise she had the stick out.

When we went to Kirrama at Christmas to stay with our grandparents we had many jobs to do as well.

I don't think we had a favourite meal. We used to like trifle. Mum used to do a really good one. That's one thing I really remember. And, because we had the butcher shop, we had meat a couple of times a day. All the time, all our life. We had beef soup every night and I make it myself sometimes. I just put a little bit of barley in it, just like Mum.

I was an altar boy, in bare feet. I used to get the cloak thrown over my feet when I was kneeling down. Wasn't too nice. The bishop used to stay in a little tent just out of our house when he came to Tully. There might have been no hotel, I don't know. Anyway, he was good friends with Mum and he used to come and sing me songs in Latin. He thought I was going to be a parson!

In the cane cutting days, there were around 600 cutters and every night they were into the hotels, well a lot of them did so. That's why hotels made that much money then. And there used to be a peas-pies and potato place. They put an old truck in there every night and supplied the hotel with peas-pies and mashed potato. The fellas would come and buy them. They sold them at the school too, four pence each they cost at school. They were full of meat, good pies.

One day my brother threw a bone at me and it pierced the back of my leg. It went in. We didn't take any notice, but it swelled up and Dad took me to the doctor. It had to be bad for Dad to take me to the doctor. And so, the doctor said, "Wait a while". When everyone went, he took me in, put me on the table. Dad was the anaesthetist. He put a bit of a rag on my face, put some chloroform on, held it until I went to sleep and the doctor operated on my leg. He fixed it up properly, yeah. I still remember the doctor gave Dad the ether and told him what to do. The doctor said, "Start counting". I think I got to nine.

The depression didn't worry us because we had meat. And I remember Dad telling us about some of these fellas coming, carrying their swag, and they wanted a job for a feed. Dad gave them a job and some meat and they'd go and cook it themselves. It was pretty tough in the early days. It didn't concern me though because I didn't know about it then.

The water supply was not at Tully early on so Dad and a few other fellas went up to a creek and put a pipe in and that gave us – a few houses – water; and the Tully sugar mill laid a pipe in another creek, which was a bit further away, and that was the water for all their houses for their employers. The main mill, they used all the water from the Banyan, when they were pumping. The other houses used tanks for rainwater, everybody had tanks. And then Tully got the water supply later from the Banyan. I remember them putting the pipes in. We were only kids going to school then.

We only had cold showers. Even when I left in 1951, we still had cold showers. But we used to go to the sugar mill, four blokes would get on my motorbike and we'd drive down to the sugar mill, turn the steam on and have a warm bath [laugh].

Joe went to the Tully State Primary School as did all of his siblings. It was a short distance from their Mars Street home. Joe remembers how he often had to work when he returned from school:

Dad used to get cattle on the train, so we had to take them down to the slaughter yard [at Lower Tully] and he would pick us up at school at half past three. He'd take us down to the slaughter yard and give us a bit of bread, he'd say 'catch the horses and ride into Tully'. So, we'd get there about dark and mum would give us something to eat and send us to bed straight away. About 11 o'clock dad said, 'get up and saddle up the horses and go down to the railway' and the train would bring the cattle along and it was nearly always raining. Dad would give us a

sack bag – he never bought us a raincoat. When we got wet, we just threw the sack bag away. We'd drive the cattle down to the slaughter yard and get there about daylight and dad would pick us up and bring us home and then we had to go to school. It wasn't easy. The teachers would see us go to sleep and they didn't care. They just let us sleep. I'd go to sleep on the desk.

I was about 4 or 5 when I started school in Tully. I'd just walk down to school there. We had to come home every day for lunch because mum said if we'd stayed at school for lunch, we'd get into too much trouble. Some of the kids used to ride to school on bikes, some used to come on horses; some were five or six miles away. All the kids who came from far away, they used to stay at school for lunch – they had a couple of sandwiches, but Mum wouldn't let us.

The school was burned down. We found out who burned it down but we won't talk about that. [laugh]. And so, when it burned down, I thought we'd be going to have a big holiday but no. Next day, we started school at the showgrounds. Yeh, and there, one building where they used to display all the produce, there were a few classes in there and we were under the grandstand, that's where we had school. We were there for one year and the next year my class went to the Irish Club in Tully and the next year we went to the CWA, which was just over the road from the Irish Club and the next year in the new school.

My first teacher was Miss Simmons. She was nice but you really had to do what you were told straight away as we used to get the cane. The cane was about three foot long, a meter long, you had to hold your hand out, sometimes you got three cuts, sometimes six cuts and in the higher grades, there was a kid there, he kept pulling his hand away, when the cane came down it hit him here. So, he run home, told his father. About an hour later the father came down - big man, huge boots – boots were not even laced up, pair of shorts and black singlet, hairs everywhere – just walked in the classroom and said, "Don't touch my boy anymore", walked out of the room. They never hit him again. He was a timber cutter. Very tough man. If we complained, Dad would give us a bit more.

We played rounders, cricket and tennis and marbles at school; we all played marbles. I can tell you one about marbles. It happened to our house, outside. It was early in the morning, about 6 o'clock we were playing not far over the road. Mum was on holiday so my uncle was in the house. There was a marble called the blood Arthur in the middle and my brother Rod was the best player. He was better than me and better than the other fella. He picked up this blood Arthur and run home. So, we picked up his bag of marbles and we ran home, just over the road. He came over to get his marbles, but he had to deal with my uncle and didn't get his marbles, we got them and did not give them back.

I remember going to buy marbles off Mr Patten, from the paper shop, and I showed him a pound. "Did you steal that money", he asked. "No" I said, "I found it". He didn't believe me. He rang Dad up; thought I stole it off Dad. "No" Dad said, "He didn't steal it off me. I don't know how he got it but he never told me". So, I went back to Mr Patten and he sold me some marbles. When I got home, I had to put the rest of the money in the money box.

My uncle was from Kirrama. He just came down for a couple of days and stayed there. We were happy he was there and Dad was always happy when he was there too. When he wasn't there my Dad was always cross. Breaking up day was the best day of school, last day of school. I hated every day of school. There was no high school in Tully, so went to Charters Towers. I went to All Souls the first year and then the Army took over the school, was turned into a hospital and we went down to the Burdekin; we lived in tents and we had school in tents too. We were there for a year. Then they shifted the school to the race course in Charters Towers. I left All Souls and went to Thornborough, that's a different school (Presbyterian/Methodist school).

That was during the war. We watched the planes taking off every afternoon, all the bombers. There was a big chimney in Charters Towers and that was a landmark so one Saturday morning, they blew it down. They started to blow it down about 7 o'clock and they didn't get it knocked down 'til 11 o'clock. It was big. Very high. When they were doing the gold, there were fifty hotels that used to be in Charters Towers and the tower was part of a gold smelter.

Dad made a shelter – a ‘war shelter’ under the house during the war. He dug a hole with a pick and maybe three or four people could shelter in that. When I was at school in the Towers, we had to dig trenches as well, in case there was an air raid.

Joe spent one year of secondary education as a boarder at All Souls School in Charters Towers in 1942. The nation feared a Japanese invasion and the Army took over the school buildings and sent the students to a camp on the Burdekin River. It was icy cold in winter at nights with little clothing or bedding available.



Edgar, Rod, Joe, Mike (front), Jocelyn, Molly and John, 1944.



Molly and Alwynne. From Doug Unsworth.

Joe's second year at high school was in the Towers. On completion of his education in late 1943, Joe worked for his father in the butchery business. He did that for six years and completed his refrigeration ticket so that he could maintain the freezers at the shop. He then spent two years at their slaughter yard in Lower Tully. Joe's recollections:

My first job was working at the butcher shop and I had to drive the meat truck. I didn't have a licence, but there was no one to drive the truck because all the men had gone to the war so I'd drive the truck to Lower Tully to get the meat when they killed stock. It had no brakes, you'd only drive slowly, down and back and then when I came back, I had to; well in a few days I could break a bullock down, after it was hung. I learned pretty quick. I used to have to make all the sausages and all the mince.

I had no choice about where I worked. The shop was opposite the top pub in Tully. You know Roly Newton in Tully, next door to Roly's shop. That used to be a café. We used to start every morning at 4 o'clock, we'd cut the orders and we had ice works too; we had to pull the ice, bag it and label it and get the bags down to the railway by 6 o'clock. It used to go on the railmotor; the railmotor used to leave at 20 past 6. If you had it down there by 6 o'clock so they could check everything. The ice went from the Tully railway up north, up towards Innisfail. Some of the fellas used to get meat, some of them meat and ice. I was paid 1 pound 10 shillings a week and had to give mum 1 pound for rent and food, so it left me 10 bob.

When I was about 18, Dad left me in charge of the shop. There was one fella used to fix the compressor with dad – I could do it too – but dad was away and I was the boss. I said John – I can tell it wasn't running properly see – I said go and fix the compressor there, the valve is broken. He said, "No". I said, "Look, I want you to go and fix that compressor.". He said, "What are you going to do? I said, "You're sacked'. So, he took his apron off and his pouch and out he went. So, when I got home that night, I said to Mum, "You know, I sacked Dad's good butcher today". She said, "Hurray, hurray, the thief is gone." I can still see it to this day. Dad said nothing when he came back. There were three fellas in the shop. I just went and got another fella straight away.

Page 82, James Sinclair, *The Money Tree*: Joe Collins: "Fellers used to go by on the loco which was right near where I used to kill. [near the slaughter yards]. Made twenty-two quid last week, how much did you make?' they'd yell. I was only making 11 quid!"

While he was in Tully, Joe spent some time mustering at Kirrama and worked on one droving run. He joined Barney Curley and his team driving a herd of cattle from Spring Creek to Townsville, a distance of almost 1,400 km. The drive took a month and at Townsville they had two more in the herd than they started with despite some deaths on the journey. Joe recalls the event well:

I did a droving trip from Spring Creek to Townsville, which took a month with pack horses. I never got enough sleep. I hated it. You had to ride around the cattle every night because there were no fences to put them in, with 650 head and you had to sing. The first night I stopped singing and the cattle rushed. Have you heard cattle rushing? Well, they all jump up and all go the same way. That just how they go, the whole mob.

You have to sing while tending them at night. If you stop singing, and you're riding they don't hear you coming and they get a fright. When one gets a fright, they all go like that. We stopped them about three quarters of a mile but couldn't get them back to the same place; they wouldn't come back to the same place, so then for a couple of hours everybody had to round the cattle, no one had time to sleep and then we found were 25 head short when we counted them in the morning. So, we had two extra fellows from the cattle station, they tracked them and found them and caught us at lunch time, then they went back to the cattle station and there were just three of us with the cattle - one fellow was a cook that's four, another fellow looked after the horses, he was a horse tailer, that was five. We got to Townsville though with two extra head.

I can tell you another story about the droving. Righto, well this day the cattle were going in for a drink and it went down something like eighty feet or so, had a drink and went up the other side, spread out and it was my job when all the cattle went up to the top, I had to go back and check all the little gullies which were running into the creek. So, I found 10 head and I was taking them up a shortcut and it was very steep and so they're going up, and it got real steep and then going up on their elbows like this, then they turn backwards, roll down hill, hit the others down there and then they are trying to charge because they are a bit wild then; so I just went steady for a while because I used to work in wild cattle so that was all right; so then I take them up the same track that the big mob went up and the old boss is there and he said; "there's a bit of blood on them". I said, "they walked under a log." I didn't tell him about the shortcut and none of the cattle were injured.

Every night going on camp, the boss would say "You're the worst bloody man I've ever had working for me". But when we got to Townsville, he asked me to come on another trip. "I'm off!" was my response. I got 21 quid for 27 days work droving but got almost no sleep. Lunch time we used to have to go and get water for a cup of tea. One time, I had to ride two miles for water. He said "Ride up this track for two miles, you'll come to a gully. Follow up the gully and you'll see where the brumbies are drinking. They dig holes. You dig a hole, keep digging it out until the water comes out clean and fill a quarter pots then fill 3 quarter pots." I got back on the horse and had to trot all the way back, then we could have a cup of tea. They had a sleep at the camp when I was going to get the water.

Joe recalled some aspects of social events and holidays at Tully:

I joined the lifesavers. I was the first driver for the lifesavers and I was in the first squad when it started after the war. And the fella who taught us was a fella called Jack Riley, he worked in the railway; they borrowed the truck from a fella called Archie Warburton. Nearly everyone in Tully knows Archie, he's dead now. And so, they'd all sit down in the truck with their legs out of the side, like this, and we'd have a practice down at Mission Beach then we'd drive back. That happened every Sunday.

I sort-of enjoyed it. I was only in the lifesavers a couple of years and after that Rod and I bought an outboard engine between us; we got a little boat and we also used to go shooting all the time and spearing. We used to go spearing up the Tully River and mainly caught black bream. We went shooting wallabies too. Plenty of ducks but we had to go on the places where you're not supposed to shoot them.

An old lady used to chase us on a horse and we'd go through the fence while she had to go round to the gate so we got away. We'd have to run over a mile to escape.

We went to the Tully Show of course and at first show we went to, we put some plants in. We saw in the book where you could get five shillings for some plants. So we went into the bush, got all these plants – Mum got some plants for us, we'd put them in the pots and take them to the show – we all made some money – 5 shillings each. The show was the only thing special at Tully. I used to play football in Tully, but only played a couple of games. We were more interested in shooting and fishing.

When I first went to the dancing, I'd go all around the hall and the girls wouldn't dance with me. It was because I could not dance. So, I went to the CWA where married people danced and I never had a knock back. Used to have sandwiches and cakes and tea. It was lovely and I went nearly every Saturday night for two years. There I learned all the old timer dances and it was so good. Most places had a piano for music and sometimes one fella used to play an accordion and another fella was on the drums. For the dance up at the Country Women's place, they had only a piano and when they did the square dance, a fella - he was the caller – his name was Shorty, and there was a fella called Johnny Skardon and he was just playing a little accordion for the music for the square dance. It was good; good people to talk to. Some of them were timber cutters and timber haulers, real nice fellas, their wives were nice too.

I went on my own on holidays occasionally, not often, and once went for about a month. I went down South, with my aunty. My uncle came along and took me to Dalby. I was driving a dozer and pulling all the logs off because he had wheat. And then one day he said, "You can go now, take my wife and my kids and drop them off at Toowoomba." He just kicked them out. I never knew at the time. All the kids in the back of the ute, the utility, and I was driving and his wife and the baby in the front. I just went there. He told me to leave the car so I went back to Brisbane, it's all; my aunty there, so I went to Sydney to my grandmother. And she said, "How did you go out there?" I said, "Pretty good" and told her what happened. "Right" she said and told me about how good the wife was and about how terrible he was, like kicking her out.

Anyway, when I was in Brisbane, I took two dancing lessons and learned how to do the two-step – six shillings and sixpence each lesson they cost and my uncle, he had a car down there, so I used to drive my aunty to work in Sydney and pick her up every afternoon and when my uncle was there, we used to drive to Palm Beach and have a swim every day, in the sea. There were no houses out there, it was all bare. So righto, then I left and went back to the butcher shop. By the time I was 18, I did an exam and was able to run an ice works and freezers.

We used to work every Saturday up to 2 o'clock. Sunday, we had to be there to sell the ice because nobody in Tully had fridges. Everybody was buying ice. The other butcher shop was the same, they had ice works too. We had to stay there up to 11 o'clock on Sunday morning, to sell ice. When I went to the slaughter yard, that was hard work because I had to feed the pigs twice a day. We had 140 pigs. I fed them every morning and every afternoon as well as killing the bullocks. I used to kill four or five bullocks every day. Once a week, I'd do four pigs, sometimes some sheep too. Those were big days.

JOE'S SIBLINGS



Joe, Mike, Jocelyn, Ed and Rod.



John, Rod, Mike, Ed and Joe Collins.



Tully slaughter yard: Eddie, Johnny, Jocelyn, Rod, Mike and Joe Collins.



C 1995: LTR Jenny and Rod Collins, Margie and Mike Collins, Doug and Jocelyn Unsworth, Joe and Margaret Collins, Jennifer and Eddie Collins.

Roderick (Rod) Collins 1929

After leaving school, Rod worked in the Tully River Butchering Company with his father, uncle Eric and brother Joe. Rod worked for the shop in Tully at times and also at the slaughter yard at Lower Tully. In 1947, Eric wanted out of the business to concentrate on cane farming so Rod and Joe bought a quarter share each.

Rod:

My first job after the butchery was as a stone crusher in Tully, I was carrying stones for them for 30 shillings a week. I then drove a truck for Dicko, a guy who was in the timber game so I was hauling logs.

I asked for a job and initially did not get one but Bert Morris, who was their driver, was killed by a death adder and I was given his job. He was the son of George Morris who was on Dunk Island for some time.

George was a builder later in Tully and he built Johnny's house at South Mission Beach. That was not a good home like the ones Bob Nisula built for Ed and Rod. We all had homes on South Mission Beach at the beachfront early on and Dad bought four lots on the hill at the south end of the beach but decided to sell them later.

I went working at Tom Leahy's property near Dalby for 18 months ringbarking and didn't make wages really but by 1953 had saved just enough to get to New Guinea to join Joe there. I drove trucks from Lae to Bulolo at the start and looked after their ice works before we decided to buy Uncle Jim's sawmill.

Rod left his father's business after five years and did some time as a timber truck driver for Tully sawmill. Rod moved to Bimbian Downs near Dalby to work for his uncle, Tom Leahy on his wheat farm. After two years there, he went to New Guinea to join his brother Joe in 1953.

He drove a truck for Bulolo gold fields for his first year in New Guinea then, with brothers Joe and John, purchased an old sawmill from their uncle, Jim Leahy at Kotuni, 14 km from Goroka. Rod and Joe purchased 100 acres of land at Numbia near Goroka while they had the sawmill and planted 90 acres of coffee. They increased that to more than 160 acres of coffee by buying adjoining land from Cheery Lane seven years later. They employed their cousin, Paddy Leahy, to help with the planting. Their best crop was 285 tonnes from 160 acres: 1.8 tons per acre. That would have been worth \$4 million or more in today's dollars. James Sinclair in *The Money Tree* interviewed Rod who said that their plantation became the highest producer per acre in New Guinea after they adopted the practices of Baron Goto: *He said, 'This is how you prune', and when we saw him doing it, we thought he was going to destroy the coffee.... Our plantation was the highest producer per acre in New Guinea.... Our brother, Johnny, tried double-planting at his place up in the Baiyer... He never got more than we did... When Paddy Leahy got going, he followed Goto on Joe Searson's block, and got the same results we did.* Goto had told them that if they looked after their coffee trees well, they would endure for 100 years. Rod continued: *When the flush was on, we'd have some 200 pickers, more if we could get them, from local villages. We paid them a pence a pond and that was good money if they worked well. We always heard stories of other growers getting bigger crops than us or Paddy but when we went to see them it was all lies and exaggeration, most farms were hopeless compared to our farm.* He added that they had their own efficient factory and that good pickers could pick over four tons of finished coffee in a day.⁷ *In one crop the pickers took 70,000 pounds of cherry off in one day – it was a bumper crop that year.*

Rod married in 1962, the same year as Ed. He married Jennifer Kate (Jen) Westcott who had lived on Gunnawarra Station with her parents earlier and lived at Atherton when she met Rod. Her mother, Nell, was part of the Atkinson family that owned many stations – she was a cousin of Monty Atkinson who married Ruth Collins of Kirrama. Her father, Afton Westcott, was a brother of Ena Westcott who was Margie Collins' mother. What a family web! Rod and Jen lived at Numbia on their coffee plantation.

Jen had started training as a nurse and that training terminated when she married. Rod and Jen had four children, two born in New Guinea, Alison and Eleanor, and two in Cairns, Sam and Brendan. Rod tells of how things went when he courted Jen while she was nursing in Townsville. With Jen being so far away, it was never going to be an instant union as it had been for Joe and Ed ...

Rod:

I had about a five month engagement; well, I wasn't engaged at all and it took me five months to convince her to marry me. I was trying to get engaged, but she wouldn't have anything to do with me!

⁷ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P.186.

I used to have to go back to New Guinea all the time and I was busy up there and couldn't spend time with Jen.

We got married in Atherton eventually. I think all the nurses she worked with eventually got to Jen and said, 'Christ, hand on to him, there's not many blokes around like him.

When Jennifer first came up we visited Dan Leahy at Mount Hagen one day and I was nervous about telling her his family situation fearing she would not take it well. I was driving along the road thinking how do I say this and kept putting it off. Then, as were nearly there, I finally blurted out: You know, Uncle Dan has some half caste children Jennifer Stoney silence. Then when we are all but at the house I decided I had to tell her ... Jennifer I should also say that Uncle Dan ... long hesitation... Yeah, well he has two wives! Not a word from my newlywed wife.

Rod and his brother Joe purchased a cattle station near Charters Towers in 1965 (see Joe Collins). They also owned a cane farm together at Josephine Falls. After taking regular holidays back in Australia, Rod and Jen purchased land at South Mission Beach and built holiday homes there, as did Johnny and Ed while living in New Guinea.

Rod and Jen returned from New Guinea in 1978, two years after Joe left. They stayed on to dispose of their assets in New Guinea. Jen and Rod took up dairy farming at Malanda on return and while Rod did not much love the work, Jen was heavily involved and they increased the farms productivity considerably by installing modern milking equipment from New Zealand and adding irrigation systems to increase their herd size.

They purchased a 100-acre farm nearby to enhance their herd size further and Rod had several other ventures including an avocado farm, commercial sheds and a joint venture with Joe in a Brisbane tennis and commercial centre. His passion though was fishing, so he took to that with gusto.

Their four children were not interested in a farming career and hated the cows, so they sold the farm and retained 100 acres of land surrounding the house and agisted cattle. In 2024, they remained at this property. As a keen fisherman, Rod has spent much time in his boats at South Mission Beach and travelling around the country fishing and attending fishing events or barramundi fishing. He even travels abroad to Central America and PNG in pursuit of fish.

Jen is a long-term member of the Eacham Historical Society and has travelled through Europe with her daughters and spent time there with one of her granddaughters. Jen and Rod have seven grandchildren. Their son, Brendan, is a builder currently working in Indonesia and doing well and son, Sam, is thriving in the fruit growing game with a highly successful mango farm near Mareeba.

Dennis Collins 1931 - 1933

Dennis died prematurely of diphtheria when only 26 months old.

John (Johnny) Collins 1933 - 1973

Johnny left school late in 1949 and worked for his father until he sold the butchery in 1951. He then worked for Alf Nixon on a barge at Tully Heads cutting mangrove timber. He did three months National Service in 1952 then worked for a while as a stone crusher before going to New Guinea in 1953.

He went on a fishing trip with his brother Joe and then worked for his uncle, Mick Leahy, dismantling war surplus equipment. Later, he worked for his cousin, Tom Leahy, on his Markham River farm and ran a barge across the river before the bridge was built. He worked for a while with his cousin, Danny Leahy at Bena Bena before going into partnership with brothers, Joe and Rod, in the Kotuni sawmill.

Two years later, he went out on his own again and worked for his cousin, Dan Leahy at Kuta. He also spent time establishing a trade store at a government run cattle station and spent a year as a builder. In 1958 he applied for a land grant at Tigi Creek in the Baiyer Valley, near Mount Hagen and was successful. He set up a 334 acre coffee plantation there. For most of 1959, Johnny was a member of the Sixth Archbold Expedition to New Guinea acting as a transporter and manager of native workers. He assisted with the collection of plant specimens and small mammals high in the mountains.

Johnny worked on the coffee farms of Joe and Rod as well as on Paddy's plantation and learned the modern coffee horticulture methods of Y Baron Goto, following his family's lead to become an efficient coffee producer with high yields.

He married Anne Camfield Balzer in Sydney in 1962 and their best man was Joe Collins. Johnny had been best man for Joe in 1951. At Rod's wedding, earlier in the same year, Johnny had declared to all that there was no way he was getting married. An unplanned pregnancy changed those plans.

Anne was a nurse who worked at stations in Australia who decided to visit friends in New Guinea. They told her she must visit the Highlands and there she met John Collins. Her father was surgeon, John Balzer from West Wyalong who had married Phyllis Youmans while studying in London.

Johnny and Anne returned to Mount Hagen and lived in a garage until mid-1963 then they built a fibro house. They had five children, all born in the Highlands: John, James, Tont, Julie and Simon. Dr John and Phil Balzer lived with them in 1969 to enable the children to go to school in Mount Hagen. In 1970, John and Anne purchased 300 acres of land on an adjacent block called Kul. They planted another 150 acres of coffee and John contracted terminal leukaemia. They moved to Sydney for his treatment and he died in 1973, just before his 40th birthday.

Anne ended up in Vacluse in 1974 then moved to Glenhaven in 1976 where the boys attended Kings College. The Tigi plantation was managed for a period and sold by the family in 1975. During the tribal wars of 1990, Tigi Plantation was abandoned and it has yet to reopen. It was one of the most productive plantations in New Guinea, producing 428 tons of coffee from 200 acres in 1978 while being managed by Bob Hargreaves.

Their two eldest sons, John and James, returned to Papua New Guinea and set up trade and hotel businesses and they were joined later by Tony and the three had a charter boat business together. In 2012, Anne had nine grandchildren.

Edgar (Ed) Collins 1935

After leaving school, Edgar worked at Bimbian Downs with his uncle, Tom Leahy, west of Dalby. He moved back to Tully in 1953 and stayed until late 1954 working on the new hydroelectric project, the Koombooloomba Dam. He then did National Service for three months in Wacol, Brisbane before spending a couple of months at Kirrama. In early 1955, he followed his brothers to New Guinea.

When I interviewed Ed in 2024, with his wife, Jennifer, two brothers, Joe and Rod with his wife Jen, we got off to a quick start with Ed relating stories of his youth in his energetic, and fun-loving way. I had read much of the family and Ed by that time and was not surprised at his zest for life and his ability to entertain. I knew of his reputation as a decisive man who spoke his mind and was intrigued to hear what he would say about how he and Jennifer married. Joe had been very decisive about that part of his life, was Ed equally sure of himself? Jennifer flew to Goroka on Australia Day 1962, and on her first day there she met Ed in her workplace in Goroka. Over to Ed, he tells it better than I can:

Jennifer's family came to New Guinea when her father was appointed to open a branch of the National Bank in Moresby. When he was recalled to Australia, Jennifer said, 'I'm not going back to Australia. I've

got a job offer with Peter Fox, an accountant in Goroka (the accountant for Collins and Leahy and the Collins Brothers). So, up she came to bloody Goroka and I spotted her and that was the end of the story! And then when we said we were getting married, everybody said, 'What's bloody going on here? There's been no mention of sheilas or anything like that, ever.

Ken: *You only took a week to be engaged I heard.*

Ed: *Gotcha. I said here's a bit of quality [much laughter.] We were the only ones that got married in New Guinea – in Goroka. The whole of the family came up and all the uncles and aunts were there. It was only relatives in the church, it was full up.*

And when Jennifer's father and mother came up they see me standing over there in the airport and I've got the hobnail boots on and the footy socks. What's this she's found! [laughter].

Jennifer: *My mother said to me a little later, you know, 'I thought you'd marry a professional!'*

Ed: *I mean my mother came up and did the same to Jennifer. I mean, oh jeez, oooh.*

Jen: *They were all in shock because it was so quick.*

Jennifer: *My sister, Christine, had been in New Guinea with my parents anyway. They all went back to Sydney and I wrote to my mother to say I was engaged. Christine said she was there when mother got the letter and opened it up. She said that mother went white and had to sit down. [more laughter.]*

Further recollections of Ed:

I ran away from school. I sent Dad a telegram from school saying, 'Wasting your money and my time.' I hopped on a train and went to Miles on Anzac Day. An old digger, Wally Fraser, gave me a lift out there. I can still remember how cold it was out there. Dad had visions of me being an engineer. He always thought that I should go to university because I passed all my exams at boarding school in Brisbane. All the other sons had gone to work for him in the butchers shop. I was having none of that university stuff. I wanted to follow my three brothers to New Guinea. University was the last thing on my mind and I had no intention of going. None of us were scholastically inclined. We hated school.

Joe: *We all went to the University of Hard Knocks; you make a mistake and you pay for it yourself.*

Rod: *Our mother always said we were better than others around us and urged us on but we did not see that and no one from Tully in those days ever went to university.*

Ed: *As we saw it you leave school at fourteen and find work. We all stayed on at school until we were 16 years old. Despite our disdain for school, we all discovered later that what we learned there had value, especially the maths. I eventually returned to Tully after four months with Uncle Tom ringbarking trees and boundary riding on his wheat farm.*

I arrived at the Tully railway station and made my way to the shooting competition nearby where I knew my family would be. Dad was the President of the gun club. My parents were sort of half happy to see me, there was no jubilation, and as luck would have it, I met the boss of the Koombooloomba Dam project there and was offered a job. I went with Clarry Mealing in the car to Ravenshoe then on to Koombooloomba and stayed there 12 months on unprecedented money. I saved £1,000 and that was more than enough to get me an air ticket to New Guinea. The government made us pay a bond of £90 to ensure that if we made humbug in New Guinea they were covered and we also had to have at least £150 in the bank before they let us go.

I went expecting to get work at the sawmill with Collins Brothers, Joe, Rod and John had just started repairing the old sawmill. They did not have enough to pay me wages though, so they suggested that I go to Mount Hagan and run Uncle Dans farm and three trade stores for him while he was away for a period. On the plane I went to Mount Hagen and the first thing Dan said was to come and meet my cousins, his kids. I was blown away, No one told me in Goroka that he had two wives and kids. I did not know of them, he had two New Guinean wives and several children. That was all OK by me, I grew up with a lot of black fellas up in Kirrama and got along well with them. I knew nothing whatsoever of how to farm coffee or run trade stores but was happy to give it a go. I did not even know what a coffee tree looked like. He purchased passionfruit for Cottees as well, so I took that job on as well. I was joined by Cousin Danny Leahy there. While there, Uncle Dan had ordered a new Willys Jeep and it came on a DC3 in bits, so we reassembled it on the airstrip and then cruised around the place in it in the weekends.

When Dan returned, we were in big trouble for driving the new Jeep all around, so he sent us packing. He was not unhappy with the work we had done, but in retrospect, he had no further need for us when we returned anyway. I returned to Collins Brothers and they still could not employ me, so I went to Bulolo looking for a drivers job. On the way, I stopped off at Uncle Mick's place and there was a fellow there, Les Lane, with a truck and he hired me instead.

At Christmas that year we all went back to Australia in an old war bomber and it took all day to get there. When we returned I was given a job driving timber to customers with Collins Brothers. After a while, I started a small trade store near Goroka. My brothers cut up a large fig tree and I used that timber to build the store, it was merely 15 feet by ten, but that's how I got started. I still drove the truck for my brothers and knew the local New Guinea guys well by then so they were happy to buy goods from my stores. The saw mill was going well and they purchased a new Caterpillar D2 tractor and Johnny drove it like a man possessed and soon had a huge stockpile of timber in the yard. I was given the offcuts and sold them by the truckload for firewood. I started doing commercial carting for Cottees taking frozen fruit pulp to the airport where it was taken to Australia. Next I sold Kau Kau [sweet potato].

When I had two stores going with two trucks, I met with Danny again and he was ready to sell his coffee plantation, so we decided on the spot to amalgamate our businesses – Danny had two stores and two trucks as well and that's how we started Collins and Leahy. We went straight to the bank and were asked what we wanted to call it and away we went, full bore into business. We traded in everything, peanuts, passion fruit, you name it but our transport became the core of the business. The biggest load of peanuts we exported to Australia was 60 tons which is quite a few peanuts.

When I was at Koombloomba I tested cement and was a builders labourer and learned a lot about building. I was the powder monkey in their quarry and learned how to build houses as well. Handy skills. We were all living at the sawmill in a tiny house and I decided to build them a new house using timber from their mill. It was a good house and Johnny and I wired it. Of course, we knew how to wire trucks so it was not a lot different doing a house. We had a water powered generator and lights but the generator was touchy and we took it in turns to turn it off at night. One night, I vividly remember going out at night when it was my turn and I made a slight error in the way I switched it and the Pelton wheel revved up and it blew up all the light globes in the house. What an uproar that caused, you could hear everyone in the house shouting out what a useless bastard I was – I was not at all popular. Oh, my godfather. Not happy stuff, but we all laughed about it later when we eventually managed to buy more light bulbs. Yeah, it was hard work at the Kotuni sawmill.

When Collins Brothers amalgamated their coffee plantations and started processing coffee from other farms, Danny and I started buying coffee from the Kanakas from all over the place. We ended up with three coffee processing plants. Paddy managed the Collins Brothers coffee operation after Joe and I

started it and raised the funds. Joe was its first Managing Director. Paddy was an astute manager. We bought more coffee plantations, like the run-down Clarens Estate, 200 acres. I sacked the guy running it and we appointed the first Neo Colonialist [New Guinean] to run it – a guy we had running Paddy's plantation, Obihaka. He was plenty smart fella and we had him running another farm, as well later on. Clarens Estate was covered in weeds and we had 40 spray boys to fix it.

The Collins and Leahy business expanded rapidly and even got into steelmaking, soft drink bottling, and owned a hotel in Goroka. The first really big deal we did was to buy the stores in Goroka from our major competition, Mick Reilly. He owned Goroka. That was where we got the soft drink factory. We agreed to pay £75,000 [\$2.6 million in today's currency] for the stores and made a £10,000 deposit with ten year terms. Everyone was scandalized at the deal, they said they're going to go broke these fellas trying to pay it off, but we paid the debt in two years, not the ten years we had to do so. I learned how to become a soft drink manufacturer for our stores. Brother Rod put pekpek on me for being the town's chief bottle-O, collecting all the bottles for the factory. However, we sold a hundred thousand bottles in a month so did OK on that business.

The hotel in Goroka was good business as the New Guineans were cashed up and ready to get into liquor in a big way and we needed bigger trucks to haul the booze in. We knew the licencing commissioner and he told us that drinking liquor was on its way to the Highlands. In the end, after having many different types of trucks, Fords, then English made Commers, they would not sell the Commers to us until we did a full course, Johnny and I in Sydney, on how to maintain the engines. Then we got Atkinsons, then we traded up and had 12 Macs, each with three semitrailers to maximise their efficiency. We imported frozen meat, tyres, fertilisers, everything. The tyre deal was funded by a firm in Birmingham, Schofield Goodman, and we imported Michelin tyres from Europe. They gave us three months credit. Our Accountant by then was a genius named Peter Fox, super fulla, who was an incredible asset for the operation. He was the accountant for Collins Brothers as well. He was desperate for us to list the company on the Sydney stock exchange. We floated it on the stock exchange and declared a 60% dividend in the first year. We did the same the next year. We made soap and coffee driers and did deals on the run – we purchased the steel works from an Estonian called Gus - we went out fishing with him and did the deal on the boat. He said he was tired of the business and couldn't get the Kanakas to work, so I said why don't you sell it. He said he couldn't find a buyer so I asked what he wanted. He said £25,000 and that was the deal we did. It was profitable and we had 50 people working there in Lae building truck bodies and coffee dryers and all sorts of things.

Rod: You haven't mentioned that bloody newspaper. [loud laughter.]

Ed: *Oh, yes! That's another thing we had! The Age in Melbourne wanted to start a newspaper in New Guinea. We said we had no idea about the business, but they said they would send us two of their finest young fellas experts to set it up. So, we decided to have a lash at it. The two newspaper guys came up and instantly fell in love with all the local girls of course so they were of little use to us. The business was hungry for capital, we were always buying things. We were hoping that we could influence politicians with a newspaper and have people elected who would help our cause, but that never worked. Joe and Rod took the operation over but sold it on and just kept the buildings. It had a flash colour Heidelberg press and they printed invoice books and airline tickets as well but the business was not viable.*

Rod: *We had Rod Suckling involved – he later became a Minister in the government there. We owed about £30,000 to the bank and he said he knew the bank manager and could do a deal. We gave him the business in return for him taking the overdraft on, the guarantees.*

Joe: *We took on the newspaper on because there was an election coming and we hoped to influence it*

Ed: *We always paid money to all the candidates and vehicles to use, but it was a waste of good money. We learned that we could not influence the outcome of any elections by favouring some bloke over another.*

Rod: *No matter what we did, we got nowhere. We didn't ever know what was going on with elections.*

Ed: *We bought a quarry and brick making business next. That was handy. We always had about 20 carpenters working for us erecting buildings.*

I can remember Danny Leahy and I early on dreaming of getting our revenue up to £4,000 a month but later on we were doing a million a week. The business grew quickly.

In 1979, I sold my share of Collins and Leahy to Mike Bromley and we left New Guinea. Jennifer and I returned to Australia and purchased a 500 acre dairy farm at Malanda. We are still there but dairy farming was a seven day operation and never a money earner and while we modernised it with the latest New Zealand technology it was not worth continuing, so we kept the beautiful land and we now lease it for cattle grazing.

Everyone said, 'that useless bastard from New Guinea bought it and it's worthless ground'. I saw it differently. Everything was run down and bugged up, but we drained it and made it into great pastures with three lakes. Lived happily ever after! The climate is nearly identical to that in Goroka and that suits us perfectly. The kids hated cows so were not interested in the dairy farm.

It did not dawn on me that the dairy farm would never make money until I had tried investing in the latest machinery from New Zealand and then we bought a machine that measured the amount of food the cows ate. That was a very simple message and we closed it soon after the price of milk dropped. When Rod and I were dairying, there were 264 dairy farms here and now there are about 30 and they are still being closed down.

When Danny Leahy came to Mt Hagan, he and Ed Collins had not met, but they struck up an instant friendship. Ed and Danny both played Rugby League for Goroka and New Guinea.

Edgar and Jennifer Jean Bull were married in Goroka in 1962. In 1971, they built a beach house at South Mission Beach and spent every holiday there with their family from July to September. The land was owned by Peter White and his house was on the beachfront near the boat ramp on the hill.

Ed is a keen spear fisherman and diver and travelled twice to Europe with his wife and young children, Louise, Edgar (delivered at Goroka Hospital by Aunty Jocelyn), Thomas and Phoebe.

There is no doubt that Ed and Jennifer Collins worked hard, took risks and created great wealth. Ed and Danny Leahy excelled in business yet the entire family were successful in their own way. In family interviews, it was apparent that Ed was the decision maker in the partnership and Danny while he had his strengths usually procrastinated. Together, they were highly effective in business.

In Malanda, Jennifer and Ed set up a modern dairy farm with New Zealand rotary equipment. Ed was on the board of Malanda Milk 1982-83. They closed the dairy operation in 1986 but kept the land and set up fish breeding ponds.

Ed was a successful competitor in clay pigeon shooting and was in the Atherton Tableland Gun Club with his brothers Mike and Joe. He has won many significant titles including the Australian Open Title for Single Barrel Championship in 2012

Ed had invested in a number of commercial rental properties including a historic building in Cairns which became a nightclub. He sold that and purchased a car yard in Townsville. He also had a partnership in a van park in Cairns with his cousins Paddy and Rosemary Leahy who managed that for some time.

Jennifer and Ed's children have all been successful in life and their youngest daughter, Phoebe did what so many of her female ancestors did before her and became a registered nurse. Their son Edgar is enjoying a stellar career in dairying despite swearing as a teenager that he would never be involved in it again. He has played a major role in setting up large dairy farms and plants in Indonesia and China. His Chinese operation had 135,000 milking cows and sold for over \$1 billion recently, Edgar remains a shareholder and is a consultant for them and still visits China regularly.

Their son, Tom is also a successful entrepreneur with a helicopter-based business in Brisbane and all sorts of other businesses as well – the family keeps on rearing more entrepreneurs.

Ed and Jennifer have 13 grandchildren.

Michael (Mike) Collins 1939 - 2007

Mike Collins first went to New Guinea in 1957 and worked for a time for his brothers, Joe and Rod, at their sawmill near Goroka before they had to release him when the business was struggling. He moved to Goroka and joined Collins and Leahy owned by his brother Ed Collins and his cousin, Danny Leahy. He then managed the buying and processing of coffee beans for the family-owned Highland Produce Buyers working with his uncle Jim Leahy who was the first Managing Director of the company.

Payment was delayed for his first shipment of coffee, so Mike returned to Australia and grew bananas on Joe's Lower Tully farm for seven months. Jim wrote to say that he had been paid and that coffee prices were good again so Mike returned to New Guinea. In 1962, Mike married Margaret Ena (Margie) Hill of Sydney, a cousin of Jen Collins who was married to Mike's older brother, Rod. Margie had been a physiology lab worker at Sydney University. The couple returned to New Guinea after fun time with the Collins family in Cooktown.

Mike and Margie started life in New Guinea living in a grass hut in the Chimbu Valley. Highland Produce Buyers was sold by Jim Leahy and Mike and Margie moved to Kianantu and managed Jascar, a coffee plantation and coffee processor, for Collins and Leahy. The Cooperative that purchased Highland Produce Buyers were soon in deep financial trouble and they invited Mike back to restore the company's finances. Mike returned reluctantly on a good package. He achieved their objectives and returned the cooperative to the black. However, politician Imbakey Okuk intervened and was offended when he learned of the salary and bonuses that Mike earned. Mike was strongly supported by the shareholders who were Chimbu villagers but resigned, tired of the constant bickering. He was not thanked for his incredible feat of saving the society from bankruptcy.

Mike returned to Jascar. George Leahy, one of Dan Leahy senior's sons, managed the society for a time and it eventually folded. People who opposed Mike Collins' continuation sometimes said he was too hard on the employees, little understanding that it took incredibly strong and capable leadership to prevent the corruption that ultimately ended the society.

Mike and Margie had six children and returned to Australia in 1976. They settled in Cairns and had a business selling tractors and farms and built commercial sheds for rental. Margie was selling for Amway. Mike moved to Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands and started an avocado farm while Margie remained in Cairns so the education of their children could continue.

They built a house at Lake Tinaroo in the early 1980s and Margie moved to be with Mike. The avocado farm was sold soon after. Margie created an amazing garden on the shores of Lake Tinaroo and Mike became very

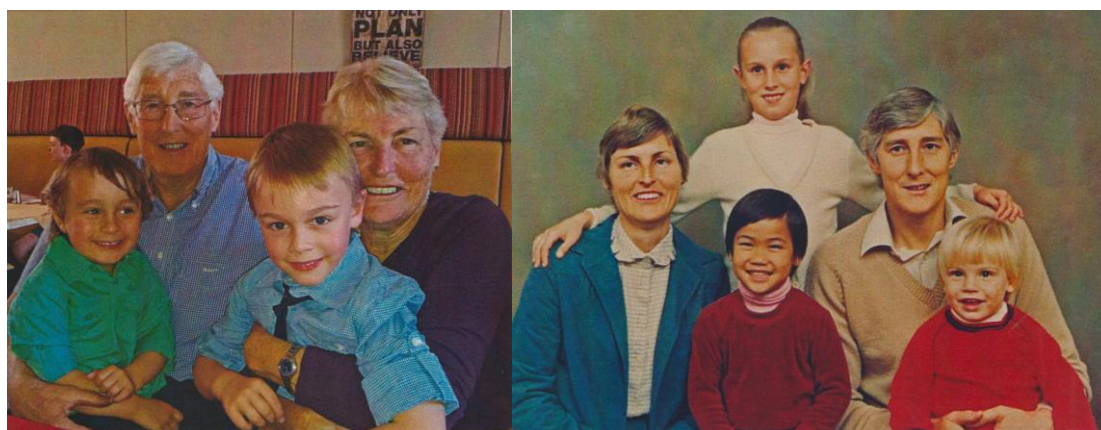
actively involved in the Atherton Tableland Gun Club and often travelled to the Gulf on camping trips. Their sons Michael and James returned to New Guinea and started businesses there and Mike spent much time in New Guinea assisting them.

Mike enjoyed clay pigeon shooting all his life and was a founding member of the Atherton Club. He won his first state Championship while still a junior and was a consistent winner over time, winning his last shoot in 2006.

Mike died in 2007 and Margie continued to live at Tinaroo. In 20213 she remained living there and had 19 grandchildren.

Jocelyn Collins 1943

After leaving school, Jocelyn headed straight for New Guinea to be with her brothers and stayed there for one year before returning in September 1961 to begin nurse training at Townsville. She was engaged to Ross McDonald in 1964 who died shortly after in a car crash in Fiji. Jocelyn graduated in 1965 and moved to St Margarets Hospital in Sydney and completed midwifery training. From there she moved to Goroka and worked in the hospital there for almost a year before travelling to Canada late in 1967.



Doug and Jocelyn Unsworth with grandsons Henry and Joe Mortimer, 2012. Jocelyn and Doug with Christine, Kylie and Steven, 1983. From Doug Unsworth.

Doug Unsworth was born in Cootamundra, NSW in 1942. His grandparents migrated from Lancashire, England in 1911 and lived on a property near Wollongong. His grandfather worked in a coal mine there. Doug's father was a teacher who had several Headmaster roles in NSW. Doug's only sibling, Gwen lives in Wollongong with her husband Jim Paterson.

Doug graduated from Wollongong University as an engineer and travelled to Canada in 1967. Jocelyn and Doug married in 1969 and spent the next four years in British Columbia and spent their weekends camping, hiking, canoeing and skiing. They adopted baby Christine in 1972 and returned to Australia in 1973. In 1979, they adopted a daughter, Kylie and in 1980 their son, Steven was born.

Doug worked in mining and oil-gas projects around Australia and in PNG before retiring in 2009. Jocelyn spent much time nursing. Jocelyn and Doug purchased a 400 acre property at Kaban, near Herberton, in 1983 and owned that for almost ten years before selling it to build a home in Brisbane where they now live.

NEW GUINEA

The decision to leave Tully was sudden. Joe:

I was at the slaughter yard and Dad said I was bludging. So, we had a few words then I started leaving. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to Mt Isa, they are making good money there". Righto. So, I went into town and then to the barber – he had just returned from New Guinea. I told him that I was leaving the slaughter yard, going out to Mt Isa. He said, "Do you want to go to New Guinea? There's no income tax there". I said, "That'll do me". That's how I chose New Guinea. Left straight away.

I was in New Guinea for 24 years. From 1951 to 1976 when I returned to a cane farm we had at Babinda. We stayed there for a short time and built a new home at South Mission Beach and that is where I still live after 47 years. We did not return to live in Tully.

Returning from New Guinea in 1951 to marry Margaret, Joe relates the story of how quickly things happened after he proposed to Margaret – 26 hours later they were married showing how things were so simple and no fuss in those days:

Dad met Mum at the butcher shop. He was delivering the meat. I used to deliver meat too and that is how I met Margaret Menzel as well. And she was still going to school then. I first met her out at Euramo where their farm was. I was going there twice a week with the meat because nobody had cars, hardly anyone had cars because of the war; the farmers couldn't buy tyres, they couldn't even buy petrol. But the butcher, we'd get a special permit for petrol also, we could put tyres on our vehicles to take the stuff around to feed people and the baker was the same. So, that's where I met my wife. Well, I didn't go with her then, but we were really friendly and then when she left school, she went nursing and that's when we started going out together. I remember thinking I must not be slow, the first girlfriend I had ditched me and said I was taking things far too slow for her liking. I would not make that mistake again.

It must have been two or three years we were together because I had my running shoes on. When I went to New Guinea, I wrote to her and I got a letter from her and she was saying she was leaving, she was going to Mt Isa. I thought if she goes to Mt Isa, she's gone and she's a real good one, not like a lot of girls I had met. That's Friday. One pay in the week, that's Saturday. Saturday morning, I left New Guinea, came down here on the weekly flight from Lae to Cairns. Saturday night I got the midnight horror train to Tully, it was so slow, went to my brother and said, "I want the truck because I'm going out to see Margaret". They brought the truck down; I took him home and then - this time it was Sunday morning about two o'clock – got out to the Menzel's place and knocked on the door. They said, "Who's that?" and I said, "Joe Collins", so went in, "Will you marry me?", "Yes", righto. Monday morning, I went to see the pastor and said, "We'll get married about Thursday". "Oh", he said "I won't be here." "What about Wednesday?". "No", he said, "I won't be here." "What about tomorrow?". "No", he said, "I'm going over to Palm Island to take over the church over there". "Well, what about today? I pleaded. "All right", he said, "Today, four o'clock". Righto, so I went and got a card off the chemist for the ring size and returned out to Margaret's place, tested the ring size and came back, bought the ring and at four o'clock we're married.

When we got married, we came to Mum's place. It was Mum, Mrs Hilcher from over the road, and someone else attended. One brother, he was the best man, he had to be. He was working on the stone crusher. He was best man. The other brother was driving a timber truck and he couldn't get time off. The other fella was going to school. He was making sausages [laugh], so he couldn't get time off either. Dad was in Townsville at the time so we just had a cup of tea at home and I took Margaret to the beach. There was a house down there belonging to a fella called Peter Burns. We had a bit of food to eat and a mattress on the floor, there for three days, went back to New Guinea and I left her with her mother. That's how it happened.

Margaret was wonderful and I loved her from the day I met her to her last days when I bathed her and cared for her in her illness. Margaret was the love of my life and we enjoyed great times together.

There was a bit of mucking around getting her up to New Guinea after we were married because you had to get a permit. I was already living in New Guinea and didn't have to have a permit but Margaret needed one.

Joe later added that while the pastor was not available on the days preferred for the wedding the fee was the same, nonetheless and Joe paid £5 for the short ceremony. That's \$250 in today's dollars so was quite a stretch for Joe when he was starting out.

Joe's first Job in PNG was driving a barge over the Markham River to supply the Bulolo gold fields. Margaret joined Joe in New Guinea in 1952 after the birth of their first child. Joe:

I went to New Guinea by plane – 18 pound for my fare and I had forty pound to spend. I went to Lae and stayed at the hotel the first night. It was two miles out of town and I walked out there. I didn't lock my suitcase and I lost nearly all my clothes. They knocked them off. I worked with my uncle Jim Leahy (Mum's brother) for a month. He said, "I can put you on for a month and you have to look after my place". He was going down to buy cattle. I had to find a job. Righto.

I was there for a month and I looked for jobs everywhere, Wau, Lae, Bulolo, the Golden Pines sawmill at Morobe - I couldn't get a job anywhere. To travel from Lae, you had to go on a barge across the Markham River. So, I came back to that place, Labu, across the river from Lae, where the barges were and the women there used to be from Tully. I said, "Look, I'm going home, can I stay with you for the night and I'll catch the plane?" She said, "Yes" and asked me, "You know, why?" I said, "Well, I can't get a job, where I can make money?" She said, "A fella put his resignation in today, driving a barge. Go and tell them you can drive a barge." So, next morning first thing I go over to Works & Housing, you know the people running the barges. It's a government department and I went up to the office and the girl said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want to do jobs on the barges". "Just a minute" she said, she changed straight away. Had an appointment immediately with the boss there who was running the place. "Yes, you've been driving a barge before?". "Yes". "Whereabouts?" "On the Tully River." "What were you doing?" I said. "I was carrying tractors and logs and I've seen an old thing down there stuck in the sand." So righto, he asked me a lot of other questions too, which I answered. He sent me to the doctor with a note and they put me through straight away. He said this is urgent. I came back, gave him the note. "Righto", he said "You can start, go and see the foreman, here's a note". I went and saw the foreman. "Good day yeah, you're the new man, eh? Can you drive a barge?" "No". "Do you drink?". "No". He said, "You'll do me", just like that and by lunch time, I was driving the barges on my own. I did one trip with him. He said, "You learn quick". They had four engines in them, you could put on two semitrailers or three diesel trucks.



Barge at Markham River, Lae, 1953. From Doug Unsworth.



The bridge over the Markham River today.

The river was wide as it was at the estuary. The barge went over the bar to Lae and I was unloading over there and bringing loads them back to this side of the river. I loved it, the most money I ever made in my life I can tell you. They said, "We start working every morning at half past seven". I was down there at half past six. After being at the butcher shop and starting at four am every day, I thought, "This is fantastic." I'd get everything ready and

fuelled up, check the engines, that was good. Then I went fishing for a time but new competition saw an end to that.

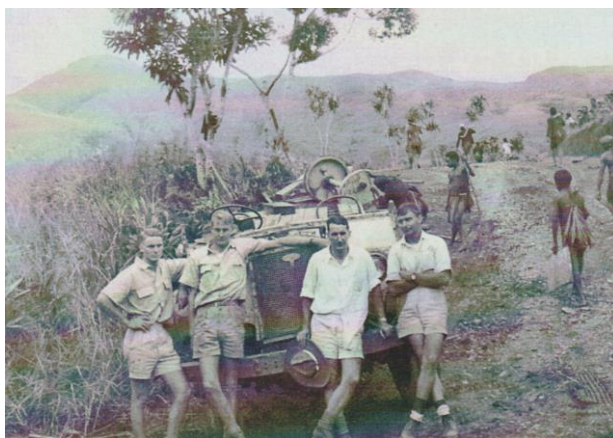
I had to send Margaret back to her mother. Then I had another job as an engineer on a boat, which belonged to a gold company at Bulolo. I did two trips up to the Sepik River as an engineer on the boat and when I came back all they said was, "You can be a driver now". They put me on driving a truck and a dozer or whatever. I was there for two years. When I was there, I needed a house. "Oh" they said, "We can't give you a house". So righto, then there was a bulldozer stuck in the flooded river. They couldn't get anyone to put a rope on it. I said, "Well, put a rope on the other side of the river and hook it onto a truck here. You can make it tight so that I can swing out and get onto the dozer". "All right", they agreed. The first time the open rope was too loose and it went into the water. You could hear the stones rushing down the river, it was flowing very fast. I had to let it go and down I went. I surfaced about 50 yards downstream. They said, "Are you still alright?". "Yeah, I'm alright." "Will you go again?" I said, "Yes, but with a tighter rope". This time, I went out and pulled another rope with me and fastened it to the dozer. They pulled the winch wire out, put the brake on and pulled the dozer out and the manager came along and said, "Well give you a house". So, I got a house!

Then I got Margaret back and lived with her on the company's land, in one of their houses. It had paper walls, but it's warm in New Guinea. It also had a ship's stove. To make the stove work, you had to have a drip of water and a drip of diesel in, coming in. You had to heat it up first and then the heat will start it. You cook in the oven too. I've never seen another one since or before. Margaret loved living there.

Margaret and Joe had seven children. Three were born in Tully, Karin, Barry and Peter, Roderick in Madang, and the other three, Stephan, Malcolm and Sonia, were born in the Highlands of New Guinea at Goroka. Joe:

I am not sure where all the kids were born but Roddy was born in Madang because Margaret was going to go to the hospital in Goroka and the fella there was in the horrors. He had drunk too much and was a pilot from the 1st war, so, they put her on the plane and sent her down to the hospital in Madang. I was never with Margaret when she had a kid. She'd just leave the house, go to hospital, have the kid and come back in a few days.

After two years at Lae, Joe left the gold company and set out to the PNG Highlands to run a sawmill business at Kotuni, near Goroka. In partnership with his brothers, Rod and Johnny, Joe purchased an old run down timber mill from their Uncle Jim Leahy. Joe: *Everything was bugged, the bearings and belts, everything. Uncle Jim did not run the mill himself; he had a manager in the business. Fortunately, Rod and I had expertise from the butchery so we knew how to repair and maintain belts and bearings.* It was a financial struggle initially but paid off long-term and when the timber became scarce at the Kotuni mill, they moved further across the range to Marafunga. They built a timberyard in Goroka to distribute the timber. John left the partnership after two years.



Mike Collins, Fred Leahy, Rod Collins and Joe Collins. New Guinea with sawmill gear.

The Kotuni Mill was built on the slopes of Mt Otto at 7,200 feet above sea level in the steep, narrow valley of Iamahagi Creek. John Collins climbed to the summit (11,613 feet) of Mt Otto twice with others.

Joe:

I left that goldmine job after two years and myself and my brother Rod went sawmilling. We lived in the mountains. It was up high; the first sawmill we purchased from Uncle Jim was located at just over seven thousand feet. The house was only one bedroom there, Margaret and all the kids in that. There was the kitchen and dining room with the four brothers in there. We were there for three or four years. Might have been more, and then we couldn't keep the brothers because we couldn't afford to pay them. At the start, we only took enough money to eat. We were butchers, like we knew nothing about cutting timber, but we learned fast. There were mountains all around us. We had a toilet down the back and for water we had a drain running past the house, that was it. Later on, we put a generator on and had electric light. First couple of years we only had carbide lights. I had them at the slaughter yard at Lower Tully too, that was my light at the slaughter yard.

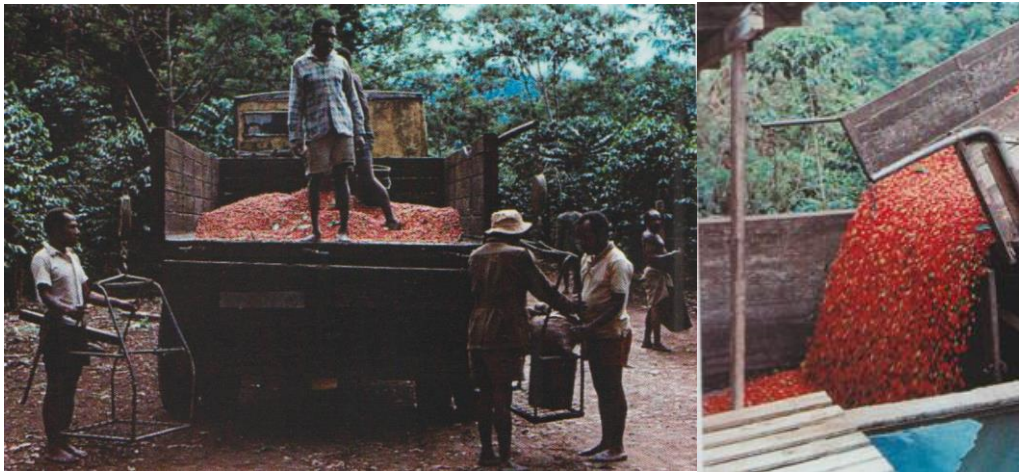
We stayed because we were making money. Then, while we were there, we bought some land – 100 acres. We paid 4000 pounds for it. We had only paid 1000 pounds deposit initially and two business people from Moresby tried take it off us. They were in with the bank manager and the accountant. And we were very lucky because my brother Eddie was coming over with the plane to Moresby then Goroka – not far from Goroka was where we were living – and he heard them talking about what they were going to do. The next morning, I'm going in to see the bank manager and I gave him a charge, then went to see the accountant – I had a few words to him too. Then I went and had lunch, then saw them again. Gave them a bit more. Next morning, was the land court hearing and he was in it too, the fella, oh, the minister in charge of land, he was in it too. He called me over and said, "Mr Collins, your land is all right, it will go through." So, I had put the windup them all. And I knew nothing. I'm just a butcher boy [laugh].

On that land, we grew coffee. We put 100 acres of coffee in there, not 100, probably we put in 90 acres, because there were a couple of hills there we couldn't plant. We got another 100 acres nearby and planted that as well with coffee so probably had 180 acres all up in the end. While we're doing that, we had run out of timber at the first mill and had to build another mill. When we built the road, it was up nearly 8000 feet, that's two and a half thousand meters. The first mill was driven by water. We'd turn the tap on in the morning and it gave us 90 horse power. But we couldn't do that on the second place because we couldn't get the fall, so we had to put a steam engine in. Everything was hard.

For a start with the coffee farm, things were very tough because we'd sell the coffee and were not paid for nearly six months. But we had the saw mill income to back us. We built a coffee factory when we were a bit more financial. We built the second sawmill and had no money again and we had about 150 people there all the time. The coffee brought it up there to 300, because there were the pickers you see. We had to fertilise every month, prune all the time and fertilise. Every day was different. Every day was big!

In the finish it was terrific. The coffee venture was profitable. But before the really big prices came when there was a world shortage of coffee, we had to sell the farm. The government made us sell our coffee plantation to the neighbours. We were getting 40 cents a pound for good quality coffee. But then in Brazil, which controls the world coffee price, they had a big frost, which killed a lot of coffee, and they also had fires in their huge stores. They had enough coffee there for three years and that enabled them to control the coffee price. Coffee prices went up overnight and we'd also formed an organisation to sell coffee overseas. And so, every day we got a telex to tell us what the coffee price was around the world. All of a sudden, it doubled. Doubled and then, the government charged us so many dollars a bag for every bag we exported. And that went into a coffee account in case the coffee farmers had a lot of trouble they could finance them. There was millions in it and the government took it all.

The coffee farm that Rod and Joe purchased from John Gilmore was about 100 acres, 80 of it in coffee. It was located at Numbia (Place of the Swallows) a little south of Goroka. They purchased a second plantation from Cherry Lane and then had more than 160 acres of coffee trees. The plantation still operates today.



Numbia Coffee, PNG 1977.

In New Guinea we did not have much time for anything but work. However, we played polocrosse. I was the captain of our team and played for New Guinea when they played in Australia. It was an all-white team.

Soon after we sold the coffee farm, we finished sawmilling and had a lot of dozers, trucks and loaders and graders, so we hired them out to the government. Then, because my family was growing up, I returned to Australia.

I was crossing the Umi River once and when I got to the bank, there's a fella there, stuck with a Ferguson tractor and a trailer. The water was a deep and fast flowing and you could hear the stones rolling past. We took a rope out and said, "Tie this to your tractor and when I go past, you can hook it on the dozer and I can pull you out". I pulled him out and when we got over the other side, I said, "Who are you?" He said, 'I'm at the Foursquare Mission. You know, I just started praying to God and he answered my prayers and I'm out of the river.'

Another time, we were taking the dozer to Goroka and at the top of the range it was steep and Eddy [Edgar] went to get some corduroy and I drove the tractor onto it [logs/timber]. When it got dark, Eddy didn't come, so I kept on going and at dark, I pulled up near a plantation. I walked to the plantation and asked the owner if I could I stay the night? He said, "Yes, what time do you want to go?" I said, "Before daylight." He said, "I'll have your breakfast ready before daylight." The name of this plantation was 'Costa Rica'. Anyway, Eddy arrived with the truck when I did – just at daylight – we serviced it and got to the first bridge and we had a look at it – didn't look too good – we'd put a crowbar in it. I said, "I think it'll be alright. I'll stand up ready to jump". That's how I hit the bottom, I was still ready to jump and the tractor was still running. It took us a day and a half to dig it out. That's what I mean when I say every day is big.

We had the first tractor in the Highlands. It came up for sale at the government 'Works and Housing' in Lae. I went down there and had a look at it and while I'm looking at it, three fellas came along. They said to me, "Are you interested in this tractor?" I said, "Yes". They said, "We have a good idea about getting it cheap. Are you interested?" I said, "Yes" and they said, "We'll put our names in a hat, whoever pulls his name out, this is the fella who buys the tractor". I said, "Well, if you got more money than me, you buy it and if I got more money than you, I'll buy it." So, I bought the dozer.

We tried everything in New Guinea, we never stopped. Always doing something.

The family had many large business ventures during their stay in New Guinea. An example was their family owned coffee marketing company. That was set up by Ed and Joe. They flew to Sydney to meet their bank manager. At the beginning of the interview, the manager was candid and said he would not be approving a loan but he would give them 30 minutes to change his mind. Undaunted, Joe and Eddie made their pitch. At the end, he said, *You've got it.* Joe started the show being Managing Director for a time before he handed the role to Paddy Leahy. There is no doubt that Joe Collins was the equal of his relations in the business field.

Margaret and the children returned to Australia in 1973 and Joe in 1976.

Margaret lived on their Babinda cane farm until Joe returned and they stayed there a while longer before selling it and moving to South Mission Beach.



Joe and Margaret 1974. From Doug Unsworth.



Children in New Guinea: Sonia, Malcolm, Barry, Peter, Stephan, Karin, and Rod.



Collins and Leahy men in Margarets Goroka loungeroom. Left to Right: Jack Lee, Neil Williams, Johnny and Mike Collins, Dan Leahy, Margaret and Joe with baby and Eddie Leahy with his injured leg resting on the table.

SOUTH MISSION BEACH

Joe and Rod, in partnership, bought Kangerong cattle station near Bluff Downs, 120 km northwest of Charters Towers in 1965. The station was 55,000 acres and held up to 5,000 head of cattle. They improved the property considerably adding bores, drains, dams and fences and owned the station for 22 years before selling it in 1987. The property is on basalt soils with good rivers and was purchased for \$16 million in 2008 and after an extreme drought went into receivership in 2013 and was sold to a Swiss consortium in 2014 for \$10 million.



Kangerong Station.

While in New Guinea, Joe and Rod also purchased a cane farm near Josephine Falls south of Babinda and that was operated by a manager and sold shortly after the brothers arrived back in Australia.

The Collins boys and their families came from New Guinea to Australia for an extended holiday of up to three months every second year, often staying with Molly at Mars Street. Later on, Rod and Jen bought land at South Mission Beach and built a house there and used it as a holiday home. The visits were not all one-way for Molly visited New Guinea at least once on her 70th birthday in 1967. Her brother, Jim Leahy, was at the party and most of her children and their spouses with 14 of her grandchildren all smiling in the birthday photo.

Joe and Margaret purchased the old Mission Beach Surf Club site on the beachfront at South Mission Beach. They lived there for a brief period and then built their new home while staying in Rod and Jen's home nearby. Joe remains there today. They invested in several ventures such as commercial sheds, real estate and an avocado farm. Rod and Joe in partnership had a tennis centre at Everton Hills in Brisbane as well for a number of years.

Joe obtained a commercial fishing licence and spent some years fishing in an aluminium trawler, *Marjo* which he moored in the Hull River. While Joe liked the boat, Margaret and his children dreaded the dangers it posed when he went out in the night. Joe:

When I got back, I built some sheds in Cairns. I sold some of them to my sons and the rents paid them off. I then got a trawler, went prawn fishing. I had to build it first, brought it over from Perth myself. I sold the prawns at the house. I wouldn't sell to others. I sold them all at the house. I brought a big engine down from New Guinea. We had plenty of engines up there. I brought a generator down because sometimes the power goes off. I didn't want to lose all my prawns because I had a big freezer. The big generator was really good. In the end, I could just start it up and we had power on tap. I still had the sheds then and they were making money.

I also still had a 280 acre cane farm on the Hull River. I acquired that land when I was only 19 years old. The government wanted people to develop land and you got it for nothing but had to do the back-breaking work to clear it and develop it. That meant a huge task initially to build a road onto the land – I did that by hand and it was a long track so was difficult then I had some scrub fellas clear it later. My brother, Mike, planted bananas there for a while when he returned from New Guinea.

Joe always had an interest in shooting, especially in clay pigeon shooting competitions at the Atherton Club and he has travelled widely participating in veteran events in NSW and QLD. He was often awarded trophies and medals and in 2024 at Wagga Wagga he won the Australian Clay Target Association's Val and Fred Horton Perpetual Trophy as well as the ACTA Oldest Competitor Medal at age 96.

Margaret was happy visiting family and friends and in 1998 she travelled with her brother Max Menzel to visit cousins in Coswig, Germany. Joe explained that with such a big family most of their leisure time was taken up interacting with relatives rather than friends. Margaret travelled to Townsville, Charters Towers and Mount Garrett often for family and in her volunteering work.

In 1986, Joe had a heart attack and went in for open heart surgery. He has had a similar operation since then as well as a stent operation in 2023 ... hard to kill a Collins! Joe: *At that stage we had to sell our businesses and Rod and I were able to agree on suitable terms without any rancour or baggling whatsoever; after all that time.*



Joe disembarks from *Marjo* in the Hull River.



Margaret and Joe. From Sonia O'Brien.

When asked about the places he was happiest living in his life, Joe was unequivocal:

Well, when my wife was alive, at home. That was the happiest times ever. Now I'm on my own, it's not really good. Not like it used to be.

Yet life goes on and Joe is still shooting clay pigeons ... some days now are not quite so big perhaps.



Left: LTR Back: Rod, Peter, Barry, Karin. Front: Sonia, Malcolm, Stephan Collins, from Sonia Collins. Right: Joshua, Malcolm, Peter and Joe Collins. Three generations compete at the Queensland clay targets state titles. From *Queensland Country Life*, 01 May 2023.

THE LEAHYS

In some family histories, the author tells the stories of those from the paternal side of the family name and leaves much of the maternal branch of the family out. Joe's mother, Molly Collins nee Leahy, and her family are included here. While I do not have details of all these people, some of Molly's family did much in their lives and their stories are accessible in obituaries or books.

In Ireland, apparently the way Leahy is pronounced is Lee-hee while in Australia it is a flay Lay.

Molly Leahy came from a large Irish family with 13 children. Her father, Daniel Joseph Leahy (1857-1937) from Cork, married Elizabeth (Eliza) Eynon (1855-1897) from Wales. They lived in Pembroke, Wales and had four children. Their first child, John, lived in Wales, married Muriel Peters and had 14 children, but much sadness entered the lives of Daniel and Eliza as their other three children died early in life.



John Leahy (front left) with some family. From *Ancestry.com.au*, posted by Sarah Walters, 2022. Dan, Molly, Jim, Mick Leahy. From Doug Unsworth.

Daniel Leahy abandoned Eliza and John and migrated to Australia. His reasons for doing so are unknown, but some say it may have been his IRA membership that forced him to flee. Daniel was a bit of a dandy, a flash dresser with an eye for the ladies and was engaging with his Irish blarney. In 1897, to the surprise of his friends, he married Ellen Stone; another Irish migrant and they had nine children together.

Ellen's family came from Killarney. They were originally English and were sent to mine coal in Ireland by King James and chose to stay. Ellen was Protestant but acceded to a Catholic wedding and was 24 years younger than her groom. She migrated to Australia with her Aunt Wright, whose family were prosperous coal miners in Ipswich. *Ancestry* entries suggest she came with her Wright cousins rather than her aunt. Daniel met Ellen in Roma when she was working for a family there. He was a train guard working for Queensland Railway, so the family had quite humble beginnings, yet many of their children and grandchildren became notable. Daniel was not a drunk but did have a tippie on paydays and tended to spend money on himself, so Ellen was the family stalwart.

Daniel was soon retired from the railway with no pension, so times were hard for the family and Ellen became the breadwinner. She put food on the table by acquiring dairy cows one by one until she owned a herd of ten. She pastured them on vacant or public land and sold the milk. As the children grew up, they helped herd the cows and deliver the milk.

Ellen was not religious, but she honoured her wedding vows and raised her children as Catholics, but she took no lip from the priests at their schools.

Molly Leahy was the second of Ellen's children. Ellen had a share-farm eking out an existence for two years at Miles then left the Darling Downs for Bilyana near Tully. Molly came to Tully to work for the Babet family minding their children and met Alwynne Collins there and in time they married.

The Leahy family returned to Toowoomba a few years later after four of their sons, Paddy, Mick, Jim and Dan went to New Guinea, chasing gold. Only one son, Tom, returned to Toowoomba with the family.

MOLLY'S SIBLINGS

Ellen Mary (Eileen) Leahy 1895 – 1965

When Eileen was married and living on a 500-hectare farm at Injune north of Roma, she and her husband had her mother, Ellen, and siblings live with them for a short while before Ellen moved to a dairy farm at Miles. Joe does not recall his Auntie Eileen clearly yet does remember a time when he stayed with them in Brisbane. Eileen's husband, Bob Fraser, worked in an asylum in Brisbane at the time and they had a family of three sons and two daughters. Joe said Auntie Eileen was lovely and remembered an argument between her son, Bobby, and her brother, Tom, when Bobby called Tom a 'bloody communist' as things became heated, as they often did with Tom.

Bobby and his brother, Brian went to New Guinea just before the Pacific War. Bobby served in the army. Brian joined the RAAF and was lost in battle over Germany in his first flight. Their brother, Ian, went to New Guinea after the war and had a mixed farm in the Wau valley including cattle and coffee. Ian and his wife, Janet, left New Guinea and settled in the NSW Northern Rivers on a small farm and grew cabinet timbers and bush tucker. Ian died and Janet lives on the property today and is an accomplished potter.

Patrick Joseph Thomas Leahy (Paddy) 1899 - 1963

Joe remembers a little of Uncle Paddy:

Uncle Paddy was a wild man, a huge man too. He was a trained fitter. I came to know him quite well when I stayed with Grandma Leahy in Sydney and liked him. Uncle Paddy often took me swimming in the sea there. He was a big drinker and I did not drink. I remember putting him on a plane when he went back to New Guinea after the war. He owned a small coffee plantation at Wau. I am unsure what size it was, but my cousin, Paddy Leahy, will know.

He was a great gardener and grew potatoes in Wau. I was told once that someone in a pub in New Guinea made the mistake of referring to him as a 'bastard' and his calm response was, 'You've insulted my mother. I've gotta do ya!' He was really tough.

Joe's cousin, Paddy Leahy, said the coffee farm was 40-50 acres and was one of the first coffee plantations setup in the Wau area and that Paddy also grew vegetables on the land. Later on, he expanded the farm.

When Paddy was young, he was known for his football ability but his sporting career ended when he was badly injured. He was the only one of the Leahy boys who drunk heavily but made up for the rest of the family with his life-long episodes of binge drinking. His brother, Dan, liked whisky later in life but was no heavy drinker. Mick was very much against Paddy's drinking.

When Paddy first came to New Guinea, he joined a construction and transport business with Jim and Mick. Later, they supported their brothers, Mick and Dan, who went gold prospecting. In 1931, when on a prospecting expedition with Mick Leahy and Michael Dwyer in the Upper Watut River, Mick and Paddy sustained life-threatening injuries when attacked by a party of Highlanders. Paddy, after his near death experience recovered from the arrow wounds, but then hit the bottle with mates for several weeks. The binge was ended spectacularly, when Mick walked in on a drunken orgy and found a new case of whisky. In a rage, he opened it and held each bottle up close to the faces of the incredulous drunken audience and smashed each bottle with a hammer.

Paddy left New Guinea for several years and returned to Australia. In 1936, Paddy left the contracting business to Jim and started a small dairy and mixed farm in Wau. It was the first dairy farm in the valley. Paddy, like his brother Jim, was not a keen miner, but loved his farm. He was described as a huge, powerful man with a solitary nature and was the only one of the Leahy brothers in New Guinea who was a heavy drinker. His brother, Mick, was a teetotaler.

The four Leahy boys all returned to New Guinea after the Pacific War, but Paddy spent a few years travelling overseas first. His Wau farm was destroyed in the war and took much effort to restore.

Paddy planted coffee in late 1953, soon after Jim and Dan. He was soon regarded as an excellent farmer and drained his shallow soil well and did all the right things to succeed. However, his land was of poor quality and when he died, others failed and the plantation died out.

Late in life, Paddy realised that he was killing himself with his heavy drinking and went to AA. It was too late and he started drinking again near the end of his life as he went around farewelling people he knew. He knew if he drank it would kill him, but after a pub visit, he went home and drank again ... and died.

Michael James Leahy M.B.E, (Mick) 1901 - 1979

Mick started work as a railway clerk and worked for Queensland Rail for eight years. He moved with them to Cairns for a while then resigned and worked in partnership with his brother, Tom, cutting cane and supplying the mills with firewood in the off season. He then went freelance timber cutting. For a while he took on a rundown banana farm near Bilyana, but the life was unappealing. He left that instantly in 1926 to work in the goldfields in New Guinea after hearing of a gold rush at Edie Creek. Family legends tell that he left his Model T Ford at the wharf gates in his rush to catch the boat leaving Townsville.

Mick met many other optimistic, yet under-resourced gold prospectors on the boat to New Guinea. When they arrived in New Guinea ready to go prospecting, they were barred from doing so unless they paid a large bond and they did not have enough money. However, by a sleight of hand, using the same money as collateral several times, they managed to gain entry.

His first exploration venture ended in misery when he contracted malaria and was incapacitated, but he endured the debilitating fevers and managed to win a ballot for a lease. He had to relinquish that as he lacked the capital and resources to effectively work it. Mick had an enduring vision: to make it big in gold and set himself up for life doing what he most wanted to do. This was always the driver and he was relentless in pursuit of that dream.

On return from his first gold run, he met a highly experienced prospector, a legendary German named Baum, camping by a stream. He stayed with Baum and the two quickly bonded. Baum invited Mick to join him on his claim. That partnership continued for two years and Mick learned all there was to know of gold and how to

live safely in New Guinea. In 1929, his brothers, Paddy and Jim, joined him in New Guinea when he was a solo prospector.

His initial forays in gold prospecting had been unsuccessful, so he retreated to construction and labour management work in partnership with his brothers. Paddy was a good bridge builder, so was a handy team member. They were building a 11 km road from Wau to Bulolo in 1930 and had 200 men employed there. Mick and Paddy intermittently went prospecting and eventually found some workable gold at Kuta. Much later, Mick operated the Kuta mine with Dan for a few years but had no faith in the mine and sold his share to Dan and did not return to live in the Highlands.

In April 1930, Mick and his friend, Michael Dwyer were hired by the Miners' Association of Wau to prospect the Ramu River tributaries. Jim and Paddy Leahy stayed at the base camp. The young prospectors had a map given to Mick by Baum and they took a blue heeler and a bull terrier that they used to good effect to stay safe. They initially met no one and were unaware that they were ever watched. They reached the confluence of the Dunantina and Asaro Rivers and saw a wide valley. To prevent attacks, they soon adopted processes that they stuck to rigidly, such as running a cotton fishing line 'barrier' a good distance from the tent around their camp and ensuring that no equipment was left near the boundary. Transgressors who breached the boundary were 'thrashed' to prevent conflict breaking out.

As Highlanders neared them there was a high level of fear and intrigue on both sides. It was tense. Mick kept a diary, and while it records traces of gold in the creeks, no significant finds were made. After two months in the Highlands, their boots were worn out and the food was running low. They were hopelessly lost. Fortunately, their carriers saved them from starvation by finding sago trees and cooking the sago. They left 'trades' for the food taken. They met many friendly tribes people but were unable to communicate. Eventually, they reached farms and found they had crossed illegally into Papua much to the consternation of the local authorities. They were on the lower reaches of the Purari River and caught a coastal vessel back to Wau.

In April 1931, Mick and Paddy went on their ill-fated expedition to the Watut River where they were severely injured – that is described in Paddy's story above.

1933 was to be the pinnacle year for Mick's gold prospecting expeditions. This expedition to the Upper Purari was arranged by Mick after approaching the New Guinea Goldfields Company. They agreed to help the expedition and Mick was to be paid £10,000 for every site he discovered that was suitable to locate a gold dredge. He would also receive a royalty for the gold produced thereafter. Paddy was in Australia and Mick summoned young Dan to come along as his assistant. Jim Taylor, an ex-policeman who was an assistant district commissioner came along as the leader of the government's party on the expedition. Jim was on the same ship as Mick when he travelled to New Guinea in 1926, but they did not meet on that journey.

Dan was earning good money in a steady job at the sawmill at the time and was reluctant to leave it since it was in the Depression years, yet how could he refuse Mick and the prospects of such high adventure? He was 20 years old and soon regretted his decision when he and Mick walked in the scorching heat through head high grass for hours a day. Mick had an iron will and was incredibly fit and unrelenting. After six hard years in New Guinea, he was an experienced bushman prospector and was obsessed with finding gold. They rose at 2 am each day and walked until 9.30 am then sheltered in shade until 3 pm then walked again until it was dark.

In their packs they had food, pearl-shells and salt as trades, firearms and explosives and now Mick had a Leica camera and films and chemicals to develop photos on the way. They were flown in, late in 1932 and headed off for the Bena Bena Valley. There were some attacks and shots fired. They camped on a spur overlooking the Bena Bena River and cleared an airstrip.

Mick was a skilled leader and treated the Highlanders and his carriers respectfully and presented orders as if they were requests rather than demands. He even apologised to his carriers if he was wrong, which was unusual. He maintained strict discipline and even had a thick rubber strap to deliver corporal punishment in extreme cases. That was illegal. Mick and Dan developed a life-long bond with Jim Taylor on the expedition.

They lost a knife and needed to retrieve it to discourage further transgressions, so took an orphaned Highland boy hostage. The boy, Jokari or 'Joe Curry' was valuable as he spoke the Highland languages and was an interpreter. They kidnapped two more boys later and they also became interpreters and worked with the party. This was a huge party with 80 personnel and they were supplied intermittently by air. In March 1933, Mick and Dan with Jim Taylor flew over the Wahgi Valley that they had chanced upon. Further reconnaissance flights occurred later in the month and they were awe-struck by the sight of the huge fertile valley, covered in small farms or gardens rather than villages.

There were more attacks in April and Jim Taylor had to kill some Highlanders with his 303 rifle to quell the riot. The expedition continued with small sub-expeditions, but they were unsuccessful in terms of gold discoveries. Nonetheless, the discovery of so many Highland people and such fine agricultural land was incredibly newsworthy and Mick wrote an article for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. They found some gold deposits at Kuta near Mount Hagen, but Jim Taylor was told to evacuate that area and the gold company abandoned their expeditions.

Mick and Jim registered a claim at Kuta and prepared to holiday in Australia. In Brisbane they are met by brother Tom in his new Packard car. Tom was now a prosperous road transporter. Dan remained in Toowoomba with the family while the other men went to Sydney then Melbourne. Mick was still seeking sponsors for further expeditions.

On return to New Guinea, they joined up with Jokari who had stayed with Jim. They were mining gold at Kuta, but Mick was more pessimistic now with violence breaking out in the Highlands and with the mediocre success at the mine. Years after their expeditions, gold was found at Porgera, but it was located at large depths. Today that is mined by Canadian firm Barrick Gold and is the second largest gold mine in the world outside of South Africa. Dan and Mick went on some smaller expeditions prospecting for gold without success and Dan caught malaria and had to be stretchered out.

Mick and Jim holidayed in England, Ireland and USA in 1935 and Dan took over the Kuta mine. Initially, Dan had difficulty controlling his workers who were becoming disrespectful. It worsened when a native girl offered to sleep with him and, being inexperienced, he fumbled. Word spread quickly and he was ridiculed. Mutiny was near. Dan summoned the perpetrators to the house, locked them in and flogged them mercilessly – that ended those problems.

Mick and Jim created controversy in England over their actions on their New Guinea expeditions. Mick approached the Royal Geographic Society seeking recognition for his discoveries in the Highlands. He had spoken openly of 31 natives being killed in the expeditions. After Mick presented his story to the Society, they were impressed and awarded Mick the Murchison Grant, but an anti-slavery and indigenous protection group complained to the League of Nations who took their cause up with governments. Their complaint ended up on the desk of a district officer in New Guinea: Jim Taylor. Jim investigated it and wrote a report exonerating Mick (and himself perhaps). The League dismissed the defence, so Mick documented his exploits and with the help of an American author, Maurice Crain, published his story in New York and London, *The Land that Time Forgot*.

While at Goroka, Mick and Dan, with a team of New Guinea workers, hand made an airstrip in the Bena Bena Valley and that was upgraded during WWII and became the Goroka airport. The government offered the Leahys £10,000 for every gold dredge installed in the Goroka area but their search for gold there proved fruitless and they moved to Mount Hagen.

Mick Leahy studied photography and journalism by correspondence and his images and video footage were used in an award-winning film documentary in 1983, *First Contact*.

During WWII, all four Leahy brothers in New Guinea served, Jim, Dan and Paddy in the Australia and New Guinea Administrative Unit and Mick in the RAAF, working mainly with the Americans as a guide and consultant. Mick undertook an assignment for the U. S. Chief Engineer as a Royal Australian Air Force flight lieutenant. He built an airstrip in a remote location and was awarded the U. S. Medal of Freedom with a bronze palm in 1948.



Left: United States Medal of Freedom with bronze palm (Mick Leahy). Middle: MBE (Mick Leahy). Right: OBE (Dan Leahy).

Mick Leahy, at first glance, seems a somewhat anachronistic man who lived as if he were an earlier colonial man in some ways and seemed to seek self-recognition. However, Mick was highly successful in all walks of life and achieved much fame, fortune and respect. It is notable that those who knew him best universally revered him. When the Collins and Leah family were interviewed in 2024, they were unanimous in their praise and respect for Mick Leahy. He was *The Man* in their eyes. He deserved all the recognition he received, and more.

In 1952, he was awarded an M.B.E., and initially declined it, insisting that he was worthy of an O.B.E. Although well read, Mick was a supporter of racial segregation at a time when few were and he followed George Wallace, the pro-segregation candidate for U. S. President when Richard Nixon was elected. Yet Mick had friends who thought quite differently: Margaret Dovey (future wife of Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam) was a close friend of his wife and a bridesmaid at his wedding.

After Mick and Dan went to Europe and there was much publicity about their New Guinea explorations, some in the media were critical of Mick, seeing his interactions with Indigenous people as harsh. Peter Munster, in his PhD thesis at Deakin University, studied Goroka history in fine detail and spoke often of the Leahys and Mick. Regarding the hostility that Mick was confronted with in his explorations, Peter put the picture in perspective and found him to be a humane man:⁸

Given that the gold prospectors were encouraged by the Administration to search for gold in the Uncontrolled Areas, and that conflict between intruders and inhabitants was virtually inevitable because of the warlike nature of the Highland people, it is unfair to judge men like Mick Leahy too harshly. From the prospector's viewpoint they were engaged in lawful business and had a right to protect their lives when ambushed or otherwise attacked by hostile villagers. Mick Leahy was a strong-willed, tough individual and his sense of outrage on discovering the

⁸ Peter Munster, *A history of contact and change in the Goroka valley, central highlands of New Guinea, 1934-1949*. PhD Thesis, Deakin University, May 1986. Accessed December 2023 at: https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb7373309w/_1.pdf

murder of a fellow prospector disqualified him as an impartial actor in the Finintegu drama. But there was a very warm, humane side to his nature, his relations with New Guineans were on a far better man-to-man basis than were those of most of his European contemporaries, and his epic gold prospecting journeys mark him as a major figure in the early contact history of the Highlands.

After his prospecting-exploration days and his overseas trip, Mick went mining gold again for a while. He was then granted a lease over 640 acres of land at Zenag, high above the Markham Valley. He cleared the land of kunai grass and planted pastures then imported cattle from Queensland and NSW. He sought advice from the Department of Agriculture and his cattle became tick infested. He felt that was the result of their advice and litigation ensued for many years and he won damages, but that decision was overturned on appeal in 1961.



Zenag Chicken logo and farm.

At this time, Mick started a transport business using war surplus trucks. Several of his Collins and Leahy nephews spent time working for him. Mick and his brothers were hard men, and not always easy to work for, so at times arguments broke out and the nephews went their own way.

In 1940, at almost 40 years of age, Mick met and married the vivacious and outgoing Jeanette Gwendolin Best, a 19-year-old North Queensland girl, living in Sydney. They had a wonderful life together with five children, Richard, Tim, Chris, Phillip and Megan. Mick had three children earlier by New Guinean girls and would not acknowledge those three sons, Joe, Clem and John. They were raised initially by their mothers in their villages and later by his brother Dan. Joe was universally known as 'Humbug' in the early years until he was renamed by Dan and the three boys were named Leahy. Humbug was initially reared by Highlanders until Dan sent him to school. Two of Mick's half caste sons came to his funeral and wept.

Some may be critical of this aspect of Mick's life applying today's values, yet those who knew him well said he had little choice given his social standing and the conservative attitudes of society to such matters. His good friend, Jim Taylor, on the other hand had a similar standing in the community and married his New Guinean girlfriend and introduced her as Mrs Taylor to all people, so there were alternatives perhaps.

The partnership that Jim and Mick had for years was dissolved shortly after Mick was married. Jim had been the numbers man of the business and resented Jeanette's involvement. It was an acrimonious split and they became friends again later, yet it was never quite the same. At that time, Dan approached Mick about problems arising from the split and that conversation turned nasty when Dan criticised Jeanette. Mick punched Dan and knocked him out and some say that was the main cause of Dan's eyesight and hearing problems for the remainder of his life. The official line is that it was caused by war damage, but we will never know, perhaps both events contributed. After being so close, Dan and Mick did not speak again until they met during the war.

Mick and Jeanette Leahy stayed on and prospered after Papua New Guinea was granted independence, working their farms at Zenag and Wau. The farm at Zenag ultimately included cattle, dairy and poultry and Mick and Jeanette's grandson, Stan Leahy, manages that operation today. The Zenag businesses struggled in the early days and Jeanette worked assiduously as a bookkeeper and administrator to make them viable. Paddy Leahy (junior) explained that the Zenag farm was turned into the thriving enterprise it is today by Stan's father, Phillip (Phil) Leahy. Phil graduated as a vet at university and chose to pursue a farming career rather than focus solely on his veterinary work. Phil expanded the farm into poultry and transformed the operation.

Today, they employ 1,200 local workers and produce 85% of PNG's eggs plus a large share of the nation's chicken making it a highly successful enterprise. Mick did not become involved in coffee farming. He applied for suitable coffee growing land but was denied it.

Mount Michael in the PNG Highlands was named for Michael Leahy. While it is not quite in the top ten peaks for PNG, it rises to 3,647 metres. For perspective, that is more than double the height of Queensland's highest hill (Bartle Frere) and just short of the height of Aoraki (Mt Cook) in New Zealand.

Mick Leahy is remembered by many as an amazing explorer. However, this was merely a means to an important end. Mick always saw himself in the early New Guinea days as a gold prospector.

In 1979, Mick had a stroke and was handicapped for some time before he died that year. Mick was buried at Zenag.

Tom Leahy (Tom senior) 1902 - 1967

Tom, or Tom senior as he was known at times, married Jean Liebke and they had nine children. In his youth, he worked in the cane fields in north Queensland and during the off-season he cut cordwood for the mills. He was the only one among the Leahy brothers who did not go to work in New Guinea. Tom was the first haulage contractor between Brisbane and Toowoomba before becoming one of the largest wheat growers on the Darling Downs. To his chagrin, five of his six sons, Tom, Dan, James (Fred), John and Paddy, joined their uncles and cousins to live in New Guinea.

Some regarded Tom as a difficult man to work for, yet that was not uncommon for men in his day. When he was young, Joe Collins worked for him for three weeks clearing land on a dozer and found him to be tough. Joe's memories of Tom from those early days were greatly influenced by an event where he was told by his uncle to take Jean and the children away after a terrible row between his Aunty Jean and Uncle Tom.

Kathleen Mary Leahy 1907 – 1977

Joe has little recollection of his Aunty Kathleen who lived in Brisbane and only met her once when he was young. Kathleen married Bob McCorry and they had 11 children: eight girls and three boys. Their son, Bob McCorry, was in New Guinea for some time and was involved in coffee before managing two huge cattle stations in the Kimberleys in Western Australia. Kimberley Downs and the neighbouring station, Napier Downs covered more than two million acres of land and they had 20,000 head of cattle in 1976. The farms were owned by The Australian Land and Cattle Company and were managed by Bob and his wife Sheryl. Tragically, they lost their five-year-old son and that caused much heartache and difficulty, but Sheryl went on to write three books about her life and the challenges faced in the outback.

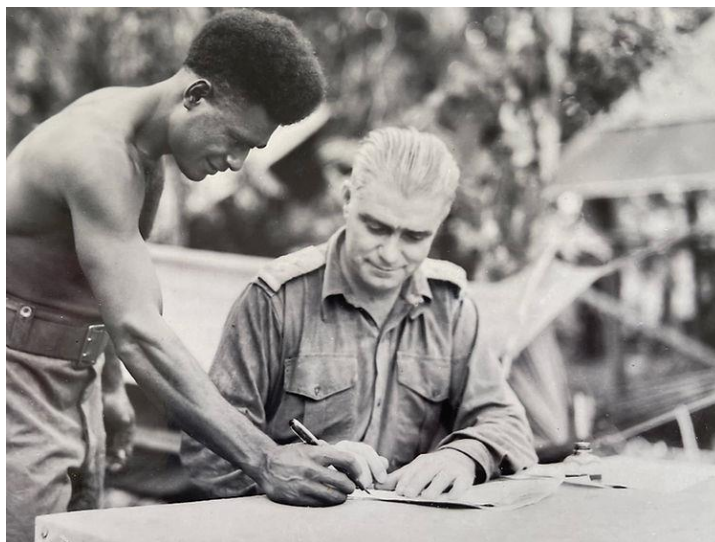
Paddy Leahy said that their other two sons, Jimmy and Graham, were also huge personalities who achieved much success when living in the Northern Territory. Paddy added that there are far more stories to tell of the Leahy clan than can be told in this small volume.

James Luby Leahy (Jim, Lube) 1909 – 1981

Jim Leahy followed his brothers, Mick and Paddy to New Guinea. In the 1930s, Mick and Dan spent most of their time gold prospecting. To maintain them in the field, they started a contracting business with Jim in transport and construction. Jim spent a few weeks prospecting with Mick and Dan but was averse to mountain climbing so he stayed with the contracting.

A Bena Bena Valley boy, Isagua, went to Lae to live with Jim and learn of the white man's world in 1933. That was a common practice at the time with teenage New Guinea boys joining white settlers and becoming translators and leaders later.

In 1936, Jim joined his older brother Mick on a trip to England, Ireland and America. They met with the Royal Geographic Society to explain their role in exploring the New Guinea Highlands. They were warmly welcomed in Ireland with their wild stories of Highland New Guinea and met their mother's family in County Kilkenny.



Jim Leahy New Guinea.⁹

During the war, Jim was a Captain in the Army with the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit working as farm manager for the agricultural research unit at Aiyura. He was asked by the US Army hierarchy to grow cinchona trees for the bark, which was a source of quinine, used at the time to treat malaria. Jim planted 100 acres of trees for them and was provided with two experienced Dutch farmers to assist with the enterprise. These farmers immediately saw the potential for coffee growing in the New Guinea Highlands. Aiyura station later became an important training ground for many New Guinea nationals to learn about coffee farming.

Jim returned to Australia for a short period after the Pacific War then came back to New Guinea in May 1946. He recruited labourers and went mining for a while at Kuta while Dan was in America seeking medical help for his war afflictions. When he handed the mine back to Dan, he was happy to do so, saying:¹⁰

I was mad about agriculture ... All during the war you're dreaming about what you want to do after and I'd come to the conclusion that I didn't want to be a gold miner any more... Life was too up and down and uncertain ... I

⁹ Chesterfield Coffee, About Us, accessed December 2023 at: <https://www.chestersoncoffee.com.au/about-us>

¹⁰ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P. 70.

wanted to settle down after the miseries of war. I didn't want to be a millionaire then, I just wanted to lead a peaceful existence and rear a family.

Jim was enticed back to gold prospecting for a short time by Mick when there was a gold rush announced at Porgera in 1948, but that venture failed. Oddly enough, gold in commercial quantities was mined there in the 1980s. Later in 1948, Jim set up the first commercial coffee plantation in New Guinea – the Erinvale Coffee Estate, near Goroka.¹¹ His nephew, Paddy Leahy, remembers the farm well as he joined Jim and worked with his venture in February 1957 when he was only 17 years old. The plantation was originally around 50 acres but was expanded considerable in time. Jim imported the coffee plants from Africa as well as sourcing them from Aiyura. James Sinclair observed, *While the experts in the New Guinea administration talked about the potential for coffee in the Highlands, Jim Leahy acted.*

He was eager to learn more on the optimum ways to grow coffee and he, with others, invited coffee cultivation expert, Professor Y. Baron Goto, of the University of Hawaii to assist himself and other Highland growers. Baron Goto visited the Highlands in 1956 and again in 1959 and held many coffee forums for interested growers. This had a great impact on stimulating the industry in PNG and improving its efficiency.

Paddy and Rosemary Leahy, on their honeymoon in 1971 in Hawaii, met again with Baron Goto and said he was a delightful man and was wonderful to the people of the NG Highlands.

Many followed Baron Goto's advice to the letter and many chose to ignore it and continue with their old ways. Among the Leahy and Collins family, Joe and Rod Collins as well as Paddy Leahy were early adopters who received much credit for practically demonstrating and advocating Goto's methods. Johnny Collins was also influential and made great gains. Paddy Leahy made huge productivity gains by changing his pruning methods, taking the shade trees down and using fertilisers, like urea. Paddy made further improvements to the pruning technique and found that pruning the coffee to create multiple stems instead of one stem, as was the practice before Goto came, had a remarkable effect on yield. With the shade, the coffee trees became a tangled mess and were difficult to pick, but skilled pruning opened up the centres and made picking easier as well. Dan Leahy was the first to adopt fertilisers and the whole family eagerly adopted Goto's advice. However, it was bizarre that the family member who had sponsored Baron Goto's visits, Jim Leahy, chose not to use his methods. It was at Erinvale, that the largest field demonstrations occurred during Goto's tours, yet Jim did not change.

Jim opened the first commercial store in June 1948 at Goroka, near the airport. He imported his first load of supplies on a DC3 and they sold out in four days. He established a second trade store later. The stores were a big success with the locals having cash to spare after they were paid back wages from the war and received payments for land leases. Jim was the first President of the Highland Farmers and Settlers Association (HSFA), a political association which was instrumental in shaping the coffee industry of New Guinea. In 1973, PNG's first Prime Minister was highly critical of HSFA, yet it had probably served its growers faithfully.

Paddy Leahy recalled that Jim's leases included a small lot in Goroka. It was set aside for the first bank to come to the Highlands, the Bank of NSW. Paddy remembers his Uncle Jim taking him into the bank not long after Paddy arrived in Goroka and saying, *This is your bank!* And Paddy remained with Westpac for life.

Jim had a timber mill at Kotuni, in partnership with Doug Elphinstone. The mill churned out 30,000 super feet of sawn timber in 1951. He sold the mill in a rundown state to his Collins nephews, Joe, Rod and John. He started importing livestock such as Aberdeen Angus cattle, Romney sheep, Berkshire pigs and poultry from

¹¹ Reuben Wanobo Sengere, PhD Thesis, *The rise, fall and revival of the Papua New Guinea Coffee Industry*, Curtin University, November 2016. Accessed December 2023 at: <https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/54142/Sengere%20R%20202016.pdf>

Australia and his nephew, Bob McCorry, worked with him on that venture for some time. Bob also helped Jim plant the coffee at Erinvale but did not like New Guinea much and returned to Australia in 1950.

At age 30, Jim married Joan White at Watut in New Guinea. They had one daughter, Jon, but sadly, the marriage ended only ten years later in 1949 when Joan left with Jon who was educated at Frensham Girls School in Mittagong, NSW. Paddy Leahy remembers Jon because she often stayed in New Guinea with her father and had great adventures there with her school friends.

In James Sinclair's *The Money Tree*, Paddy spoke of his Uncle Jim:¹²

Uncle Jim was difficult to work for. He was a very complex personality... he really led a very lonely life... I remember the first time his daughter, Jon, came home from Frensham, he idolised her and she sat in his lap for the first two hours. I was amazed at that, because my father had never treated any of his nine children like that. I sort of grew up with Jon, we were very close ... They were difficult times but I look back on those years now and the experience and knowledge I gained were absolutely invaluable to me when I went off and did my own thing. Uncle Jim was one of those Irishmen who held family values together, you had to be fair dinkum, you had to work hard, you had to do as you were told, listen to your elders, and that's exactly what I did.

Paddy understood that his Uncle Jim was tough and unbending yet always said, *He virtually treated me like the son he never had.* Jim did not remarry but retained his relationship with his daughter who married David Wilson, a doctor living in Sydney. When Jim Leahy purchased a nearby block of land to extend his coffee plantation, he named it Jon's Block.

Jim Leahy played another important pioneering role for New Guinea in 1949. The Central Highlands had vast unrealized labour potential and the nation was desperate for labour to drive its agriculture industry, especially its copra and cocoa plantations. The Highlanders wanted to participate, but the risk was high and people feared that opening up the Highlands would spread malaria and TB. New Guinea Goldfields were granted permission to employ 210 men from the Bena District but could only do so under stringent conditions. Jim came to the rescue and obtained a recruiting licence and setup the required safeguards to prevent the spread of disease. For some time, he was the only person able to recruit Highland labour. His processes were robust and the experiment succeeded and enabled Highlanders to participate in the wider economy.

Jim's first coffee crop at Erinvale Estate matured in 1952 and he gained excellent prices. His laconic diary entry said: *Got word coffee sold, top price 7/ 3d lb.* This first shipment was 1,420lb and fetched a net price of 6.83 shillings a lb. That was £485 in all or just over \$20,000 in today's money. The whole crop in 1953 was worth more than \$240,000 in 2023 currency. Jim estimated that it cost up to £100 per acre to develop a coffee plantation and the first crop in four years' time should yield up to £350 per acre.

This success led to headlines in newspapers speaking of *Green Gold*. The publicity encouraged many other Australians to start New Guinea plantations. It was akin to a gold rush and Jim's success led to 76 European-owned coffee plantations being started by 1956 with a little over 2,000 acres planted. By 1975, when independence was declared, 100 expatriate farmers had plantations. Few stayed on after that.

By 1953, Jim had 150 acres planted and had built a 2-storey home of red cedar from his timber mill. He had 86 head of cattle, 150 sheep, 40 pigs and hundreds of chooks. There were 28 workers on Erinvale. At his peak, Jim was a coffee farmer, he ran a state-of-the-art coffee processing factory, was the leader of successful coffee trading enterprises, owned fuel and aviation agencies, recruited labour, and for some time had a sawmill and

¹² James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P. 186.

livestock trading company. He created a private reforestation scheme with more than 2,000 native and Australian trees being planted and had a hydroelectric powerplant.

His influence in the coffee industry was wide reaching. New growers flooded into New Guinea and most had no experience whatsoever of coffee farming, or any farming in most cases. Many had enough funds to buy the land, but little more. Several of the new growers worked for Jim or Dan Leahy before they acquired their own farms, so the Leahys and, later, the Collins provided training and encouragement to new owners. Growers who leaned on Jim and Dan for help were Sno Blackey, Doug Elphinstone, John Watts, as well as future large plantation owners, Darrel and Will Manton and Dick Hagon. Will Manton and Dick Hagon also learnt much from Johnny Collins. Hagon worked in Dan's trade stores initially then built his coffee processing factory. He became one of the largest and most productive growers in the nation, eventually having 1,100 acres in coffee at Gumanch. Will Manton, later in life was a developer in north Queensland and started the Tam O'Shanter Resort at South Mission Beach as well as Aquarius Apartments in Cairns. His father sold his successful retail chain in Melbourne and became the first large-scale tea grower in New Guinea.

Another coffee grower who strung together many plantations to form a huge, efficient plantation was Neil Latimer and he said that it was Jim Leahy who was instrumental in him going to New Guinea. Jim was a director of Bena Coffee Lands at the time and Neil felt that he always had an interest in encouraging young people and encouraged and supported himself when he was looking to expand.

Marketing of coffee was always a challenge and Jim played a role there as well and was part of a four-man delegation sent to meet the Australian Territories Minister, Paul Hasluck. That led to several conferences to find better marketing arrangements for New Guinea coffee growers. At a conference in Goroka in 1959, the delegates visited Jim Leahy's operations and it was reported in the news that his, *fully mechanised factory must be the most elaborate this side of Brazil*.

In 1959, Jim went on an extended overseas trip with friends, visiting countries to determine best practices in coffee. They visited Kenya, Costa Rica, Columbia and several other countries. Jim recruited an outstanding coffee operator in Kenya, Harry Lewis, to manage Goroka Coffee Producers. Jim had the whole family involved in the ownership of his Highland Produce Buyers company (Hi-Bi) and they built a factory at Kundiawa. The manager was Mike Collins who was a capable leader who eliminated corruption, a big challenge at the time.

By 1964, Hi-Bi, Highlands Produce Buyers, was all but a monopoly in the Chimbu and tribal leaders wanted to buy it and form a cooperative. Jim was Managing Director and supported the sale, but Fred Leahy was opposed. Jim prevailed and sold the company for £35,000. Fred went his own way. Mike Collins agreed to stay on.

The family formed Asaro Coffee Estates by merging most of their coffee plantations. It had shareholders from all the family except Fred Leahy with Collins & Leahy also holding a large stake in it (56%). They included 5,000 New Guinea nationals as shareholders. Paddy Leahy was the Managing Director of Asaro when they paid 1000% dividends for three years from 1976 to 1979. It was highly profitable for the nine years it operated between 1972 and 1981. They started their own coffee export company as well, New Guinea Coffee Brokers in 1982 after they fell out with ANGCO, the main coffee marketing organisation.

The decision to involve nationals as shareholders was not altruistic yet was a smart strategy in light of the politics of the era. Furthermore, it benefited those Highlander shareholders greatly and encouraged their future participation in the industry.

Jim Leahy maintained a diary for most of his life and it was left with his daughter, Jon, and cousin Danny and they made it available for James Sinclair when he wrote *The Money Tree*. The entries were brief, Jim was a man of few words.

Paddy Leahy junior knew his Uncle Jim better than most and said:¹³

We all had rows with him, but he tried to keep us all in line. Many, many a weekend we sat around the little coffee table in Erinvale and reorganised the world, let alone New Guinea, and it was at one of those meetings that we decided we had to get into politics, and that was virtually the foundation of the United Party.

James Sinclair added: *The only one of the Leahys who actually stood for election and won office was Tom Leahy, but Jim Leahy was a powerful force in the background when Compass Party (later United Party) was formed.*

Jim Leahy had started something big. His nephews continued the journey and advanced the industry in many positive ways. Jim sold all but one hectare of his Erinvale Estate and remained in the house and died in Sydney in 1981.

Daniel Joseph Leahy O.B.E., (Kundi Dan, Hagen Dan, Korgua Dan) 1912 - 1991

Paddy Leahy on family names:

It was quite confusing for people outside of the immediate family with many Leahy family members having the same given name. For that reason, many of us had nicknames. Jim Leahy, for example was usually referred to as Uncle Jim by me and my siblings but we also called him Lube [pronounced Loob] after his second name Luby. My father was known as Tom senior mostly rather than Old Tom and my brother, Tom, was sometimes known as Markham Tom. There were several generations named Daniel and my Uncle Dan had many other names like Old Dan or Hagen Dan because his father was also Daniel and he named a son Daniel.

When Dan went to school he was forever behind in his studies and in trouble for being late. That was because he did so much to help his mother with her dairy cows. In a class of 72 pupils, he started out at the bottom but worked hard to reach 14th place before he suffered from appendicitis and left for an operation. He never returned yet was left with an enduring belief in the value of education and when he had children, he insisted on them being properly schooled and qualified in a trade as a life backup.

Jobs were scarce at the time but he found work on a farm at Dalby and learned all the trades and skills on several farms. Soon after Mick landed in New Guinea, Patrick and Jim joined him and Danny was eager to join them but Molly was against it and felt it was unsafe for him to go there. Dan went to work on a farm in Atherton to make a new start. He found a job on a dairy farm and was made to milk all the bad tempered cows.

When his brother, Mick persuaded Molly that it was safe, and sent money to Toowoomba to facilitate his journey, Dan left Toowoomba in May 1931 and joined his brothers in New Guinea in the search for gold. He was 18 years old. He first found work maintaining the airstrip at Lae, before Jim found him a better job at a sawmill in Bulolo. On his 19th birthday he went on his first flight in a Junkers bomber joining his brother, Mick on two exploration expeditions into the Highlands. No gold was found initially, but they did find it eventually at Kuta near Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands and sluicing started in 1934. Some missionaries were killed in 1935 by local people and the Highlands was closed until the end of WWII, but Mick and Dan Leahy were allowed to continue mining. Dan was sworn in as a constable for a while after the attacks.

¹³ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P. 299.

He travelled overseas in 1936. It was meant to be a two month sojourn to Asia but he made new friends on the journey who invited him to join them and go to Moscow and on to the Berlin Olympics. Dan did so and travelled on the trans-Siberia line to Moscow. He saw Jesse Owens win the 100 metre sprint in Berlin and toured Europe and England. Then he visited relatives in Ireland and returned to Australia via New York and Hollywood. He met relatives in New York and met actresses, Bette Davis, Joan Blondell and Cecilia Parker. Cecilia was fond of the handsome Dan Leahy.

On return to Wau, he prospected for gold again and was broke after a year so returned to Kuta.

In 1941, Dan went to Sydney and stayed with his mother and sister, Erin in Darling Point. He was concerned for their safety living near the coast with a looming invasion, so found a lot in Pymble and built them a home on it. Dan heard news of the war reaching Rabaul on the radio in 1942. He joined the New Guinea Rifles in 1942 then the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit and became an acting Warrant Officer. He was sent to Bena Bena to look for refuges and walked there and back to no avail. He was then told to walk to Bulolo (550 km!) and then to drive cattle back from Madang. He gathered the feral cattle and did so despite the threat of nearby Japanese troops and regular flights in the area by Japanese aircraft.

His next wartime task was to go to the Sepik River and rescue some missionaries hiding from the Japanese. There were two foreign priests there and five older nuns, two of them were obese and not at all mobile. The only option was to escape over the Highland ranges, some 3,000 metres high. The nuns' habits were a great impediment to progress as they were continually wet and snagging on vegetation, but eventually Dan persuaded them to cut the habits down and wear some shorts he had spare. He had to push and pull the nuns over the mountains and it took two months to reach safety. He took them to Goroka, eventually and they escaped by air. His next assignment was to rescue airmen at Wabag and he recruited 100 Highlanders to help, but they became infected with malaria and other diseases and 50 of them had to be carried out. He took them to Kuta and nursed them back to health, but he was now run down and suffering from blurred vision.

After these epic journeys, Dan was injured and deemed to be medically unfit to continue service. He returned to Australia and lived in Sydney for the remainder of the war. While there, Jim visited and had an article from a magazine about the vision repair achievements of the Mayo Clinic in USA. A friend knew the Mayo family and provided a letter of introduction. In 1945, he travelled to the U.S. for the treatment at this world-leading institute and was a guest of the Mayo family, staying there while he was treated. He was referred as well to the John Hopkins Memorial Hospital and another leading hospital to fix his failing vision and hearing but had little success. It was devastating news to know that his vision and hearing were so badly compromised at only 33 years age. In his late years he was almost blind.

He returned to Mount Hagen in 1947 and worked the gold mine until 1953. Jim had maintained the mine while he was in the US and was more than happy to hand it back to Dan. During 1948, there were 24 veteran gold miners working in the area, but the total production was merely 860 ounces. Dan was the most successful with 159 ounces in the first half of the year. While mining, he started to look for other ways to remain in New Guinea and he started trade stores to augment his income. Jim visited Dan not long after he returned to Mount Hagen and told him about his new interest in growing coffee. Dan now had 600 acres of land and was won over by Jim so planted 200 acres of coffee at Kuta in the Western Highlands in the early 1950s, but the location proved to be unsuitable for coffee, so he moved to a lower altitude and had success at Korgua near to Mount Hagen.

The Kuta planting had cost Dan £10,000, so he was not too keen to go again but was convinced when he saw Jim's early success at Erinvale. He leased 300 acres of land at Korgua and paid a generous amount of £200 as a token of faith. One of his longest serving employees, Jokari, cleared the land.

Dan Leahy was the first post-war settler in the Western Highlands. His Kuta coffee plantation started before Jim Leahy's Erinvale plantation, but it failed and his Korgua Plantation started fruiting later than Erinvale. Dan and Jim both imported a few sheep and they initially did quite well at Kuta. Dan produced significant quantities of wool and made blankets. Jim also had women weaving blankets from the wool of his Romney Marsh sheep.

At that time, people who grew coffee augmented their income by mining, trading or other activities rather than farming coffee alone. Dan did likewise and had other crops, cattle, pigs and trade stores and worked for a time for Vacuum Oil as a recruiting agent for their Highland Labour Scheme. He lived at Korgua from 1960 on and built a coffee processing plant and processed coffee for many local coffee farmers. Dan was the first of the New Guinea coffee growers who used fertilisers on his crop and he soon learned that the high cost was more than compensated for in the yields.

A Church leader from the nearby mission took coffee to Korgua to be processed and in later years recalled Dan fondly saying that, when he finished weighing the coffee, Dan usually asked him to join him for a tot and after one whiskey, he invariably said, *A bird never flew on one wing.* They had another and, occasionally, he added, *One for the road?* and on big days even suggested, *And one for no reason at all!*

Around 1949, Dan married a Jiga Pangaga wife, Koka. She left him, so he married Biam Powa, daughter of Powa, the leader of the Jiga Mugmana clan in a traditional ceremony. Later, he married Mancy Tupgla of the Jiga Komp clan as well because Biam found it difficult living in an alien culture and needed a companion. Later in life, Dan observed, *They were the best thing that ever happened to me, Biam and Nancy. Lovely girls.* Jennifer Collins (Ed's wife) was full of praise for Biam and Mancy saying they were utterly delightful and such good fun and that Molly Leahy got along with them well and showed them how to cook western food. *They all laughed loudly during the cooking lessons and Dan's wives loved Molly. The feeling was mutual.* In his book, *Kundi Dan*, John Fowke said that Mancy had great presence and welcomed all visitors warmly.

It was customary for a 'Big Man' to have several wives. Dan followed the custom. He sent eight of his children to Australian boarding schools, and the two youngest girls, Margaret and Nancy, went to Mount Hagen school.

Dan's eldest son, George, (son of Koka) established the successful mining and oil exploration services company in 1992: Oilmin Field Services. This has continued on strongly, with three of his children (Garret, Declan and Georgina) now being directors of the company. George died in 2015.

Dan's sons, John and Bryan have continued in coffee. John lives at Erinvale today on Jims original coffee farm and manages the biggest coffee processing mill in PNG, built on Mick Reilley's old plantation, Lahanenagu. Bryan Leahy remained in Mount Hagen with Margaret and Nancy and he now owns and runs Dan's original Korgua Coffee Plantation and with it two coffee processing plants. Bryan explains that the Wahgi Valley Cooperative Mill is one of the last of the coffee cooperatives to continue and its longevity is based on the wise decision of his father to locate it on land between warring tribes, on neutral ground where it was safe for all to go.

Mick had three sons with New Guinea women, Johannes (Jo or Joe, earlier known as *Humbug*), Clem and John. Joe was born in 1938 to a Jiga tribe mother, but as with Clem (*Rubra*) and John, he was not recognised by his father. He was raised by his mother on the fringes of Dan's mining camp and was accepted and supported by many of the Leahy family, including Dan. Later, Dan gave much encouragement and support to Mick's estranged sons and educated them and gave them the name Leahy when they went to school.



Cousins: Joe Leahy, Tommy Leahy (Markham Tom) and Kum John (Joe's Brother). Image from Tom's book, *Markham Tom*.

When Japan invaded New Guinea during WWII, Dan and the missionaries left the Wahgi Valley and returned late in the 1940s. At that stage, Joe Leahy was a feisty, mixed-race teenager, nicknamed *Humbug*. Dan took him onto his newly established coffee plantation at Korgua and had him working and learning about coffee farming. Dan was tough and autocratic yet did his best to help with Mick and Paddy's mixed race children.

After independence in 1975, most white settlers left Papua New Guinea. Dan stayed and remained an Australian citizen. He suffered a stroke in 1979 and was partially paralysed but rehabilitated himself using regular, arduous exercises. His hearing and vision losses had caused him to become quite irascible earlier yet he retained his sense of humour and remained dedicated to his family. In 1983, he was awarded an O.B.E. for his services to the Western Highlands.

Dan Leahy was survived by two wives, ten children and 21 grandchildren. He died in 1991 and was buried next to Biam and over 2,000 people attended the funeral.

Joe Collins:

Uncle Dan was a real nice fella, but during the war he lost much of his eyesight and hearing while he was saving a group of obese nuns from the Japanese near the Sepik River. It was tough travelling overland with the Japanese soldiers in close proximity following, as the nun's lacked mobility. In the end, the Japs gave up the chase fortunately, but it took a heavy toll on Uncle Dan's health.

John Fowke wrote a book on the life of Dan titled, *Kundi Dan: Dan Leahy's Life Among the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, University of Queensland Press, 1995. A book has also been written of Dan's perilous journey when he rescued the nun's from the Japanese soldiers during the Pacific War.

Erin Mary Leahy 1915 – 1998

Erin was a hairdresser who did not marry. She spent much of her life in Sydney caring for her mother.

THE LEAHY COUSINS



Four of Joe's Leahy cousins who worked in New Guinea: Fred, Dan, Tom and Paddy. From Doug Unsworth.

Thomas Joseph Leahy (Markham Tom) 1929 - 2012

Tom was the first child of Thomas (Tom senior) and Jean Leahy. Tom and his brother Dan left Murray Upper in 1947 to join their four uncles in New Guinea. He worked for his uncle, Mick Leahy, at Zenag for two years when he first arrived in New Guinea then did some gold mining work for three years. In 1952, Tom obtained land for a farm in the Markham Valley near Lae and grew rice initially, but that venture failed. He then tried cattle and crops of cocoa, copra, peanuts and sorghum with much success. He married Heather Undy (1928-2013) of Cairns when he was 26 and they had three children, Peter, Neil and Anne. Later he was divorced and married Pamela Young (1939-2007) from Dalby.



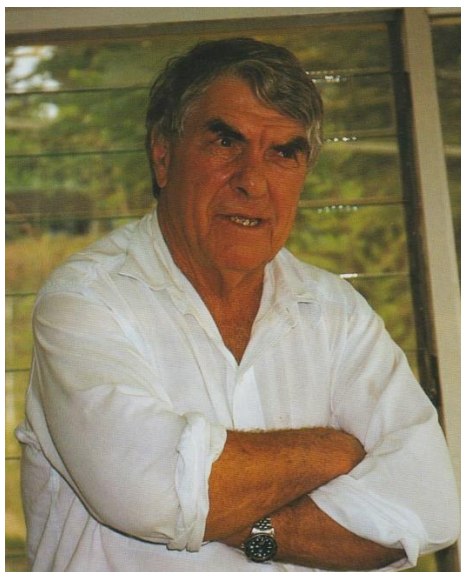
Tom and Heather Leahy with their children Peter, Anne and Neil and friends. Tom and Heather. images from *Ancestry.com.au*, shared by TheKeeperof, 2017.

Tom was a successful farmer and politician and served on the first Local Government Council in his area for 15 years. In 1968, he was elected to government and became Leader of Government Business in New Guinea and was an incredibly influential man. He was posted to New York by the United Nations for three months during his term in government. In 1970, he was appointed to a government Australian Electoral Commission role in New Guinea.

After losing his seat in the 1972 election, Tom returned to his 2,500 acre farm before selling it in the late 1970s to Collins and Leahy. The family returned to Australia and Tom visited Ireland to research his ancestors. This was his second visit to Ireland and he enjoyed living in Wicklow where he stayed for two years. In 1981, he settled on a farm named *Corowa* near Dalby and cleared over 500 acres of land for cattle and wheat production and built irrigation infrastructure to support it. Their land was taken over by miners, so they moved to a smaller farm, *Corowa II*. He returned to politics and served on the Wambo Shire Council for 14 years (1994-2008).

In the year 2000, on the 25th Anniversary of Independence, PNG honoured Tom with a citation commending him for his contributions to the nation. Tom was a larger-than-life personality and wrote several books during his lifetime.

Daniel Joseph Leahy (Danny, Sir Dan) 1930 - 2009



Sir Danny Leahy from James Sinclair, *The Money Tree*.

Dan went to New Guinea in 1947 with his brother, Tom. He wrote to his uncles in New Guinea and at 17 years old with £300 in his pocket set off to meet them. Eventually, five of Old Tom Leahy's sons ended up in New Guinea for a considerable period of their lives, Tom, Danny, Fred, Paddy and John.

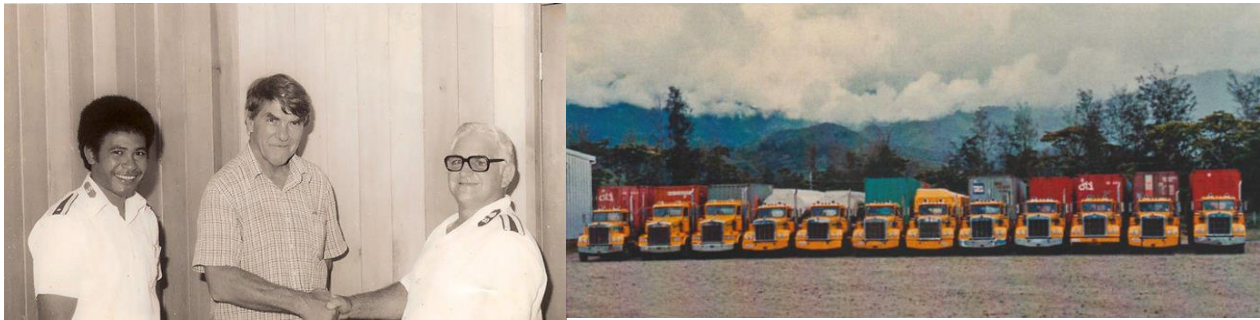
Danny wanted to leave Toowoomba because he found life hard there and needed to get away. He worked for some time for his Uncle Mick at Zenag then for Uncle Dan at Kuta. He met his Uncle Jim in a hotel in Lae and Jim invited him to work for him. After some time with Jim, Danny started a coffee plantation in the Bena Valley of the Eastern Highlands. That was the first coffee plantation in the Bena. He also had four stores.

He was visited by his cousin, Eddie Collins, in 1958 and, on the spur of the moment, they decided to join their trading stores together in a partnership that became the most successful trading empire in the Highlands, Collins and Leahy. Initially, Danny continued on his coffee plantation, while Eddie managed their jointly owned trading stores. In 1959, Danny sold his coffee plantation to focus on expanding the business. By 1970, the enterprise was cited by one financial commentator as *the most influential single non-government force in the entire Highlands*. Danny married Aileen Norris in 1967. Aileen was working for her family, Bruce and Barbara Jepakott, on a cattle farm in the Dumpu Valley.

Collins and Leahy was listed on the Sydney Stock Exchange in 1971, with shares being made available for local investors. In 1975, Eddie sold his C&L shares to Michael Bromley who had a similar business in the Western Highlands. In 1982, Collins and Leahy was the number one trading company in the Highlands and Bromley and Manton was number two and the two organisations were merged. The company expanded its business range and bought a one third share in Steamships Trading Company and Danny Leahy became the C&L chairman. He remained in the role until 1997.

Both Danny Leahy and his cousin Eddie Collins played rugby league for Goroka and New Guinea. Goroka's rugby league ground is named after Danny. He was a founding member of the Salvation Army Red Shield

Appeal at Goroka. In 1977, he was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal and in 1992, he was knighted for services to PNG.



Left: Sir Daniel Leahy, centre, as chairman of the Eastern Highlands Province division of the Papua New Guinea Salvation Army.
Right: Some of the fleet of Collins and Leahy Transport. From Doug Unsworth.

When charismatic PNG leader, Iambakey Okuk, died of cancer in 1986, sorcery was suspected by his many followers. Okuk had been Deputy Prime Minister and was an important leader in the drive for its independence. He was the first national to own a coffee factory and he led the legislation to nationalize the industry and reverse colonial ownership. After his death, riots broke out widely in the Highland towns, including Goroka.

Danny Leahy's finest hour was perhaps in confronting the rioters who would have destroyed the town but for his brave intervention. He took a loud hailer and, at high personal risk, drove into the town centre and spoke of Iambakey Okuk's efforts in the coffee industry and what Okuk would want of his people. He spoke eloquently in a language that was understood and changed the mood of the rioters from anger to sorrow.

Collins and Leahy was at one stage employing 12,000 PNG people in their retail operations alone. They had the second largest trucking fleet in the nation with 12 semi-trailers and 50 other trucks. The company owned very diverse interests in many industries across the country. When the company was listed on the stock exchange, it is notable that they offered 13% of the shares to PNG nationals. In 1996 as the takeover loomed, its shares were worth \$98 million.

The *Pacific Islands Monthly* once suggested that the spelling of the town Lae should be changed to Leahy as a mark of respect for the achievements of the family in PNG.

Aileen and Danny Leahy had eight children: Kirstin, Nicole, Claudia, Daniel, Emma, Joshua, Wilma and Jessica.

James Frederick Leahy (Fred) 1937 – 2017

Fred Leahy died in 2017 and his wife, Diann, lived on in Brisbane. He went to New Guinea in 1954 on a ship with his uncle, Jim Leahy, and cousin, Ian Fraser. He eventually owned a 50-acre coffee plantation at Goroka overlooking the Asaro Valley. It was named Foinda. They purchased that from Graham Gilmore (Diann's brother-in-law) and Jack Lee. Fred and Diann had four children, Matthew (who has died), Catherine, Fiona and Georgina.

Fred did much for the local New Guinea people and the coffee industry during his lifetime. Paddy Leahy said he was similar to his father, Tom senior, in many ways especially being of massive build: 6 foot four inches and weighing 17 stone.

Fred was more of a loner and while he was initially involved with most the family in their business ventures, like Hi-Bi, he decided to go his own way and take a different path. James Sinclair, in *The Money Tree*, said that that Fred Leahy was *one of the family's best coffee growers* which is high praise for James spoke glowingly of all the Leahy and Collins coffee farmers.

When first in New Guinea, Fred worked in Joe and Rod Collins' sawmill for six months then visited Uncle Dan at Kuta before going gold dredging. Then he spent three years with Uncle Mick in the Markham Valley growing sorghum for his chooks. He left that job and ran a transport business for three years before deciding to buy the coffee farm in the Eastern Highlands.

He managed the plantation and processing business via J F Leahy Trust and provided profits for the benefit of local people. At one board meeting, he suggested that they offer seats on the board to Asaro and Watabung women. That was met with stony silence from the all-male board. The idea was to plough the profits of the venture back into local-benefit schemes. There was initial suspicion of his motives for such altruism but the locals soon understood that Fred was not trying a scam to line his own pockets. He sold the plantation to the trust in 1976. Later, he planned a community development scheme to create community farms in the district, but that foundered when the banks would not provide finance.

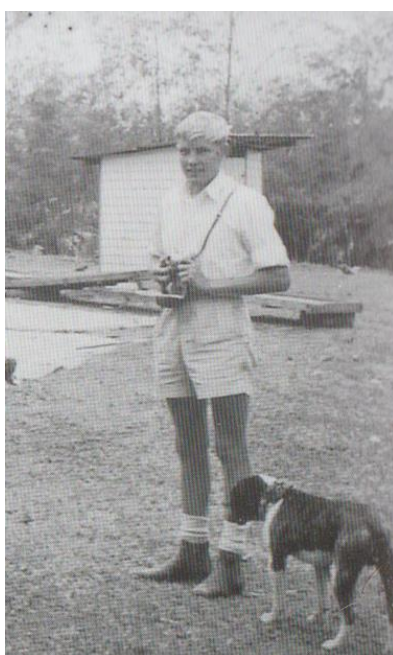
Fred stayed in New Guinea for longer than many of his family did and in the later years he spent considerable time in Australia. He left PNG fully in 1988.

Patrick Leahy (Paddy) 1939

Joe Collins:

Paddy went into the coffee business as well in New Guinea and was involved in the Asaro Coffee Plantation. When he first went to New Guinea, he worked with Jim Leahy and later on he also planted coffee on our plantation. He bought Joe Searson's coffee plantation. Then he managed the Asaro operation. Paddy was exceptionally well organized and has an outstanding memory. Eddie Collins and Danny Leahy were also involved in Asaro as were Collins Brothers (company of Joe and Rod Collins). Jim Taylor was the original owner of Asaro. Paddy married and had two daughters and three sons.

When writing this history, I spoke to Paddy and his wife Rosemary. Joe was spot-on in his assessment of Paddy's powers of recall and he and his wife, Rosemary, corrected many errors in the story content. Online sources of information are a useful place to start, yet nothing beats first-hand witness input like that of Paddy and Rosemary (nee Dean).



Paddy Leahy, 19 years age. Image by Paddy Leahy, from James Sinclair, *The Money Tree*.

Paddy is not one to speak much of himself or his achievements, yet my estimation is that his life has been as eventful, interesting and successful as any of his more widely lauded and formally recognised siblings and uncles. His entire 25 years in New Guinea were spent in coffee and his contributions to Papua New Guinea's coffee industry was highly significant, as it was for his Collins' cousins.

Paddy Leahy had a close working relationship with his Uncle Jim who started the nation's first commercial coffee plantation. Paddy lived with Jim and worked with him in the plantation for the first five years, so gained great knowledge of every aspect of the coffee game. Jim entered a partnership with family friend Sir Edward Hallstrom and Paddy lived in a hut for months and created that plantation at Nondugl. After that venture foundered, Paddy started trading coffee and he became the first person to buy coffee from the villagers in the Chimbu. Paddy recalls:¹⁴

I remember those trips; I went up in Uncle Jim's old Willys Jeep with a bag full of coins. I would literally have to pull all the flowers that the locals put on the vehicle as I travelled through.

Paddy purchased a plantation from Joe Searson in 1963 in partnership with his Uncle Jim and Jim's daughter, Jon Leahy. The farm, Obihaka, was eventually 150 acres. Paddy explained that the Leahy and Collins families owned many coffee plantations, coffee processing plants and companies that transported, processed and distributed coffee. The Highland Produce Company was owned by all the Leahy and Collins family members in New Guinea apart from Fred who owned his own company. They had a fleet of trucks and handled 2,000 tons of coffee per year.

Paddy built on the skills and knowledge he gleaned from his Uncle Jim and Baron Goto to vastly improve coffee productivity. That was to be a great step forward for the entire industry. Like the Collins boys, Paddy experimented with ways to prune the coffee trees and perfected it. There was much waste wood on the coffee trees where no fruit developed and by pruning the trees to create several stems there was a great increase in flowers per bush.

He was, like most his relatives in New Guinea, a gifted farmer. Rod Collins, on his plantation, also in the Asaro Valley, and Paddy Leahy on his Obihaka farm together rewrote the world record books for coffee productivity generating a more than a ton per acre from 640 coffee trees. Paddy was Managing Director of Asaro Coffee Estates for many years and they generated massive dividends for shareholders. Furthermore, while farming at Obihaka for eight years, he secured a premium coffee buyer in Finland who paid more than the German buyers.

Another important step that advanced the nation's coffee industry was the introduction of local New Guinea shareholders in Asaro Coffee Estate. Eventually, the company had 5,000 New Guinea shareholders. Paddy:

The soil in the Highlands was beautiful. Our Obihaka farm had fabulously productive, deep topsoil and with the plentiful, reliable rainfall you could not fail. In the times when prices were very high, the profits in this industry were enormous and we were able to share that wealth with the New Guinea people who had shares in our company. They received immense dividends.

Paddy appointed PNG nationals to his board of directors at Asaro Coffee Estate, a move ahead of the times. He ensured that there were no secret family meetings that excluded his board members; they were always kept fully in the loop so no distrust would develop. When Paddy left the company and it changed owners, it became a mess and Danny Leahy took all the shareholders on as Collins and Leahy shareholders.

¹⁴ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P. 299.

Paddy and Rosemary did not want to leave New Guinea, but eventually they did so, reluctantly, in 1980. They returned to Queensland and purchased a cattle farm at Mt Mee and built a homestead there that they imported from America. It was clad in western red cedar. After many years there, they moved into Brisbane and were able to buy acreage, so that Paddy could have a coffee plantation. He achieved that dream and still has 40 coffee trees growing strongly.

Their family continues to own many investment companies and estates and Paddy did some property development while running a Childcare Centre in Brisbane. Rosemary and Paddy had five children, Benjamin (who died in a marine accident), Jonathon and Samuel and twin daughters, Joanna and Jacqueline.

At 84 years age, Paddy remains strong, and like his cousin Joe Collins, he finds it difficult to put the hand brake on. Joe Collins' family saying, *Every day is big*, applies to the entire Collins-Leahy family.

Paddy stayed on in New Guinea until 1980 then moved to Morayfield where he and Rosemary live today. His passion for coffee growing has not waned and continues on his large property in Morayfield near Caboolture.

Ellen Leahy 1941

Erin married Eddie Cleary and had four children.

Michael Leahy 1944 - 1981

Michael died in Toowoomba aged 36. Michael did not live in New Guinea.

Margaret Leahy 1945

Margaret married a doctor in Ireland and died recently.

John Leahy 1946 - 2013

John married and had four children and lived in New Guinea for many years. He went to New Guinea in 1964 and worked for Kainantu Trading. Jim Leahy and others purchased the company and John started buying coffee and working for Mike Collins there (Jascar). After that, he worked for Fred Leahy for two years buying coffee. He then moved to Asaro where his boss was Joe Collins.

Later, he returned when Paddy Leahy was the boss at Asaro. John thought that Paddy was a perfectionist and they argued at times. Then John, still only 19 years old, started working for plantations. Eddie Collins then told him there was a plantation near Goroko for sale and C&L had enough and did not want more farms, so John went into partnership with Apere Goso and bought the plantation.

They had the plantation in the boom years and made a lot of money. In 1977, they had to sell the plantation. In 1987, Apere Goso had a new farm and asked for help from John so he returned and worked for a couple of years there and, again, they made a lot of money.

John Leahy went into trading at Mount Hagen then moved to Port Moresby running a large soft-drink factory. The Leahy's can run any business he said¹⁵, *I've gone from being a coffee man to a lollywater man.*

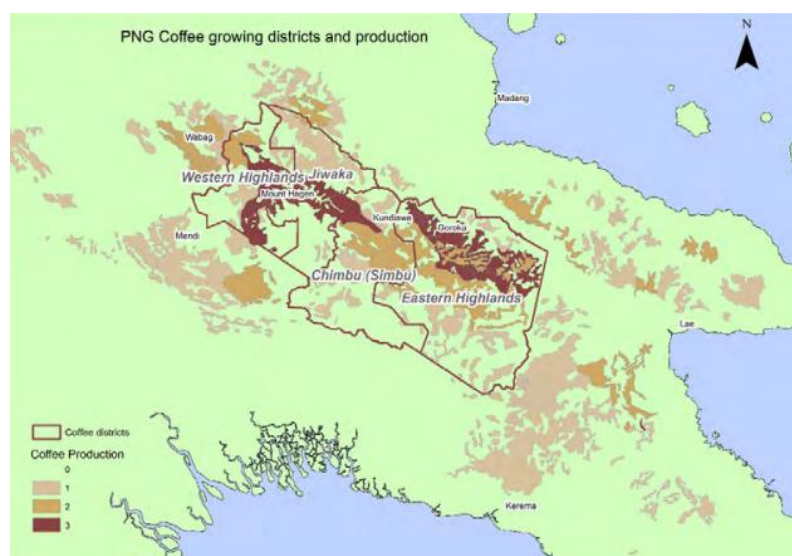
¹⁵ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P. 451.

LEAHY | COLLINS | COFFEE

The Leahy and Collins families made major contributions to New Guinea before independence in many ways, not the least being through their successes in developing its coffee industry.

In global terms, PNG is a coffee minnow, producing 1% of the world's exports. However, coffee is a major contributor to the PNG economy with almost half the population being involved or benefiting in some way from it. Coffee was planted in small parts of Papua and New Guinea before 1900, mainly by missionaries and while there were a few producers in the 1920s, and there some large plantations in the 1930s, those all collapsed with advent of the Pacific War. Hence, commercial production only started in earnest in 1952.

PNG coffee production peaked at around 1.3 million bags (each 60 kg) in 1998 and is now usually around 800,000 bags annually. It has fluctuated considerably over the last 70 years with many obstacles and challenges.



Main coffee growing regions of PNG.¹⁶ Dark brown are the most intensive farming areas.

Brazil is the dominant world coffee producer with around 60 million bags a year and the top three producers, Brazil, Vietnam and Columbia, provide a third of the world's coffee. Australia produces 50,000 bags of coffee a year, so is tiny even beside PNG.

Perhaps the best known family in the history of Mission Beach is the Cutten family of Bingil Bay. They were our first settlers, in 1895. One of their most successful ventures was their 101 acre coffee plantation with a modern coffee mill. They first planted coffee in 1890 and sold it successfully for a decade after the trees matured in 1894. However, the enterprise foundered when tariffs were reduced. Long after the four Cutten brothers had died, someone named them *Australia's Coffee Barons*.

If their Bingil Bay farm were still operating today, it would be one of the nation's largest coffee plantations. However, if we compare that plantation with the Leahy and Collins New Guinea coffee holdings, the Cutten farm was a minnow. At some time in their lives, 18 of the Leahy-Collins men owned or had a major stake in coffee plantations. That involved approximately 2,000 acres of coffee plus at least eight coffee factories. Some of the family remain in coffee in PNG.

¹⁶ Bourke, R. M., et al. (1993). *Mapping agricultural systems in Papua New Guinea*. In *Population, Family Health and Development*. Papers from 19th Waigani Seminar. T. Taufa and C. Bass. University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby. Volume 1: 205-225. Accessed December 2023 at: <https://www.rccap.org/uploads/files/242aaafc-636c-42ba-967a-3081bd1adc6e/Coffee%20PNG%20Case%20Study%20Final.pdf>

James Sinclair wrote a comprehensive history of PNG Coffee titled, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*.¹⁷ He states, *Indeed, to James Laby Leahy belongs the credit for pioneering commercial arabica farming in the Highlands, as we shall see, and Dan was not far behind... No account of the development of the Highlands can be written without allocating generous space to the Leahys.* He included Molly Leahy's sons in that statement, the Collins boys, Joe, Rod, Johnny, Ed and Mike as well as other cousins, Joe and Clem Leahy (sons of Mick), Bryan (son of Dan) and Ian Fraser. On many occasions, James referred to all of these family members as highly successful coffee farmers and explained why.

In the period from 1926 to 1931, Paddy, Mick, Jim and Dan Leahy left Murray Upper near Tully QLD to find adventure and make a living in the Highlands of New Guinea. They were originally from the Darling Downs and had followed their sister, Molly, to the Tully region earlier. In New Guinea, they started by exploring the interior while prospecting for gold. Then they started mining gold in a small way before turning to farming, some starting coffee plantations. Their brother, Tom senior, did not go to New Guinea. He became a major wheat farmer in Toowoomba. Jim and Dan were the first two commercial coffee growers of note in the Highlands of New Guinea. Their brother, Paddy was also a significant early coffee grower. Mick did not have a coffee farm; and made his mark in cattle and poultry.

Five of Tom senior's sons followed their uncles to the New Guinea Highlands from 1947 on: Tom, Dan, Fred, Paddy and John. Tom Leahy (Markham Tom) established a large cattle farm in the Markham Valley and did not venture into coffee. The other brothers were all successful coffee farmers for a time. In 1951, Joe Collins abruptly left Tully, QLD and went to New Guinea. He was not following his uncles or cousins, merely taking the advice of someone he met at the hairdressers a few days earlier, who said it was the place to go to make a living. Joe had an argument with his father; the friction had been rising for some time and he wanted out from under his father's control. Joe was soon followed by brothers Rod, Johnny and Edgar (Ed). Each of the Collins boys eventually found their way into the New Guinea coffee industry.

Joe and Rod Collins planted 160 acres of coffee at Numbia, near Goroka with a coffee factory. Their brother, John, planted over 400 acres at two plantations in the Baiyer Valley, near Mount Hagen. Additionally, Danny Leahy and Ed Collins, via their mammoth Collins & Leahy Company, had three factories and controlled much of the coffee transport and trade in the nation.

If ever Australia had a family of coffee growers and processors who could be referred to as *Coffee Barons*, the title would surely go to the Leahy and Collins family. While they were involved in coffee in New Guinea in its infancy, most left after independence. However, some of the family remain active in the coffee industry today.

Jim Leahy set the New Guinea coffee rush alight. If there was just one person in the family who was remembered for New Guinea's coffee development, it would be Jim. In 1948, he was the first to start a coffee plantation after WWII. He built the successful Erinvale Coffee Estate near Goroka and helped his brother Dan Leahy start the Korgua Estate, and Leahy descendants still run that successfully in 2024.

Jim initially gained his expertise while serving in WWII when he was farm manager at the Aiyura Agricultural Research Station. He passed his valuable knowledge to his family and to local farmers and helped them enter the coffee business. This was all excellent preparation for PNG's Independence.

In September 1974, the House of Assembly passed the Land Acquisition Bill giving government the power to compulsorily acquire land. That was the end for most expatriate coffee farmers in PNG. Some said that the transition was poor and that a more planned transfer of farming ownership would have prevented the sharp production declines that soon occurred. However, this family undoubtedly left a lasting positive legacy on the coffee industry in the new nation showing everyone willing to listen, how it was best achieved.

¹⁷ James Sinclair, *The Money Tree: Coffee in Papua New Guinea*, Crawford House Publishing, 1995, P41.

COLLINS & LEAHY COFFEE TODAY

This outline will not include all the family players, but will, hopefully, demonstrate how some of them have continued the family tradition in coffee.

Joe Leahy 1938 – 2023, Son of Mick Leahy

Of Mike Leahy's three children born to a New Guinean women, most has been written of Johannes, known widely as Joe Leahy. Joe and his two brothers, Clem and John, were raised by their mothers on the fringes of Dan Hagen's mining camp at Mount Hagen. Dan returned to New Guinea after WWII and planted coffee. He saw that Joe was a feisty teenager and needed help. He provided work on the plantation and taught him how to farm coffee. Joe started at the bottom and soon became a foreman on Dan's plantation and overseer of his stores.



Left: Joe (Johannes) Leahy with Ganiga people. Right: Joe and family, Jim Leahy is in the red shirt. Images by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson from *The Smithsonian Magazine*, March 2018.

Sean Flynn of *The Smithsonian Magazine* wrote an article titled, *The Reckoning*, in March 2018 after interviewing filmmaker and author Bob Connolly¹⁸. This relates the story of Mick, Jim and Dan and of Mick's son Joe.

Robin Anderson and Bob Connolly (her partner) read about Mick Leahy and his Highlands photography and heard that his films and images may have survived. Robin tracked down one of Mick's New Guinea sons in Lae who went into his attic and found 11 canisters of film. She returned to Australia then came back to Papua New Guinea with Bob and their camera gear and spent months retracing the route of Mick and Dan Leahy's expedition into the Wahgi Valley in 1930.

They interviewed many Highlanders as well as Dan and Jim Leahy and combined Mick's jerky black and white footage with new images and interviews to create their documentary, *First Contact*, in 1983. The film was widely acclaimed and was nominated for an Academy Award. By that time, Mick Leahy was dead and his wife Jeanette felt that Mick would not have approved of the documentary because it failed to mention the important role of their close friend, Jim Taylor. Jim's daughter, lawyer Meg Taylor of Goroka, was also dismayed by the omission.

First Contact was the first in a series of documentaries known as the *Highland Trilogy*, the second being *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* in 1989 and the third, *Black Harvest*, in 1992 was about the tribal wars that erupted in the Highlands

¹⁸ Sean Flynn, *The Reckoning*, *The Smithsonian Magazine*, March 2018. Accessed December 2023 at: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-reckoning-180968082/>

and destroyed the coffee plantations. Bob and Robin spent years in the Highlands living in grass huts on the coffee plantations and developed an understanding of what happened, particularly with Joe Leahy's plantation. They were astounded at the vast disparity in wealth between Joe and the Ganiga and the friction that had built up. Speaking of the second documentary, Sean Flynn explained:

In 1985, Bob and Robin returned to the highlands to make a new film about Joe Leahy. They stayed 18 months, living in a thatched hut on Joe's land, lugging around a camera and sound gear, slowly piecing together scenes of an intensifying dispute between Joe and his Ganiga neighbors. With Kilima, Joe was running a capitalist enterprise in a land of communal customs, where the idea that land could be bought and sold, or that wealth could accrue to one man, was inconceivable. In fact, Tumul, the Ganiga big man, had given up his clan's sweet-potato fields for a pittance because Joe's knowledge of the white man's bisnis was supposed to make Tumul's people rich, too.

"All lies," Joe fumed about Tumul in 'Joe Leahy's Neighbors', which was released in 1989. "I never promised anyone anything." It's never quite clear from the film whether Joe really believed that, if this was a misunderstanding or a swindle. Nor does it really matter. The Ganiga wanted their due.

One of the film's protagonists is a young tribesman named Joseph Madang, who eventually became one of Bob and Robin's closest friends. "Say he's made 800,000 profit," Madang tells Bob's camera. "Well, now we'd like to make 800,000. He owns it, eh? We own it. He only paid us 600 kina when he bought Kilima. We're not happy. We're joint owners. Joe and us. He's wealthy, now it's our turn. It's not fair that one man should earn all the money."

In the 1970s and early 80s, Joe made a fortune with his coffee plantation. He had a luxury home and car, toured the world and had his children at Brisbane boarding schools. From the beginning, Joe considered Kilima Plantation his alone and its wealth his to spend, but as years passed, he began to realise that was unsustainable. Meetings with the Ganiga leaders led to an agreement that a new plantation called Kaugum would be created. The profits were to be shared, 60% to Joe and 40% to the Ganiga 500. The coffee was planted and great riches were promised to the Ganiga people, but when the first harvest was due, few pickers turned up.

Joe and his wife, Rhona and their children Patrick, James (Jim), Rosita and Diana moved to Queensland in 1990. That suited most of the family, but Joe and Jim preferred life in the Highlands. The world price of coffee plummeted and with it the hopes of Ganiga riches. The Ganiga people were bewildered by the change of fortunes, and angry. Joe was now deep in debt, owing \$500,000.

Bob and Robin returned to make their third film, *Black Harvest*, and quickly found themselves in the middle of a tribal war. The war broke out after the rape of some women and revenge was sought. The Kaugum Plantation was razed and most of Kilima with it. The bank sold Joe's assets, but he retained his land. He returned to Kilima in the hope of restoring the plantation to its glory days, but no bank would support him.

His son, James, felt that his father had abandoned the family, but he returned to Mount Hagen and became close to his father. By 2020, James had his coffee trees loaded with fruit, but it was an election year with easy money available for the Ganiga people, so they did not turn up to pick the crop.

In August 2023, Joe Leahy died. There was a week-long funeral ceremony as is the custom for notable people in the Highlands. His bright yellow coffin was carried around the district in a ute and people came from Australia and Canada to mourn his death. A former Prime Minister of PNG, Paias Wingti, who had the same family roots as Joe's mother, attended the funeral to mourn his friend Joe.



Joe Leahy's funeral at Mount Hagen. From Stephen Dupont, *The Guardian*, 12 August 2023.¹⁹

Clem Leahy – Son of Mick Leahy

The New Guinea national sons of Mick Leahy, Joe, Clem and John, did not know their Leahy relations until they met them later in life. Clem was from a different village to those of his brothers. as well. When Joe met George Leahy (first son of Dan) and Richard Leahy (son of Mick Leahy) they were strangers.

Dan wanted Clem to go to school in Brisbane, as for his own sons, but Clem balked at that and returned to his village before returning to work for Dan until 1971. He trained as a mechanic. When Dan's children started returning from school to Kuta, Clem left and worked on Ron Pringle's plantation nearby. He managed that for a time then, in 1982, he purchased the farm. By 1991 though, more tribal fighting broke out and Clem was driven from the plantation and it was repossessed by the bank.

John Leahy – Weipa John - Son of Dan Leahy – Lahamenagu Coffee Factory

John originally worked at Jim Taylor's coffee plantation in the Asaro Valley at Goroka. He worked in Weipa for some time early in life, hence the nickname. In Weipa he trained as a marine engineer and at one stage he started a trucking company. For a time, John had his own coffee plantation, Kuga. He now runs the huge coffee mill on Lahamenagu Plantation.

James Leahy – Son of Joe Leahy – Nebilyer Coffee

James Leahy continued with Joe's Kilima plantation at Mount Hagen and renamed it Nebilyer Coffee. Their Facebook page states that the plantation has 190 hectares (470 acres) of land, but I gather that not all of that area is planted with coffee. Reading the posts on this site, one cannot help but be optimistic for the future of this venture as James and his family are working closely with the local people to make it a true community operation. The Nebilyer Valley Coffee farm has been diversified by James and now produces vanilla and honey as well as coffee.

Bryan Leahy – Youngest Son of Korgua Dan – Korgua Coffee

The Korgua Estate at Mount Hagen is one of the few older Highland estates to have survived the stormy war days of the 1990s. The estate's coffee processing cooperative, Kuta Mill, is also alive and well due in part to

¹⁹ Stephen Dupont, *Between Two Worlds: life of PNG tribe leader and plantation owner honoured*. Accessed December 2023 at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/12/between-two-worlds-life-of-png-tribe-leader-and-plantation-owner-honoured>

Dan's wise location of it in no-man's-land between the lands of the warring tribes. Many of the plantation's coffee trees are more than 60 years old. Bryan's coffee processing plants service the local small land holders as well as his own estate and this looks like an exciting enterprise after being owned by the family for so long.

Brian became an aircraft engineer early on then worked for Richard Leahy who was General Manager of Telair in Goroka. Then he stayed with his brother John working for Jim Leahy at Erinvale. By that time, Jim Leahy endured a heart attack and could not run the farm himself. Bryan visited Europe with a friend in 1986 and backpacked for two years. When he returned, he worked on gold with George.

Bernie was with Dan at Korgua for several years and wanted out, so Bryan took over and stayed after that. Bryan also ran a warehouse in the Bena for Collins and Leahy in Hagen.

All of Dan's children worked in the coffee industry for a time. George took over the Chimbu Coffee Society from Mike Collins for several years then went gold trading. All of Dan's girls went to secretarial college. Dan said to all of his children that they must have a trade to fall back on.

Weipa John, another of Dan's sons, was trained as a diesel fitter in Weipa. He returned in the Christmas holidays and worked like a Trojan for his father. He said his father was a hard man, yet funny and no one wanted to get on the wrong side of him. When he returned from school, he was involved in coffee with different organisations buying coffee, but he did not want to work for relatives.

Bernie Leahy – Son of Dan Leahy

Bernie managed Korgua for Dan Leahy for a decade before leaving so also had much involvement in coffee growing.

Ian Fraser – Son of Eileen Leahy

Ian is a son of Eileen Leahy and was another of the Leahy family to have contributed much to coffee in New Guinea. Ian came to New Guinea in 1954 when he was only 16 years old. He worked with his Uncle Jim and cousins, Fred and Danny, before purchasing a plantation from Keith Beach and another from Lionel Crawford. He built up the farm size to 180 acres through acquisitions. Ian went on to be one of the last three European coffee growers in New Guinea. He was the last one in the Wau valley. He was also involved in shared family coffee ventures with his uncles and cousins.

Mike and Caroline Collins – Chesterson Coffee – Lake Tinaroo



Chesterson Coffee at Lake Tinaroo, QLD.

Michael, a son of Mike and Margie Collins and nephew of Joe Collins, returned from New Guinea in 2003. He and his wife Caroline Collins, nee Rollinson of Mt Garnet, have a small yet successful coffee plantation, Chesterson, at Lake Tinaroo in the Atherton Tablelands, North Queensland.



New Guinea times: Patrick (Paddy) Leahy (Joe's cousin) with three of Joe's brothers, John (Johnny), Michael (Mike) and Edgar (Eddie) Collins and Joe's sister Jocelyn Collins (later Unsworth). The photo was taken at Tigi Coffee Plantation in New Guinea which was a large coffee plantation owned by John and Anne Collins. Both images are from Doug Unsworth's family history

The legend continues.