HISTORICAL

and

BIOGRAPHICAL

STUDIES

Vaughan Bryers

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Non-fiction writing 2015

Given the idea of producing an anthology of works by The Lithgow Writers' Group, I produced a volume of my own contributions – mainly fiction and essay work – as a test project. That went very well and was received enthusiastically by friends and family members to whom I showed it. That in turn resulted in producing another 3 copies, using varying methods of binding – a good test procedure for choosing what works and what doesn't with my resources and equipment.

Over the summer holiday recess, with time on my hands, I judged it a good idea to make a similar volume to gather together the various non-fictional works that I have produced this year. After all, I see myself primarily as a writer of history and biography. The fictional works produced for the LWG have been of enormous value to increase my "tool box" of writing skills and have been great fun, but I must always return to my primary tasks.

These are first and foremost a biography of Helen Cochrane, my grandfather's aunt and a fine artist and philanthropist, and secondarily the history of Lithgow's Zig Zag Brewery. The pieces collected here are my first steps to what I intend to be published works in the future.

Vaughan Bryers

Oakey Park 1st January 2016

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A plea for understanding, gentle reader

Please understand that the work written here is very much of a tentative nature. It is me finding my way as a writer of history and biography.

I enjoy doing the research and I am quite pleased to say that much of this material has never been collated and presented before. In that respect the work is all original.

I have two goals in my writing: the first is to be meticulous in my information gathering, relying on primary sources and being a very harsh judge of what is put down in black and white if I do not have the best information. Where I speculate, I hope I have made it clear.

But the second goal is to make history and biography, traditionally thought of as dry, come alive through good writing. It is here that my involvement with the LWG has been of huge benefit.

Some of the pieces overlap in content. Where this happens it is because the individual pieces were written for different purposes or audiences. Forgive the repetition, but each piece stands on it's own.

Lastly, all of these works are ongoing projects, therefore necessarily unfinished. Some are even incomplete just due to running out of time, energy or inspiration at various times through the year.

THE ZIG ZAG BREWERY - Part One

Of all those great industries born in Lithgow's boom years of the 1870s and '80s, only very few survived the repeated shocks of the first half of the 20th Century. Under the economic changes brought about by Federation, the Great Depression and two World Wars, the coalmines and power station of the Farmers Creek valley were superseded by larger, more modern operations to the west; the iron and steel works had transferred to Port Kembla by 1930; and with it, associated industries like coke-making and engineering support all eventually closed.

In this context it is even more remarkable that Lithgow's Zig Zag Brewery (also primarily known as Terry's Brewery in its latter years) survived until as late as 1958. That made it the last country brewery left standing in NSW, and its lifespan of 70 years (with only two short periods of closure during the Depression) also gave it the title of the longest operating country brewery in NSW.

The tale of the brewery contains all the elements of a great story. There are heroes and villains, successes and failures, episodes of great hilarity and tragedies both personal and corporate.

The name associated with its founding is Henry 'Harry' Corbett, but behind him was the support of his wife Eliza and father-in-law, William Mills. It is clearly Mills who had the resources and expertise for this venture and the subsequent record shows that the brewery was a legacy for his daughter and grand-children. Mills, at age 72, died unexpectedly just six days after the Brewing Licence was issued on the 25th July 1888.

It came into being in a rush. Brewing began in temporary premises while the impressive (and still standing) Brew Tower was being built. The Mills family had been in the hotel-keeping business in Lithgow for nearly a decade with several licences and their 'flagship' Imperial Hotel, strategically built opposite Eskbank Station (although this was almost immediately wrong-footed by the new Lithgow Station). But in early 1888 the town's brewer, Richard Inch, was in one of his periodic financial crises. He had always managed to overcome these, but this time it was different and his Eskbank Brewery was sold to a consortium of local hoteliers and businessmen in May.

Mills may have made an unsuccessful bid for Inch's brewery or have been in disagreement with his fellows or just thought he could do better; but in any event the race was on. Immediately the site of the new brewery was purchased (in the name of Corbett (2/3) and Alfred Goodare (1/3) and secondhand brewing equipment bought for an immediate start before the new plant could be delivered. (Goodare was the fiancé of Mills' grand-daughter, Sarah, and played no part in the subsequent history). Within 10 weeks of the sale of Inch's, beer was beginning to flow from Corbett's vats, two weeks ahead of the new opposition.

And so it began, brewing in a small way in a hastily built shed while the new brewery was built around it, showing from the start the remarkable vigour and intelligence that characterised the first half of the brewery's history and ensured its survival when so many others failed, especially after Federation and the introduction of a new Commonwealth Excise regime which saw hundreds of small local breweries unable to comply.

Right from the start, the 'heir apparent' was William Mills's grandson, James A. S. Jones. After he finished school at Cooerwull Academy he was sent for an apprenticeship with Henry Burrows at his Surrey and/or Waverley Breweries in Sydney. Jones was clearly a man of great capacity and character and his years at Burrows' equipped him well in both practical brewing technology and business skills. On returning, he took over the active management from about 1891 and, in 1897 at just 26 years of age, the business was transferred to his name. Harry Corbett, having successfully established the brewery and 'kept the seat warm', was bought out and soon left Lithgow to lead a somewhat itinerant life for his remaining 18 years.

John A. S. (Jackass) Jones is by any measure the greatest of the heroes of this story. His life outside the business of the brewery was outstanding – a horseman of note, bicycle racing champ, motor sportsman on two wheels and four, socialite and *bon viveur*, town councillor and mayor for a term, universally loved in his town of Lithgow. But of interest here is his drive and intelligence in building up a small-town brewery into a great success.

At the end of his 33 years at the helm, the business comprised a network of about 15 hotels in the district (at least three of which were personally owned), had steadily and regularly upgraded its equipment and techniques and had

achieved an output sufficient to supply the Central West with beer at a competitive price to the much larger Sydney breweries.

In 1910, Jones married the charming and feisty Sydney socialite, Nina Harris, and after 1913 took a step back from the day-to-day running of the brewery although very much remaining in active control. As manager and Head Brewer he appointed Alex Laing whose long and faithful service to the brewery was to keep it running in the difficult years that were ahead. Without Alex Laing it is doubtful that the business would have survived the Great Depression of 1929-33, thus qualifying him as the second of the heroes.

All through the brewery's history, incidents of theft have occurred, but the one of 21st August 1926 had tragic consequences. Two men, Porter and Lyons, having stolen a week or so before, foolishly returned for another go. Sergeant Wallace and Trooper Bell had the scene under surveillance and arrested the pair red-handed. Porter submitted and was handcuffed, but Lyons attempted freedom by attacking the police. In the struggle, he was fatally wounded. The coroner attached no blame on Trooper Bell who was a young and well-regarded man, and the pistol discharge being in the heat of combat rather than premeditated. Still, for Lyons it was a high price for a petty theft. Trooper Bell was reported to have been distressed by the incident all his days.

In 1927, Jones decided to retire and cash in. A company, the Lithgow Brewing Co. Ltd., was floated with Jones retaining a minority share. As history records, this was lucky timing on his behalf. He had left the brewery in

excellent shape and was justly remunerated for his nearly 40 years of good management. He was also wise to retain a share-holding because, two years later on the brink of Depression, the speculators moved in and paid almost three times the share price. Jones again received a dividend and severed his connection with the business he had built, although he retained all the property titles to both the brewery itself, three hotels and several properties in and around Lithgow.

The new company of October 1929, The Sydney Brewing Co. Ltd., was a speculative push out of the Richmond Brewing Co. of Melbourne to expand into NSW. The timing was disastrous. A purchase and capital raising float of £ 200,000 clearly failed and the new proprietors found themselves with embarrassing debt and falling sales as the Depression hit Lithgow and its industrial base particularly hard. One by one the shareholders bailed out, leaving a few to struggle on and try as best they could to keep the gates open while they waited for better times or a financial saviour. Neither appeared in time and the company was wound up and the receivers were appointed.

And so, in September 1932, when the next comp-any, the Zig-Zag (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd., was floated its capital was a modest £ 10,000. But the low entry price was no help; it too failed, went into receiver-ship again and this time the gates of the brewery were locked.

At a Sheriff's sale in March 1934, the great Zig Zag Brewery was knocked down for a mere £ 1,400 and its darkest hour was nigh. The sale was made to one Valleck Cartwright Mallan, a native of Adelaide and member of a prestigious family with interests in brewing there. But Valleck was clearly skating on thin legal ice. As a string of court cases both before, during and

well after his association with Lithgow would attest, he was a con-man, a spiv and a criminal. Mind you, he did get the brewery running again and so played a part.

From his very first day in charge, with faithful Alex Laing back to do the actual work, Mallan decided that paying his Excise Duty was an option he would forgo. Within four months he was arrested and found himself in Court in what the Sydney Morning Herald reported as the largest-scale Customs frauds since Federation. While it is not specifically recorded, there can be little doubt that Laing, disgusted by the turn of events, would have alerted the authorities. Found guilty, somehow Mallan evaded a gaol sentence but was heavily fined and stripped of his directorship and hence ownership. But that chapter was not quite closed.

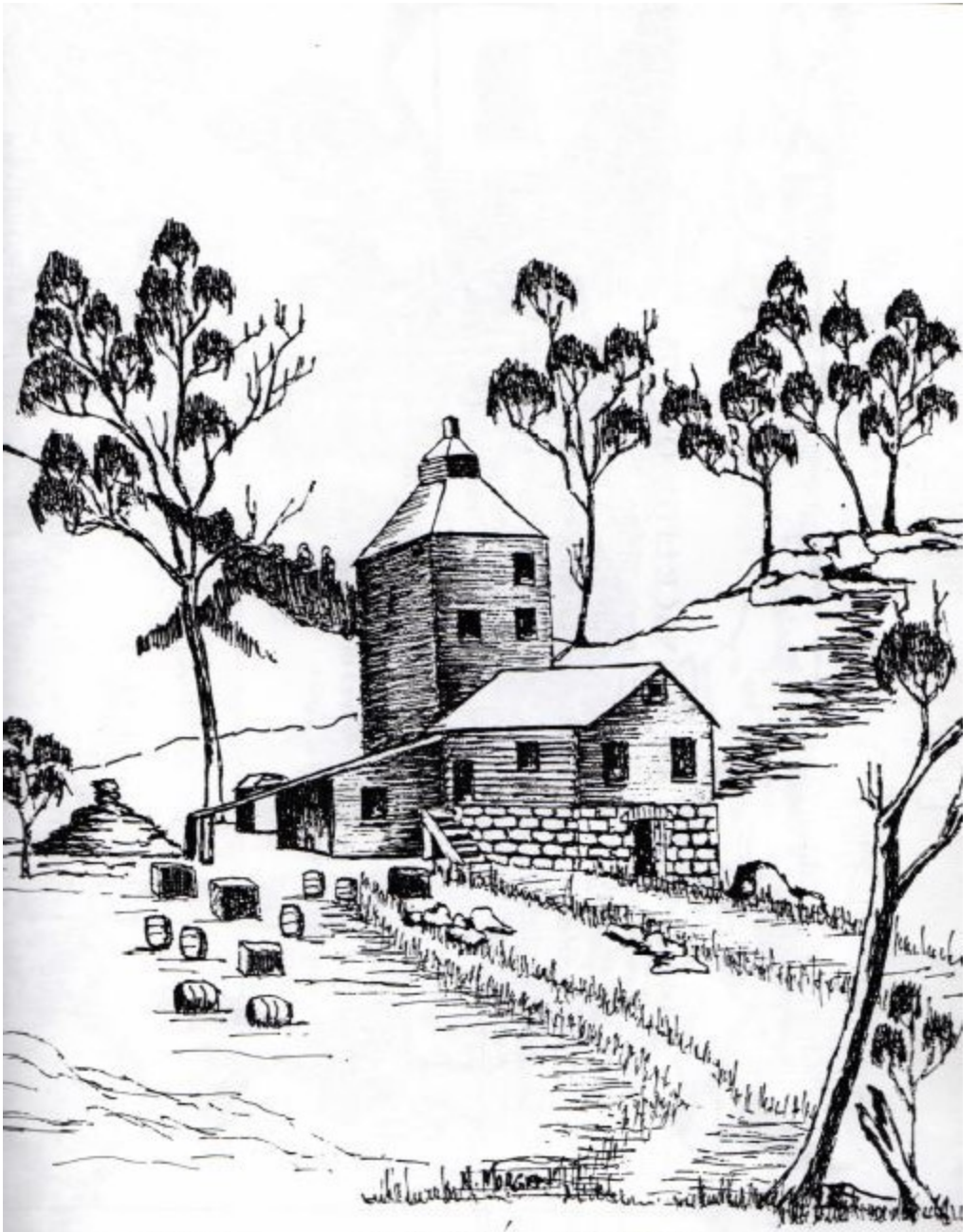
At the ensuing Sheriff's sale in August 1934 the business interests and plant were knocked down for the token amount of £ 500. To add insult to injury, the purchaser Hyman Wolfensohn, was a business associate of Mallan's and some of the proceeds of the floated Blue Mountains (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd. no doubt found their way back into Mallan's pockets. Wolfensohn himself had no interest in brewing, but one fortuitous event may have justified his otherwise useless ownership. He appointed (or perhaps re-appointed) Walter 'Fred' Lanfear as Head Brewer and Alfred 'Norm' Wyld as Manager. This was to replace Alex Laing who finally had had enough of seeing his life's work being the plaything of petty criminals and took up a well-deserved position with Tooth's Brewery in Sydney. Wolfensohn was the final chapter in the 8 dark years of the brewery's history and Lanfear and Wyld were the new brooms who would bring in the next 20 years of prosperity.

A REVISED HISTORY

OF LITHGOW'S

ZIG ZAG BREWERY

1888 – 1958



CORBETTS & GOODARES BREWERY LITHGOW
—1889—

TIME LINE

1875 William Mills and Harry Corbett arrive in Lithgow
1881 Mills and Corbett build the Imperial Hotel
1888 Death of Wm Mills, Brewing licence to Harry Corbett and Alfred Goodare
1897 J.A.S. Jones appointed Brewery Manager
1906 Jones buys business and freehold from Corbett
1915 Death of Harry Corbett
1927 Jones sells to Lithgow Brewery Ltd.
1929 Sydney Brewery Ltd. float fails.
1930 Arthur Bodimeade takes control of Lithgow Brewery Ltd.
1931 Lithgow Brewery Ltd. wound up and put into receivership.
1932 "Gale and Henry" and "Cornell and Bond" recorded in *Breweries of Australia.*
1932 Zig-Zag (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd. formed
1933 Zig-Zag (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd. declared bankrupt and put into receivership.
Death of J.A.S. Jones.
1934 Lithgow Zig-Zag Brewery Co. Ltd. formed. Excise swindle and forfeiture.
Blue Mountains (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd. purchases at Sherrif's Auction.
W.F. Lanfear appointed Chief Brewer.
1935 Blue Mountains (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd. bankrupt.
1936 Wingate Terry forms Terry Brewing Co.
1937 Terry bankrupt, business continues under receivers
Lanfear 'proprietor', legal status unclear
1939 Death of W.F. Lanfear, Norm Wyld purchases Terry Brewing Co.
1941 Norm Wyld purchases freehold.
1950 Stout wins Best Empire Bottled Stout in London.
1951 Terry's Brewery Ltd. floated with shares to employees and locals.
Death of Norm Wyld. W.Z. Black appointed Managing Director.
1956 Mudgee Federal Brewery closing. Zig Zag becomes NSW's last country brewery.
1958 Terry's Brewery Ltd. wound up. Brewery closes.

THE HISTORY OF THE ZIG ZAG BREWERY

Lithgow's Zig Zag Brewery operated for over 70 years. This alone is a rarely equalled achievement in Australia where the average life of a brewery has been well under 10 years and where failure is ten times more likely than success. It survived the first Federal Government Excise Bill of 1901 which demolished ¾ of all Australian breweries at the time; it survived (only just) the Depression and two World Wars. It carried the honour of being the very last surviving NSW country brewery. There is no doubt that its survival rested on the working men of Lithgow and the district; the coal, iron and steel workers, the railwaymen, whose hard physical labour needed the celebration of beer in the good times, and its comfort and condolence in the bad.

All the more impressive because this brewery does not stand in an industrial suburb of one of our great cities, but literally 'in the bush', in a beautiful cosy gully overhung by sandstone bluffs that catch the morning and afternoon sun and is fed by a spring which delivers perfect rock-filtered water.

The current tranquility of this lovely site is enough to lull us into forgetting that for all of those 70 years this was a place of bustling activity, providing a living for scores of Lithgow families, profits for a lucky few and, most importantly, a first-rate product that lubricated the lives of Lithgovians and, at times, of those all over NSW.

It has seen years of spectacular success and of spectacular failure, a rich history of heroes and villains and of the normal workers, often stuck in-between, but who always provided continuity when management failed.

History is of course only one-third of the whole story, because there is a great "NOW' and there will be a great "FUTURE", but history has a way of making sense of the present and future in surprising ways and also offers us insights into understanding the TODAY and into dreaming up the best possible TOMORROW. So let's begin.

THE BEGINNINGS: 1888 – 1897

Marriage is a beautiful thing. In the case of the first two holders of the brewing licence (25th July 1888) it might be said that marriage also brought fame and fortune. In 1888 the brand-new brewery was known as "Corbett and Goodare's", but how did a millwright and a haberdasher come to be running a brewery?

Henry Philip (Harry) Corbett arrived in Lithgow Valley around 1875, just as the town began to prosper. It had been just a scattered farming district (Hartley was bigger and more important) until the construction of the Western Railway (and in particular the spectacular Zig Zag Descent) brought hundreds of workers to the area which subsequently became "The Gateway to the West", in railway terms at least. The railway opened up the demand for Lithgow's coal reserves, up until then only sporadically used for purely local needs. After 1869, Lithgow took off. The population rose, other industries sprang up and a real town was born. In particular, Australia's first successful iron industries began here, and it was the construction of this new industrial infrastructure that would have brought Harry the Millwright to Lithgow.

In 1876 another builder, William Mills – a most remarkable and energetic man – arrived in the new town following, as had been his lifelong habit, opportunity (see separate article). It is probable that the two men worked together, formally or not, on the construction of the new Eskbank Ironworks and at least one of the town's churches (Mills had come direct from being the principal builder at the copper-mining town of Currawang, near Goulburn). Accompanying Mills were his widowed daughter, Eliza Jones and her children, Sarah (9) and John (5). Two other young daughters were left buried

at Currawang and Eliza's husband William was found floating face-down in Darling Harbour in suspicious circumstances. It was not a happy time.

But in 1881 the relationship between Harry Corbett and the Mills family was cemented by Harry's marriage to William's daughter Eliza. Together Mills and Corbett built the new Imperial Hotel, opposite Eskbank Railway Station and Harry gave up building to become the nominal licensee.

And the other brewery partner, Alfred A Goodare? Well, newly-arrived in Lithgow with his brother (Benjamin Watson Goodare), this shopkeeper married Eliza's daughter Sarah (now 21) in December 1888 and so also became a part of the Mills family. (Goodare's role in the brewery only lasted eighteen months. Things may not have been too rosy as by 1895 Alfred and Sarah, by then operating the Hydora Hotel up the road in Blackheath, had separated and subsequently divorced).

It is likely that William Mills himself was the true instigator of the Brewery business. It is he who would have had the capital and the experience. It is likely (yet to be proven) that he was the builder of the Belfast Brewery in Port Fairy, Victoria, and had many, many major buildings to his credit in the Wollongong district – including the state's first purpose-built coal-loading jetty at Bellambi.

Given that the first licensee partnership (the licence was granted just 5 days after William's death on 7th August 1888) consisted of the husbands of his daughter and his grand-daughter, it is looking like a family business with "Mills" stamped all over it. And, as we shall see, in the subsequent years the patterns of ownership and business activity all devolved to his children and

grand-children. Even during his lifetime, Harry Corbett became increasingly marginalised.

There was already an established brewery in Lithgow at that time, the Eskbank Brewery of Richard Jeffree Inch (from a Cornish family already in the brewery game from Hill End, Bathurst and Blayney). Inch's had been very successful for over a decade, supplying most of the district's pubs and taking out awards at various competitions, but by 1888 Inch was in financial trouble anyway and lost out to the new competitor almost immediately and selling out to a new consortium within a year of Zig Zag's opening. The new owners, The Burton Brewing Company, did continue trading for another twenty years but could never match the dynamism of Zig Zag. Richard Inch staged a short-lived comeback in 1902 as The Blue Mountains Brewery, but even he could not make a third Lithgow brewery work. Another brewery in Blackheath had opened in 1884 but failed in 1889. There is an unconfirmed story that some of its brewing equipment came to Zig Zag, but it is more probable that it went to Burton's since Zig Zag had just opened with new equipment and Burton's (Inch's) was running a 10 year old plant.

By 1897, having done a brewing apprenticeship at Waverley Brewery in what is now Bondi Junction, Eliza's son John Jones was appointed Brewery Manager, and Harry and Eliza, after guiding the brewery through its initial decade moved to Queensland to pursue a mining venture. This tells me that they had become quite successful and that the Brewery must have been profitable from the start. We don't know how their mining went, but they eventually returned to Lithgow and became involved in oil-shale mining at Newnes and Glen Davis.

THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE: 1897 – 1928

John Alexander Stammers Jones was born in Currawang in 1870. His parents (William and Eliza) chose elegant middle names perhaps to counterbalance the rather plain John Jones. At some stage, probably very early on, Jack A S Jones became known (always very affectionately) as Jackass Jones. Whether prompted by his parents' aspirations or by determination to prove himself no jackass, J.A.S went on to become a very high achiever. He was just 11 when his mother remarried●, so he became in every sense Harry Corbett's stepson and when the new brewery opened in 1888, at the age of 18 he would have been completely involved in the new business.

Around 1892 he was sent to Sydney to learn the art and craft of brewing at the Waverley Brewery, the third largest Sydney brewery after Tooth's and Toohey's. This was located on the ridge of what is now Bondi Junction with a fine view down to Sydney Harbour. Whether or not his apprenticeship at Waverley included management aspects in addition to practical brewing is not yet known, but for whatever reason, when J.A.S returned to Lithgow and his parents turned the responsibility of managing the brewery over to him, his tenure of over thirty years was a great success, the first of two Golden Ages.

● His father, William Watkin Jones, had emigrated from Wales as a mining engineer and surveyor who had married Eliza Mills, 1866. By 1867 he was working for the Currawang Copper Co Ltd and later, prospecting independently, discovered a new copper ore body at Michelago near Cooma. This was developed in 1870 by a controversial consortium from Melbourne and much disputation occurred including a Supreme Court Action in March 1872. Exactly one month later, Jones was found floating face-down in Darling Harbour with some evidence of foul play. The Coroner's Jury, with a startling lack of interest, did not find a cause of death.

In 1906, J.A.S. (who was, remember, William Mills' grandson) bought not only the brewery business‡, but also the freehold of the land. His sister, Sarah, now divorced from Alfred Goodare, was well into a career of hotel ownership and management (which would include the Hydora at Blackheath and the famous Stammers Hotel at Newnes). She eventually re-married more wisely (into the prominent Cripps family of Blackheath) and went on, like her mother Eliza, to become a powerful and very successful businesswoman in her own right until the time of her death in 1946. William Mills' strategy for the ongoing prosperity of his family came to its fruition.

‡

There is an unconfirmed unlikely story that the actual 1906 purchaser was the local chemist, a Mr. W. Roper, with Jones acting as Manager and Brewer.

DEPRESSION AND DISASTERS: 1929 – 1935

With exquisite timing, after 30 years of running the brewery and at the ripe but still active age of 57, J.A.S cashed in. In October 1927, with four others●, he floated The Lithgow Brewery Limited and sold the business to it for £70,000. What share he held in the new company is not yet known (probably 1/5). He and his wife, Vida, left Lithgow in February 1928 to live in their Darling Point home until his death on 3rd May 1933.

The new company started optimistically with plans for equipment upgrades and brought in a very experienced brewer, John Breheney from Queensland to take the role of Manager and Chief Brewer. But without J.A.S.'s great experience at the helm and with the western world tottering on the edge of financial suicide (and soon after going over into the Great Depression) the next ten years of the Brewery's life can only be described as chaos. There were frequent (possibly eight) changes of ownership, intermittent closures (at least twice), bankruptcy and receiver-ships and the greatest excise swindle since Federation. Somehow the ship stayed afloat. Battered, swamped, becalmed, marooned, she was never wrecked, always rising to sail on another day when the weather turned fairer. Indeed to the credit of all concerned, by 1937 Zig Zag was one of only two country NSW breweries left standing (the other being the Federal Brewery, Mudgee). It had outlived the Bathurst and Orange breweries, even outlasted the mighty breweries of the Hunter Valley.

● The others were: J. Felix Booth, Eric Campbell (THE Eric Campbell of New Guard fame) Michael James Dillane, all of Sydney, and Arthur George Bodimeade, the successful Lithgow baker and storekeeper.

The Depression was severe for Lithgow; thousands out of work, mine closures and the subsequent union unrest, work-for-the-dole schemes. Hoskins' Australian Iron and Steel closed its Lithgow Works and moved to Port Kembla. Proud working men who had survived the hardships of the mine and the steelworks found themselves unwanted and (in their own eyes) humiliated. Beer, which might have been increasingly a comfort, became a luxury; consumption dropped, profits dropped.

In response, in October 1929, the directors of The Lithgow Brewery Ltd (including Jones) attempted a public float (The Sydney Brewing Limited) to raise £200,000, but this did not succeed. As the Depression bit deeper, the Brewery kept on working but clearly under difficult conditions. In 1930 one director, Arthur Bodimeade (a very successful baker from Wollongong who had re-settled and set up in Lithgow) took a more prominent role, taking over the management and probably buying out many if not all of the other directors.

After some more attempts at restructuring, The Lithgow Brewery Ltd was wound up and the business put in the hands of receivers, only three years after the departure of Jackass Jones – no Jackass after all. The world had changed very quickly and he had sold at the top of the market.

Deutsher's *The Breweries of Australia* records the names of 1) Gale and Henry and 2) Cornell and Bond, as licensees in the chain of ownership. Walter Frederick Gale and William Henry were two highly respected citizens and unlikely brewery proprietors. Subject to further research, it appears most likely that they were acted as administrators appointed by the Receiver.

Of Cornell and Bond, no information has yet surfaced. "Cornell" is most likely Mr A. C. Connell, the Bathurst Sheriff's Officer who conducted the Sheriff's Sale of the assets in 1934.

In September 1932, a consortium of 7 mainly local men● headed by the formidable Dr. Grove Johnson, Government Analyst and consultant to the major city breweries, formed the Zig-Zag (Lithgow) Brewery Limited and purchased the brewery for a mere £10,000. It must have seemed a bargain and Grove Johnson was no fool, but the new consortium must have encountered unforeseen problems. Perhaps they thought the Depression was soon to end and things would pick up. They didn't. Nothing happened, and the brewery ceased operations for the first time in almost 50 years. The new consortium was declared bankrupt and the brewery put in the hands of receivers.

In March 1934 a new company, The Lithgow Zig-Zag Brewery Co Ltd and its Managing Director, Valleck Cartwright Mallan, took over the operation. It is not entirely clear, but it seems that Mallan was the sole proprietor, and his stake in the brewery amounted to no more than £1,400, perhaps not that surprising for a business in such dire circumstances.

Mallan arrived fresh from a string of legal proceedings in Sydney for dubious business dealings in highly speculative ventures. Curiously, the Mallan family was one of the most highly respected in Adelaide with extensive interests in breweries there. Valleck seems to have been a 'black sheep', perhaps remitted off to racy Sydney from pious Adelaide.

● Grove Johnson, A.S. Clark, W. O. Robinson, G.A. Dibbs, E.A. Morris, G.H. Fleming, E.L. Holmes

But from Day 1, Mallan decided that he did not need to pay the Government excise on his production. He under-reported the brewery's output and substituted low-strength figures for his full-strength beer. He corrupted hoteliers by offering to split the savings. This only lasted a matter of months before he was caught by an Excise Audit – most likely instigated by a tip-off from an honest employee or customer. His Head Brewer, Mr Alex Laing, gave evidence at Mallan's trial that he (Laing) had tried to dissuade Mallan from his actions.

(In July, August and September of 1934 a series of trials were held at Lithgow Police Court to prosecute the company, Mallan and associated hoteliers for various fraud and evasion crimes. Mallan was convicted and fined heavily but somehow evaded a prison sentence.)

The brewery was confiscated from the short-lived Lithgow Zig-Zag Brewery Co Ltd, placed in the hands of the Bathurst Sheriff (Mr A.C. Connell) and quickly (in August 1934) snapped up at auction, apparently at the bargain-basement price of £500, by a Mr Hyman Wolfensohn and a group of colleagues who rapidly incorporated The Blue Mountains (Lithgow) Brewery Ltd. to raise another £4500 for necessary expenses and applied for a licence.

This venture again came to absolutely nothing. While his son's* autobiography suggests that it was more a country retreat and hobby for Sydney dilettantes than a real business venture, it emerged that Wolfensohn

* Hyman's son James Wolfensohn, went on to be President of The World Bank 1995-2005. He was a young child during the time of Hyman's weekend retreats in the Brewery House! Perhaps drinking the Lithgow Valley Springs water at an early age contributed to his later brilliance.

had been a senior employee of the disgraced Mallan! Was this some elaborate money-laundering scheme or a scheme to cover his (Mallan's) losses by raising a capital float from a fresh set of investors? As late as 1950, Mallan was still facing courts for tax evasion.

As with Mallan's venture, Wolfensohn did get the brewery producing again under the long-suffering abilities of head-brewer and manager Laing. But this time it was too much. In 1934, Alex Laing – for six long and difficult years the mainstay of the brewery, and Jackass Jones's right-hand man for fifteen years before that – walked. After nearly 30 years at Brewery Gully he had secured a position with Tooth and Co. in Sydney and, with his family, turned his back on Lithgow and the brewery he had helped make such a success. It must have broken his heart.

The brewery then suffered its second major closure, the gates being closed for about 12 months. In late 1935, a creditors' meeting was called to make claims on the company, but they had little joy.

Wolfensohn had, however, made one very good decision that was to outlast him. To replace Alex Laing, he had engaged (25th Oct 1934) Mr. Walter Frederick Lanfear as Head Brewer. Lanfear was a third-generation brewer from a family with experience in Queens-land and Perth breweries, as well as lengthy periods spent overseas including at the Guinness Brewery, Dublin•.

In 1936, the last of the between-wars entrepreneurs to try his hand brought a name that stuck, even though he personally fared no better than his predecessors, Claud Norman Wingate Terry. Terry had lived the life of a wealthy grazier and socialite at Yass and Bowral, including marriage into the

prominent Clark family. He was divorced by his wife in 1935 and soon after (April 1936) sought a licence to restart the Blue Mountains Brewery, now to be known as the Terry Brewing Company. This started with some fanfare on 15 June and by 10th July, the first 18-gallon keg was broached at the Lithgow Workingmen's Club. and quickly developed a reputation for personal energy and the quality of his beers. Another person employed about this time by Wingate Terry was Alfred Norman Wyld, probably as the business's manager.

Again, in a very short time, the latest endeavour failed financially and the Terry Brewing Company was soon in the hands of the receivers. But this time, something was different. Terry had, while personally failing, sown the seed for future success, indeed for the brewery's second Golden Age, by his astute choice of personnel. The receivers could see this and appointed Lanfear and Wyld to continue running the company. Lanfear had been described in a newspaper report of April 1937 as the 'proprietor' of the brewery and beer labels of the time carried his name.

THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE: 1938 – 1958

Norm Wyld invites parallels with Jackass Jones. What any business needs is a long period of stability with a steady hand at the lead. It cannot be denied that larger influences are at hand as well. In this case, the outbreak of a new war was kind to Lithgow. As the nation went on to a war footing, industry was required to play its part and Lithgow answered the call. The Munitions Factory expanded massively, coal and electricity were in demand. Work flowed into the area and with it, money.

Even after the long war, things began to improve with the post-war reconstruction boom. This was a good time to be in business.

Walter Lanfear alas died in May 1939 at only 52 years of age. But his contribution was such that, just 3 months later in August, the Receiver considered the brewery in a sufficiently recovered state to relinquish the Brewing Licence back, now to Norman Wyld.

The actual freehold of the property had remained in the hands of the Jones family since the beginning (another indication that it was in fact Eliza (Jones) Corbett who instigated the brewery in the first place) but in 1941, Jackass' widow Vida finally sold the brewery property to Norm Wyld. And while initially, after Walter Lanfear's death, Norman Wyld seems to have been in a partnership with a Mr P Newdick, by 1945 he had bought him out to become sole owner of both property and business.

And now the brewery was really able to take off as a modern business. There had been a severe undersupply of beer immediately following the end of the war. Zig Zag Brewery had always been the main supplier of beer to the district, competing fiercely against the Sydney breweries, and especially to the Lithgow Workmen's Club but in early1946 a much bigger customer emerged. The NSW Branch of the RSL was unable to purchase enough beer for its many sub-branches, and so a deal was locked in to take the whole of the brewery's production – as much as it could make – to ensure supply. Production at that stage was about 20,000L per week and the RSL said it could take ten times that amount! It was even mooted that the RSL might purchase the brewery!

Of course the 'dream come true' was in fact too good to last long and the big Sydney breweries (Tooth's, Toohey's and Resch's) with their massive capacity were not going to let that situation go on for too long. The beer shortage came to an end, but Zig Zag had had a huge confidence boost.

In October 1950, at the hands of the then Head Brewer Allan Wolfenden, the brewery entered its best Stout into the Brewers' Exhibition in London and was awarded First Prize in the "British Empire and Commonwealth Bottled Stout" Division. The remainder of the dozen bottles sent was offered to HM King George VI. It is not known if he drank them!

Allan Wolfenden was, like Alex Laing a generation before him, a home-grown Lithgovian brewer. He is listed in the 1930 electoral roll as a Brewery Hand while all the other Wolfendens were coal-miners.

In mid-1951, Norm Wyld, again following Jackass Jones' example, decided to float the business into a company, Terry's Brewery Ltd. Employees were offered shares in the business, other major investors included William Zealand (Billy) Black, the mayor of Lithgow, but Norm Wyld retained the Managing Directors role and, presumably effective control.

Just as this new order was settling in, the unforeseen happened and Norm Wyld died in August 1951, aged just 56. Billy Black took over the Managing Directorship (in addition to that of the Workmen's Club).

Another milestone was reached in 1956 with the closure of Mudgee's Federal Brewery, thereby making Terry's Zig Zag Brewery the last of NSW's country breweries left standing – a very proud distinction indeed.

That distinction was only to last another two years. Improved transportation meant that the giant Sydney breweries could distribute their product ever more cheaply and efficiently. Lithgow itself had begun a slow decline with the winding down of its engineering and power-generating industries. Coalmining was becoming more and more mechanised and was moving out to the larger modern mines away from the town centre.

~ THE DEATH OF Mr W W JONES ~

It could all be solved with the answer to one question:-

"Did the boarder return to Mrs Jackson's Lodging-house in Clarence-street, Sydney on the night of Wednesday 10th of April 1872?".

If the answer is "Yes, he did", then William Watkin Jones almost certainly took his own life the following morning, a defeated and hopeless man.

If "No, he didn't", then he was surely murdered.

The Inquest into his death – which resulted in an open finding – was held only 19 hours after the discovery of his corpse, bobbing gently under the old Hunter River Steam Navigation Company's Wharf close to where the trendy King Street Wharf development now rises; Darling Harbour, Sydney, at the then-foot of Margaret Street and fairly close to Mrs Jackson's lodgings.

A mere nineteen hours, of course, left no time for any police investigation beyond the initial discovery and a cursory check. This seems very odd to the modern sensibility, trained by endless hours of watching "Silent witness" and "Wire in the blood" and especially as the Coroner noted many signs of conflict and violence on the body – an existing black-eye, more recent abrasion to the knuckles and a bruise around the throat. And yet, one key witness was located – a witness who tendered much evidence to suggest that Jones was responsible for his own demise, but one who (seen with the benefit of historical research) may have had an undeclared interest in the death.

This witness, John Jenkins, licensee of *The Forth and Clyde Hotel* in Balmain, attested that Jones had arrived in Sydney from Gulgong two or three weeks earlier (say 20th–27th March). The policeman (Senior Constable William Dick)who retrieved and initially examined the body deposed that he had found "nothing upon it, but an empty purse and a piece of newspaper." The empty purse backed up Jenkins' evidence that Jones was broke, but no further mention, no enquiry, was ever made about the piece of newspaper. Why would a man's last possession be a piece of newspaper?

On the 16th March, reported that night and in following days in the Melbourne *Argus,* a Supreme Court sitting in Melbourne found against another man named Jenkins. Was this the piece of newspaper, torn out and sent to Jones? His vindication against the man who may have ruined him? Was Jones seeking justice for himself?

Mr. William Jenkins was an important man, a Government Mining Agent responsible for the administration of mining activities in Gippsland, but also an active promoter and investor of dozens of speculative mining ventures. The jury (in majority, not unanimously) found that he had acted deceptively in share-trading of *The Monmouth Copper Mine*, a mine that had been discovered by and embodied all the hopes of the dead man, William Watkin Jones. The mine, discovered to much fanfare in late 1869, had come to nothing and some local newspaper reports implied that William Jenkins and his partner J.R. Davies had been "dodgy" all along. Jones had staked all on this discovery (Monmouth was his birthplace) and had lost all including, it would seem, his family and self-respect. He had taken refuge with relatives in Gulgong.

Although lodging in Clarence-street since his arrival in Sydney, Jones had visited *The Forth and Clyde Hotel* at Balmain on at least three occasions. This was clearly not just for a drink as there would have been many, many pubs along the way. He had known the licensee John Jenkins from a time when both men were at the copper-mining township of Currawang. This was close to the date and place of the discovery of the *Monmouth* mine (and of the involvement of Mr. William Jenkins). Perhaps the men were old friends, although the testimony of Jenkins at the Coroner's Inquest was set in a negative, distancing tone. If (and this is not proven at the moment) there was a connection between John Jenkins and Mr. Edward Jenkins, with John Jenkins as the go-between to Jones, then Jones would have a very specific reason to visit – to claim his vindication.

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Aspects of the Inquest are very puzzling to the 21st Century mind. First, the unseemly haste – a mere 19 hours – and the lack of any police investigation. Then the testimony of the doctor responsible for the autopsy, Dr. George Henry Hamilton, estimated that the body had been in the water for "five or six days" whereas other witnesses had seen him alive only a day-and-a-half prior to the retrieval of his body – a serious inconsistency.

Dr. Hamilton gave the official cause of death as "asphyxia by drowning" and yet the body was afloat before gas decomposition would have raised a submerged body and the clothing that was described would have not aided buoyancy. This flotation is more consistent with his death being out of water and the lungs containing air.

Clear marks of fighting were not considered overly suspicious. Jones had clearly been beaten in the days leading up to his death. What appeared as a ligature mark around his throat was not considered sufficiently deep to cause strangulation and was attributed to having his tie done up too tightly!

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So; was it suicide or was it murder?

It all hinges on that question that should have been asked of Mrs. Jackson, but that wasn't. Strange, isn't it. Unless the truth was not really wanted to be known. The only two substantial witnesses, John Jenkins and his wife Catherine, may have been implicated. Mrs. Jackson lived just a ten-minute walk from *The Observer Tavern*, the site of the Inquest. Also, there is the question of just what that "piece of newspaper" was. Did it implicate Mr. William Jenkins, an important public man, in the case? Why was it not examined?

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There are reasonable grounds to consider that William Jones took his own life. First, where he was found was the nearest piece of water to Mrs. Jackson's Lodging-house. Second, Jones was in a truly desperate state – financially ruined, estranged from his wife and four children, apparently now an alcoholic. Third, he may well have come seeking vindication and found only fists and failure – literally a broken man. Fourth (and most poignantly), 10th of April was his 38th birthday.

But the tides and winds of the 10th and 11th of April 1872 as recorded in *The Sydney Morning Herald* would have been able to carry a body, killed on land and dumped into the harbour at *The Forth and Clyde Hotel,* out of Mort's Bay to just beyond Goat Island and then back into the adjacent Darling Harbour the next morning.

WILLIAM GRAY

A pioneering developer of Lithgow

Hotels and commercial buildings of Main-street

The Oakey Park Coal Mining Co. Ltd.

Part One

Early life: England 1830 – 1857

Origins

William Gray is recorded in the first British Census of 7th July 1841, a 10-year-old boy living with his recently-widowed mother, Sarah (45) and 7 siblings (4 older, 3 younger). His father, Jonathan, had died earlier that year. The family lived in the village of Stainburn, parish Workington, county Cumberland although his birth is thought to be on 15 August 1830 in the nearby village of Brigham. It may be worth noting that, between these two villages, lies the Great Clifton coal mine and it well-may be that his subsequent choice of career, a wagon driver, was his and his elder brothers' continuation of the father's trade.

Working

Between the two Censuses of 1841 and 1851 there is no trace to date. In "The Aldine Centennial History of N.S.W." (appendix 1) it is recorded (and this can only have come from William Gray's own mouth) that *"he was early connected with the construction of many railways throughout England, Wales, and Scotland, and on the continent of Europe"*.

At the 1851 Census, William (now 20) is recorded as lodging in Lelant, Cornwall together with a **William Sharp**, 50 who also gives his birthplace as Brigham. Their occupations are given as waggon-driver *[sic]* and horse-keeper respectively. It is likely that William Sharp (who may have been a relative) took the young William on as an apprentice or assistant into his cartage business quite soon after William's father's death.

Between 1846 and 1852, I K Brunel's West Cornwall Railway was under construction and much of the work was centred around the town of Hayle, close to Lelant. It is safe to connect Sharp and Gray with this project given William's claims to have been employed in British railway construction, the dates and his occupation.

Marriage

The following year on the 9th August 1852, with William having followed the railway construction almost to Truro, he marries **Elizabeth Jones** (born c. 1832) in St Michael and All Angels' Church, Baldhu. The railway builders' encampment was at Tomperrow and Greenbottom, where Elizabeth was recorded as living, was the nearest village. The marriage certificate lists William's (and his late father's) occupation as 'labourer' and records that he marks rather than signs his name.

Elizabeth's background

Elizabeth came from the coppermining area of Cornwall and is recorded in the 1841 Census at Hugus, a village about 4 miles from Truro and within a mile of all the other places mentioned in the previous paragraph. The district was called Kenwyn in those days. The Census shows a widowed mother, Maria aged 39, with five daughters and a son ranging from 16 to 5. Her father William had been a miner (also recorded as a miller and as a labourer) but had died in February 1837. A month after that, on the 19th March, Maria arranged for Elizabeth and her two younger sisters (Alice and Susan) to be baptised.

By the 1851 Census, her family had scattered with mother Maria living with eldest sister Jane, married to John Thomas a copperminer of Liskeard, and her younger brother William also a Liskeard miner. Elizabeth herself does not appear to be recorded.

Family life

Their first child, **John Jonathan**, was born 25th March 1854 and baptised in Kenwyn Parish church on the 5th November. The family's residence is given as Newham, just north of Truro, where an extension railway line to the docks was being built at the time. William this time gives his occupation as 'horse keeper' – like his mentor William Sharp.

The next record of the family we have is the birth of their second child, **Elizabeth Jane**, registered in Falmouth District, Cornwell in the 3rd quarter, 1856. No baptismal record exists. Two possible connections appear. The first is the presence of a large granite quarry at Penryn that would have required heavy carting capacity. The other, more tenuous and intriguing, is the existence of an *Esmond House* in the town of Falmouth itself. This name was used by William 30 years later to name his own home.

Emigration

The emigrant ship *Alfred* left Liverpool on the 23rd April 1857. It is possible but unlikely that she diverted to Falmouth to pick up the Gray family, for speed was of the essence. It was considered an excellent passage with no adults dying and a relatively low loss (6) of infant life – a perennial problem in those conditions. Elizabeth was only between 6 and 9 months old at embarkation and so was particularly at risk. Not only did she survive, she went on to thrive as a fruitful and long-lived woman.

The *Alfred* arrived in Port Jackson on the 23rd July with its cargo of mainly agricultural workers. Labour and Commission Agents Haigh and Ashlin were engaged to match immigrants with potential employers. William Gray went on to work at least 8 years with the railway contracting firm of **Forster and Roberts**, a natural match for his experience. We can trace this employment (or sub-contracting) from 1861 to 1869, but not for the 4 years immediately after arrival. Nonetheless it is more likely than not that his employment was immediate, indeed may have been pre-arranged prior to leaving England, for that year of 1857 was the very beginning of extending the railway network of New South Wales beyond its very first line to Parramatta.

The Aldine article clearly states *"In 1857 he arrived in Australia to follow up the same line of business"*, namely railway construction.

HELEN LAVINIA COCHRANE

A NEW BIOGRAPHY

PREFACE

As it turned out, 1917 was the midpoint of the span of Helen Lavinia Cochranes's adult life. She could not have known it then nor even thought about it. In 1917 she was too busy stitching up the bodies and souls of broken soldiers.

In every sense that year was the peak of her life's journey. The first 49 years had furnished her with the motivations, the abilities and the opportunity. The remaining 29 seemed a gentle, refined dénouement that could not have been more different to the active, somewhat turbulent, first half of her life.

It was also approximately halfway through her marriage to William Percy Cochrane, bisected by their shocking separation in 1920. It was as if they had come together to create the most wonderful place on earth, generously placed it at the service of mankind during that terrible war and then, the work done, suddenly realised how totally unsuited to each other they had always been. Their love, if that's what it was, raises many questions.

That wonderful place – still there and still wonderful – was Villa Rezzola, a classic home stunningly perched in a pass overlooking the Gulf of La Spezia, to the islands of Palmiria and Tino, the towns of Lerici and Portovenere and beyond that, the Tyrrhenian Sea. From the time that Percy and Helen settled there in 1900 – through their splendid Edwardian years, the Great War, then a recovery only to sweep in facism – until Helen, alone, returned to London in 1935, Villa Rezzola shone splendidly and generously.

In that beautiful location it stood as a focus for the little English community of the Gulf, a haven for artists, writers, travellers (principally, but not always, English) and an en-lightened and generous Manor House to the local village.

This account will have much to say about this villa and its influence and how that reflected the personality of Helen.

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Her life began in tricky circumstances, although by the time she was old enough to grasp such things, life had improved for the Shaw family and we might assume that she had an idyllic and happy childhood. In short, she was born on the run. Her father, Henry, had been an upright and respected Essex lawyer until he was embroiled in a sharemarket swindle that brought ruin to his wealth and reputation. After a spell in debtors' prison, he and the family began a frantic series of moves in and around London, presumably living on the kindness of friends and family. In 1868, with wife Marion carrying the child who would be Helen, it was decided to leave London for good and go to Weymouth on the Dorset coast. Helen's birth came in Bath as they passed through.

Growing up on that wild coast with six older brothers there can be no doubt that her senses would have been tuned to nature and adventure, and the love of seacoasts and ports was always with her. When she was about six, the Shaw family's fortunes turned for the better with Marion's inheritance of a lovely cottage on the edge of the Gloucester Cotswolds, as gentle as the south coast had been wild. For another six years, perhaps those critically formative ones from the age of 6 until 12, stability and genteel country comfort replaced the daily struggles. Her much-loved father was still being pursued for bankruptcy when he died soon after her 12th birthday. Her childhood was suddenly over.

The family moved once more. By this time, the two eldest brothers had made good in their own right and were now living in Clifton, Bristol. This timing

and place proved a lucky break for Helen as she was able to enrol at the new Clifton High School for Girls which was founded on a new and radical rethink on the value of education for women. Helen's resolve to develop her talents as an artist must have been fostered both here and in the nearby West of England Academy of Art for she was accepted into the Liverpool School of Art after she finished school. (She also later received training at the Westminster School of Art and, during 1890, Helen travelled to Munich for further study under Franz von Lenbach, a leading portraiture teacher.)

That was soon after her eldest brother (Hele's) appointment as the founding Professor of Engineering at University College of Liverpool. During this period of rapid development in Britain, engineers were the superstars of the day and Hele Shaw was right at the top of the game, associating with the great and good. He was a protégé and friend of Sir Oliver Lodge and married into the prestigious Rathbone family.

It would have been in those Liverpool days that Helen met and, in November 1892, married William Percy Cochrane, son and half-heir to Cochrane and Co., one of the booming iron and steel businesses in the land. They went to live in Newcastle-upon-Tyne where Percy had been given control of the family's coalmining interests as well as being involved in the ironworks at Ormesby. After a Cambridge education, Percy had been working across the family business activities, travelling abroad to wherever Cochranes were doing business – as far away as Australia and New Zealand. At one stage he was appointed French Consul for the northeast of England. He and his younger brother, Cecil, were being groomed as the fourth generation to continue the flourishing business. He had become very active in Masonic circles.

And the newly-wed Helen? We have some watercolours and sketches of Newcastle and the surrounding countryside that date from this time. She was a long way away from her close-knit family, her older and younger sisters especially. Unusually for her family, no children came. These are the mystery years - it is difficult to imagine the vital, intelligent young Helen doing nothing, or just keeping house. There must have been copious correspondence – nothing remains.

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Five years into their marriage, very close to Helen's 30th birthday in 1898, something unexplained happened. They left England – Percy for ever. It has the whiff of scandal about it. Or perhaps the role of business magnate collapsed him and he just walked away, leaving his brother Cecil to take all the responsibility. In any event, when his father made a new Will in 1900, the Estate and capital was left only to Cecil. Percy was granted a £500 annuity for life and a half-share of the profits arising from the then very profitable Cochrane and Co., but it was an effective disinheriting from the great family business.

They fetched up at the English colony at Menton, the next stop after (or down from, if you prefer) Monte Carlo and the point at which the thriving French Riviera peters out into the then-wild Ligurian coast of Italy. Initially they rented a charming small villa *"La Lodola"*, a little out of town and began the life of ease of the idle rich; the tennis club, giving parties and formal dinners. And although the *côte d'azur* remained an important base for Percy for the rest of his life, very soon something made them move along again. This move, east into an Italy that was wilder, more dangerous, less civilised – above all, less English – was surely Helen's.

It was to "The Gulf of Poets" – the Gulf of La Spezia – where Dante had written, where Botticelli had painted his Venus, where Trelawney and Byron had found inspiration. Where Shelley had died. The early photographs show Helen revelling in Italian costume or driving a donkey cart (while Percy ran a chauffered Rolls-Royce). She became beloved by the villagers around her, but it seems Percy never really took to Italy. Despite being made *Cavaliere* (an Italian knighthood) and an honorary citizen, he was back to Menton, later to Monte Carlo, as often and for as long as he could; in 1920, forever. Helen stayed, effectively as a widow, for another 15 years until Mussolini dispossessed her in his fit of pique against the British.

This story is primarily written from Helen's point of view because there is some great information to use. Percy, in the public record, is almost invisible; oddly so, given his early wealth and position and his fame during the years of the First World War. His life is punctuated by several abrupt and unexplained turn-abouts. There are tantalising circumstantial indications that he was an Admiralty spy, a homosexual, a syphilitic, an outcast, a man who sought redemption but gave up. In 1937 at Monte Carlo he died in obscure poverty after years of ill-health, a relict of the great Victorian past, nursed to the end by his faithful Rosa who followed him only a year later. He is buried in perhaps the loveliest cemetery in the world, at Cap d'Ail in his beloved France.

Helen, staying on in London, lived long enough to see the end of the Second War; even acting as a firespotter from her apartment rooftop, apparently caring little for her own life. She was on borrowed time by then. There were also personal tragedies and difficulties, family issues but, as always, she was characterised by a courage and an indomitable toughness combined with a certainty in "the right way of doing things".

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As in all true biographic quests, what matters most here is "Character". It is all very nice to know the whens and wheres of someone's life, but the real interests are usually the whys – invariably complex, never wholly explicable. In this case, Helen and Percy seem to provide an example of extreme opp-osites in most aspects of their lives, interests and behaviour.
Helen never achieved greatness as an artist, mid-level at best, although she exhibited several times in good venues in London during the 1920s and '30s. Her vast output of watercolours, mainly landscapes and domestic vignettes, are competent and workmanlike, pleasing and unchallenging. In contrast, her much fewer works in tempera rise to near-brilliance, documenting in close detail the working practices of 1920s Italian rural life with much energy and a clearly expressed love of people and land.

The great endeavour in which they truly shared was in the arena of service to others – most publicly in the foundation and operation of two Military Hospitals but just as much in their more private support of their adopted Italian home, the Ligurian village of Pugliola, where strong traces remain a century on.

They were in some sense "the last of the Victorians", shaped and formed by that age but living on, perhaps to their own surprise, into a vastly different world. Helen managed this transition quite well, Percy not so.

VILLA REZZOLA

A PLACE

BUT ALSO A DREAM

ABOUT TO END

1938.

Prince Aimone Roberto Margherita Maria Giuseppe Torino, Duke of Spoleto and cousin to King Victor Emanuele III, was soon to marry Princess Irene of Greece and Denmark. After two decades as one of Italy's great playboys, that was no barrier to his delight in the company of the beautiful widowed Contessa, five years older, who strolled beside him on the paths of her new home. He may just have cast his eyes over her 16 year old daughter, as tall and athletic as the mother was sylph-like.

But what really took his eye was the place. Not just the blue of the Tyrrhenian Sea and the fairytale islets of Tino and Palmiria. Not even the rough hills of the Portovenere peninsula behind which the sun was setting. This place totally commanded the entrance to his workplace. For Admiral Aimone had just been appointed *comandante* of the huge naval base in the Gulf of La Spezia – *Maridipart Alto Tirreno* – and a war was coming.

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2014

I, who could not be more different from Prince Aimone, live alone in a poor town in a spent Australian coal- and steelworks valley, improbably cut into a thousand metre high altiplano by a tiny crystal-clear brook. When the time of day and the climate are right, some spirit in me lifts away and I go back to Rezzola, half a planet away, and where I have strolled those same paths with that splendid 16 year old girl, now 92.

I say the name aloud a lot. I roll it in my mouth for joy and for the saddest sweetest nostalgia. It's Musical. No, a bit harsh for music, rather say Poetical. It starts strongly and cadences away,

with that stylish Italian micropause on the T as you crest the glottal stop and sibilantly roll over the edge. You can roll the R if you like or (if Australian like me) you could be bothered.

And the name itself? It's true, there is a dialectic word *rezzola*. It denotes a certain type of fishing-net (from *rete*). At first I just accepted this – but thought it odd. Unless the owner felt ensnared by its beauty. The first mention I have found comes from 1627, when it was called *Rizzola*, and again in 1866 it was called *Resola*. A few years ago, another (now retired) *spezzino* admiral told me it was a corruption of *Brezzola* – an *ola* (place) of *brezze* (breezes). That theory is probably wrong, but I like it so much because I have known those breezes.

I first came to Rezzola in the warm September of 2009. The year before I had begun researching a biography on Helen Cochrane, an English artist and philanthropist. She had lived at Rezzola from 1900 to 1935, the first part of that time with her husband, Percy. In the hope of finding documents or artefacts of her life, I wrote to the present owner – of whom I knew nothing other than her name and that she bore the title *Contessa*.

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As Prince Aimone's eye recognised instantly, this Rezzola is about *PLACE*. The placement is everything. Without this exact location, there would be no Rezzola. All that was done here, everyone who came and went, everything that was damaged, happened because of its latitude, longitude and elevation.

Some are bewitched by power, some by beauty. Rezzola works on both levels. It has seen the greatest joy and most bitter pain.

Wars have punctuated the calm of the Gulf for ever. The Romans needed a 10 year campaign to wipe the Ligures off the face of the earth – total annihilation. Moors and Vikings had been there for their usual trade of rape and pillage. Pisa and Genova had fought a century-long war for maritime and trading advantage. It was Napoleon Bonaparte (whose family originated in nearby Sarzana) who had built the first naval base recognising the strategic advantage of the Gulf of La Spezia.

But no previous war had touched *Rezzola* quite like Aimone's war of 1940-45. So, on the 10th June 1940 when Italy entered the war formally, one of the first acts was for Aimone to compulsorally acquire the villa for his headquarters and personal home. The slim contessa and her daughter were despatched to Rome. For three years Aimone and his naval command of La Spezia did their grim business of war with courage and distinction.

The fortunes of all wars ebb and flow. Aimone, cousin of the king, took part in the signing of the Armistice with the Allies in September of 1943 and left *Rezzola*. A German admiral took over. Grappa out, schnapps in.

As the American 5th Army made its way north in 1945 in the mopping-up phase of the war, the Americans naturally used *Rezzola* as their local command post. Schnapps out, bourbon in.

The last phase before the slim contessa returned was the bitters-weet aftermath of men fighting. *Rezzola*, stripped bare and the fabulous garden run

wild but relatively unscathed, served in the end as a shelter for the many, many orphans of war.

Perhaps there are records that mention Rezzola before 1600, but if they exist they will be buried within ancient archives of the Bishop of Sarzana, successor to the Prince-Bishops of Luni who controlled the lands from 400 A.D. to the Rinascimento era.

The Botto family is the first name I have found linked to the villa. They were merchants from Genova who had first arrived in nearby coastal Lerici in 1554. Later, one of these *genovese* Botto had married a local *lericina* Botto and they changed their name, perhaps humorously, to Botti. Thereafter until 1900, the *villa di Rizzola* was known as Villa Botti.

There is one recorded, in fact newsworthy, mention of a villa of the Botti family (it is not specific if it was at *Rizzola*, but it may well have been). In April 1678 one of the Botti boys shot and killed an intruder "to avenge the honour of his sister-in-law". What the intruder and the sister-in-law were up to is not recorded, but in the morning the body was identified as the 20 year old Francis Seymour, the 5th Duke of Somerset, a courtier of Charles II. An "international incident" with an interesting legal procedure and outcome ensued. The English, perhaps characteristically, saw it as "murder most foul", the Italians, equally characteristically saw it as a "crime of passion".

Then nearly two centuries passed in seeming obscurity. Perhaps members of the Botti family lived there (it remained theirs until 1900), perhaps the villa was rented – probably a combination – until we next find, in 1865, a famous tenant moving in. George (also Giorgio) Henfrey, with his brother Charles,

were engineers who had made fame and fortune with the expansion of the British and European railway networks. George loved Italy, and Italy him. He was a trusted adviser to the men shaping the new nation and, indeed, a personal friend of Count Cavour, father of the nation and its first prime Minister. As the railway work began to slow down, he took up shipbuilding, mining and smelting businesses in the Gulf of La Spezia.

He was by all accounts a delightful man, his great wealth and influence never interfering with his friendly and modest character. He stayed at this place for 35 years, raising his family and directing his many business interests, surely a tribute (given his abundance of options) to a happy and settled life. He only left it, aged 78, on the death of his beloved wife, Emily, in 1900. During their tenure, the house was a renowned place of political, business and social gatherings. (The 1913 Baedeker Guide even claims that the Henfreys hosted Queen Victoria, but this needs verifying).

A SHORT HISTORY OF

THE VILLA

REZZOLA / COCHRANE / CARNEVALE

PUGLIOLA (SP)

ANCIENT HISTORY

This awareness of *PLACE* is not new either. On the land that Percy and Helen purchased in 1900 there stands a time-worn megalith, proudly phallic, its knob transmuted into a floral arrangement!
In prehistory, a Celtic tribe called the Ligures had settled here. Around 150BC they defended their place against the Roman expansion – and paid the price of extinction.

Soon after that the Via Aurelia linked the area with Rome and the Empire. The local city was Lunæ at the mouth of the Magra River, just five miles away. Lunæ lasted beyond the collapse of Imperial Rome to become a Byzantine city linked with the Exarchate of Ravenna. Recent excavations are finding details of a fine basilica of this period alongside the Roman-era remains.

Around the year 1000AD it was all over though – a combination of a century of raiding by Saracen and Viking marauders, the silting up of the port and its related malarial infestation. On the larger stage, there was a general economic and social decline as Lombards, Franks and Roman popes threw most of their energies into landgrabbing wars. It's clear that this same action was played out at the local level by petty feudal warlords, evidenced by the number of little castles dotted all around.

Fortunately in a way, the area does not figure prominently in general history because, then as now, it is just slightly off the beaten track. After Lunæ fell, no great cities, no great industries, no great natural resources invited the outsider. The outsider came here by chance, by luck and found a different treasure.

MEDIÆVAL HISTORY

For most of the 12th and 13th centuries, the city-states of Pisa and Genova (there was no 'Italy' then) were engaged in a series of maritime and mercantile turf-wars.

Rezzola was frequently on the border, the area swaying back and forth with the vagueries of war. Castles were built, bombarded and rebuilt. Watchtowers that had originally been built to defend against the Moorish and Viking raiders were reinforced for new purpose. Such a one remains, now in the service of peace as the belltower of Santa Lucia's church.

Those skirmishes eventually ground to their irrelevant end and the area was ceded to victorious Genova. Ever since, Rezzola has been in Liguria rather than Tuscany. Curiously, although the general population was and remains proudly Ligurian in character and lifestyle, the ruling elites were more likely to have had Tuscan connections, a left-over from the earlier rule of the Lunæ period.

With the advent of the *rinascimento*, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries, the north of Italy became more prosperous and landed nobility became wealthier and more numerous.

Thus, in 1554 Nicolò Botto, the son of a noble Genova family arrived to try his luck in the district . He did well by ambition, hard work and by marriage into a prominent local family. His son, Giovanni Maria, married a distant cousin, also with the name of Botto. Thereafter, with a grammatical sense of humour, they were known as Botti. He is recorded as dying "in his own villa of *Rizzola* near Lerici" in October 1627.

And after more than 300 years, it was the Botti family from whom Helen and Percy purchased in 1900.

19TH CENTURY

Before 1900 I imagine that change was slow and slight. The Botti family had owned it from 1600 until 1900, no doubt living in it themselves or renting it out as the needs and circumstances of the family required. I have found no newsworthy records beyond births and deaths so far.

Villa Botti (as it was then usually called) first came to broader attention when it was rented, from about 1865 until 1900, to a remarkable Englishman named George Henfrey. George made a huge economic contribution to *risorgimento* Italy in the fields of railway-building, mining, metal industries and shipbuilding.

He was a passionate advocate of the new nation and a personal friend of many national leaders. He was greatly admired and respected. About 1865, the railway development being done, he acquired shipyards, a lead-smelter in the Gulf of La Spezia and mines on Sardinia.

During his 35 years at *Resola* (as he called it) he raised a family (two of his children were born there), only leaving his beloved home on the death of his wife at an age when he was ready to retire to the care of his daughters who had since moved to rural Wales.

WORLD WAR TWO

Wars have punctuated the calm of the Gulf for ever. The Romans needed a 10 year campaign to wipe the Ligures off the face of the earth – total annihilation. Moors and Vikings had been there for their usual trade of rape and pillage. Pisa and Genova had fought a century-long war for maritime and trading advantage. It was Napolean Bonaparte (who's family originated in nearby Sarzana) who had built the first naval base recognising the strategic advantage of the Gulf of La Spezia.

But no previous war had touched *Rezzola* quite like Aimone's war of 1940-45. So, on the 10th June 1940 when Italy entered the war formally, one of the first acts was for Aimone to compulsorily acquire the villa for his headquarters and personal home. The slim contessa and her daughter were despatched to Rome. For three years Aimone and his naval command of La Spezia did their grim business of war with courage and distinction.

The fortunes of all wars ebb and flow. In September 1943, King Victor Emanuel III signed an Armistice with the Allies and Italy became a divided nation; civil war. In the north, the Germans still held a firm grip and they were quick to establish control over the La Spezia base, where most of the Naval Command (including Aimone) were pro-Armistice and had left to join the main war effort further south. And so in turn, *Rezzola* became the local German command post. Presumably schnapps replaced grappa in the sideboards, but everything else probably stayed much the same..

But only a year on, December 1944, the Allies had pushed up the Italian peninsula and were only a few miles away, beyond the barrier that the

Germans called The Gothic Line. The fighting became intense; the naval base at La Spezia and the air base at Sarzana were extensively shelled and the two cities sustained a lot of damage.

As the American 5th Army made its way north after the Spring offensive of 1945 in the mopping-up phase of the war, the Americans naturally used Rezzola as their local command post. Schnapps out, bourbon in.

The last phase before the contessa returned was the bittersweet aftermath of men fighting. An orphanage run by nuns.

GEOGRAPHY

And where exactly are we? We are on the far northwest coast of Italy. Thinking of the leg kicking the ball, just south of the groin area, where the Italian coast bends westward to meet Monte Carlo and the *côte d'azur*. If you know your Italian cities, between Pisa and Genova.

It's beautiful here and – so far – unspoiled. It lies on the same stretch of coast that was made popular by Portofino in the 50s and then by the *cinque terre* over the last 15 years. Both have been strangled and debauched by their own success. The city of La Spezia is a major holiday transport hub, but the rest of the region is quiet, blissfully so. In Sarzana, probably my favourite small city in the world, only Italian is heard on the streets, there are hardly any postcards for sale and life in the (car-less) *centro storico* is lived with quiet charm and dignity. The coffee is good.

Perhaps the travel agents are put off by the shipyards of Muggiano, the huge naval base of La Spezia itself and the mega-industrial scale of the marble mining at Carrara, a few miles south. Good. All of these will touch our story, helping to make it what it is.