

The Edward Spencer Story



by Grahame Best

Edward Spencer was a much younger son than others in his family. Born in 1862 and raised at Rouchel Vale, he was Confirmed at Muswellbrook in 1878. Two years later the first of his brothers moved permanently to the 45,000 acre "Cuttabunda" at Brewarrina, and 3 years later, in 1885, Edward and his brother William purchased two blocks adjacent to "Cuttabunda", with river frontage, that they called "Narran Plains". Edward was 23 years old. 3 years later, in 1888, Edward was still in Muswellbrook area, as he married Mary Hodge in Muswellbrook, when he was 26. One year later, Edward & Mary's first daughter, Lillian Irene Spencer was born in Muswellbrook in 1889. This same year the family property at "Rouchel Vale", now comprising 2700 acres, was sold, and some of the elder sons moved to "Cuttabunda" at Brewarrina, where the sons had already been alternately living and working for 12 months at a time. Matthew Spencer didn't move to "Cuttabunda" until 1892 or 1893. At this time there was a newspaper article (below) describing the party activities on "Cuttabunda":

Tuesday 19th December 1893, page 2, Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser, describes the country lifestyle of the period very well;

"An Australian Summer Party.

How delightful is the Australian climate ! An unbroken succession of heat in these latitudes is very oppressive, it is true ; but then when a more or less copious rainfall moderates the temperature, the weather is unsurpassed, even in the middle of our sunny Summer. At such an occasion, Mr. And Mrs. John Spencer, of Cuttabunda Station, had decided to invite their friends to a picnic, accompanied by a ball.

How charmingly flower studded was the rapidly growing pasture ! How pleasantly cool breezes from the south seemed to invite the numerous guests to rest, stroll, or play on the flowery carpet on the Bockhara river ! How merrily echoed the bush with exclamations of mirth and pleasure, and how joyfully all eyes were beaming !

After the customary games and entertainments, so much enjoyed by all, the company betook themselves to a spacious hall at Mr. Spencer's station, which had been elaborately prepared for the impending ball that soon commenced. The indefatigably obliging ,and highly attractive hostess, Mrs. J. Spencer, was dressed in terracotta nun's veiling, and her charming daughters, Miss Delia Spencer, in brown nun's veiling, and Miss Mabel Spencer in blue cashmere with gold braid ; Mrs. Loughnan in black, and Mrs. Wm. Spencer and Mrs. E. J. Saunders in grey cashmere ; Mrs. Arwidsson in light coloured cotton and silk ; Miss Saunders, in pink sateen ; Misses Evelyn and Corinda Saunders and Miss May Baker in pink dresses ; Miss Jackson in cream embroidered muslin; Miss Selly in cream nun's veiling and white satin ; Miss McGregor in magenta cashmere; Miss Allen in a silver-grey dress ; and last but not least attractive Miss McCarthy in white muslin.

But who in this charming assembly of ladies was worthy of carrying the laurel wreath for beauty and grace? Perchance is the appointment rather a difficult one, the graces being very equally divided. However, without deviating from Mrs. Grundy's mostly infallible opinion, I venture to place the said wreath on the head of a lady very favourably known and highly appreciated in the social circles of Brewarrina; on the head of the young and gifted Miss Kelly. But when speaking of grace and gift, perchance were it a just homage to also mention Miss Evelyn Saunders, who also possesses a remarkable share of that enviable gift for music which makes its owner so attractive, and whose graceful manner of dancing created general admiration:

About 5 a.m. the guests dispersed, after having spent a highly enjoyable day and evening."

From National Library of Australia. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19029683>

By 1896, a combination of floods, drought and a bank recession saw Spencer Brothers Pastoral and Homestead Lessees (the parent company which operated both "Cuttabunda" and "Narran Plains") bankrupted, and all three properties were lost. It is not known if Edward spent any time at all on "Narran Plains", as his marriage to Mary Hodge occurred in Muswellbrook, as did the birth of his first daughter, Lillian Irene Spencer (Born 1889, BDM:24091/1889, Died July 12, 1912 in Wee Waa of pneumonia. She died at 23 years & 10 months).

The following year, Edward and Mary Spencer, with their daughter Lillian Irene, were in Wee Waa, NSW awaiting the birth of Edward's second daughter, Thelma Sherwood Spencer. (Born 1897, BDM:5205/1897, Died July 27, 1954 at Wee Waa, aged 57 years). Thelma spent all of her life in Wee Waa. She never married.

Edward's activities in Wee Waa at this time are unknown, until his wife Mary died on April 25th, 1903, aged 38. (BDM:6924/1903) Edward was then 41 years old. Mary is buried in Wee Waa Cemetery, next to Edward's grave, with the headstone inscription:

"My Dear Wife Mary Spencer, Died April 25th 1903, aged 38 years".

Edward married a second time, two years after Mary's death, in 1905 to **Alice Georgina Matthews** in Sydney. He and Alice were living in Wee Waa, and Edward was preparing to start a new business called Spencer & Collett General Merchants in Rose Street, Wee Waa. Edward was 43 years old when he married the 23 year old Alice.

Spencer & Collett opened in May, 1906, the year he and Alice had their first daughter, Alma Ruth. By 1907 Edward had bought out his partner, Collett, who wanted to go back to sheep farming at his property, "Elkdale". Edward then ran Spencer & Collett until he died on October 15, 1915. Edward's headstone in Wee Waa Cemetery reads..."Edward Spencer. Died 14th October 1915. Aged 53 yrs"

Lillian Irene Spencer is buried next to Edward Spencer. Her headstone reads..."Lillian Irene Spencer. Died 12th July 1912. Aged 23 years 10 months". She died of pneumonia. She never married.

Alice Georgina Matthews was born 1882 in Baradine, NSW (BDM:23437/1882, Coonabarabran). She was Confirmed Sept 16, 1901, and then married to Edward Spencer by 1905. Alice was the eldest of 8 Matthews children, and had come to Wee Waa to work for the Boyle family, and she lived almost all of her life in Wee Waa. Alice was from a large, well known Baradine family. Her parents were James Matthews (died 1910, father George, mother Jane) and Helen Mary Cockburn (died 1936, father David Bell, mother Mary ?)

After Edward's death in 1915, Alice continued to run the family business for another 44 years, until 1959, when she died suddenly after two seizures at work. She was a highly respected member of the community. She looked after Edward's two children by his marriage to Mary Hodge, as well as her own three children with Edward;

1. **Alma Ruth Spencer:** Born July 17, 1906, Sydney. Baptised July 17, 1906, Wee Waa. Married George Wallace Wilson in Wee Waa on July 3, 1935 (BDM:14118/1935). George died in 1967 in Sydney. Alma died Dec 8, 1987, aged 81. The marriage certificate describes George as a grazier, and Alma as a spinster & draper
2. **Ena Mildred Spencer:** Born May 22, 1911 in Wee Waa (BDM:A183456/ 1911) Father listed as Edward Spencer, Storekeeper, born Rouchel, aged 49. Baptised June 22, 1911 at St. Augustine's, Wee Waa. Confirmed Nov 23, 1924, Wee Waa. Married a policeman, Keiran J Mulcahey. One son, Peter Mulcahey. Died August 24, 1990, Wee Waa. Buried Wee Waa. Shortly after their son Peter was born, Keiran Mulcahey left Ena, never to be heard of again.

3. **Edward Earle Spencer:** Born April 3, 1914, Wee Waa (BDM:23818/1914). Married February 9, 1939 at 7.30pm, St Augustine's, Wee Waa to **Nancy Isabel Tuckey**. One daughter, **Jane Alicia Spencer**, born May 14, 1952. Earle died January 9, 1978, Wee Waa. Buried Wee Waa. Earle was only 18 months old when his father Edward died in 1915. Earle was educated at Wee Waa Primary School and Maitland High School. As he grew he worked in the Spencer & Collett business, with little spare time for any interests of his own, such as football & tennis. He ran the business after Alice died suddenly in 1959, supporting his two sisters as well as his wife and daughter. Earle sold the family business to Permewans in 1973.

The Wee Waa Echo newspaper on 27th July, 1972, on the front page, listed;

“ A Sad Farewell”

Under a photograph of Alma, Earle and Ena, entitled:

” Edward Spencer and Thomas Collett opened for business in May 1906”, the following article appeared.

“Thomas Collett remained for only eighteen months. At that time, Edward Spencer bought out Collett. The partnership was broken. Edward Spencer carried on the business up until the time of his death. He died in the year 1915. His wife then ran the business until the year 1959.

After being bought out by Spencer, Collett moved to a property now known as Eskdale, where he started off in the sheep grazing business. Since then Eskdale has had three owners. Eskdale is now a Peanut farm.

From 1959, Mr. Spencer and his sisters, Mrs Wilson and Mrs Mulcahy, have been doing business in the store where Permewans now stands. An old general merchants store used to stand there. Its owner's name was AA Coppleson.

Mr. Spencer is married with one daughter, who works in Sydney for a large company of solicitors. Mr Spencer and his sisters have been of great help to the town and people of Wee Waa. For when times were bad for some people, those people came to their aid.

I am sure that the people who only have known Mr Spencer and his sisters for a short time will wish those people, with the township of Wee Waa, all the happiness and best wishes for their future.

Mr Spencer accepted Permewans offer to buy him and his sisters out. It is not known where they intend to settle.

There are mixed feelings in the town, according to Mr Spencer, owing to the close down of the store. It is a sad day for Wee Waa and its people, to see a proud service come to an end.

We wish to wish Mr Spencer and sisters health and happiness. We are sorry to lose them.” (Tim Gannon)”

Despite this article, Spencer & Collett continued to trade until 1973, when Earle was in negotiations with accountants and solicitors for the sale and/or lease of the property to Agricultural Distributors for \$30,000 (sale) or \$2,400 per year lease.

These negotiations failed, and Earle continued to work in the store leased by Permewans, and the local Solicitor, PR Suttie & Co advised on 6th July, 1978 (after Earle's death), that the premises of Spencer & Collett in Rose Street, Wee Waa was sold to the Trustees of St. Vincent De Paul Society, and contracts were exchanged on that day.

Earle's only daughter, Jane Alicia, became my wife on January 29, 1979, at St. Peters, Watsons Bay, Sydney.

Earl Spencer died of heart failure at home on January 9, 1978, aged 63

Obituary

Mr. Edward Earle Spencer

“Residents of Wee Waa and district were shocked to hear of the sudden death of Mr. Earle Spencer of Cowper Street. Mr. Spencer died at home on January 9 of a heart attack.

Edward Earle Spencer was born in Wee Waa on March 4, 1914.

He was educated at Wee Waa Public School and Maitland High. On leaving school he entered the business of Spencer & Collett owned by his mother. Spencer & Collett traded as a general store until it closed in 1973. Mr. Spencer later worked at Permewans in Wee Waa.

In his younger days Mr. Spencer’s interests were Boy Scouts, tennis, cricket and football. In later years he served on the Wee Waa Urban Area Committee and was patron of the Wee Waa Golf Club. Earle Spencer was particularly concerned about the difficulties facing the elderly in the community and willingly helped many elderly citizens with their problems.

Mr. Spencer was a Past Master of the Masonic Lodge who conducted a Lodge of Sorrow before his funeral on January 11. The funeral was at St. Augustine’s Church of England, Wee Waa, where over 200 relatives and friends filled the little church and stood on the lawns and footpaths outside.

Six members of the Wee Waa Masonic Lodge acted as pall bearers. Acting Chaplain of the Lodge.

Mr. Tom Brown, conducted the service at the graveside.

Edward Earle Spencer will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy, his daughter Mrs. Jane Best of Darwin, sisters Mrs Alma Wilson and Mrs Ena Mulcahy of Wee Waa”.

Edward & Alice Spencer were wealthy for the period. They lived in a lovely weatherboard home called “Loma”, in Cowper Street, Wee Waa, next to St. Augustines Church. It is still standing today, but not in the family. After Edward’s death, Alice ran the family business very successfully until her death in 1959, when her son Earle Spencer took over the reins. The shop still stands in Rose Street Wee Waa in the colours of St. Vincent DePaul.

In 1927 the shop burned down, but Alice rebuilt and continued working as if little had happened

After 20 years living alone and running the business, as well as the family, Alice married a local farrier, Clarry (Clarence Joseph) Dwyer in 1936. Lillian Irene and Thelma Sherwood Spencer, Edward Spencer’s two children by Mary Hodge, still lived with Alice. Lillian died young at 23 years old, but Thelma remained and performed housemaid duties all her life until her death. She never married. Both Lillian & Thelma are buried in Wee Waa. Alice also maintained several “people in service”, and owned only the second car to be seen in Wee Waa: a 1939 Straight 8 Buick.

By all accounts Clarry Dwyer was a drunk in later times, and Jane remembers him being “banished” at Loma to living on the covered in verandah area. He must have had his good points though, as Clarry was a Light Horseman at Gallipoli. Clarry outlived Alice by many years, and all of the Spencer property, heirlooms, etc, passed out of Spencer hands into the Dwyer descendants. Jane has almost nothing of Edward or Alice Spencer.

Alice was a small woman physically, and Jane (Spencer), her granddaughter has a few memories of starched aprons, severe bun hairdos and a not very nurturing, distant nature, while she has very fond memories of Thelma, who lived at Loma and conducted all the housekeeping duties, as well as supported Jane much more than Alice did. Alice, however, was highly regarded as a businesswoman and community figure in Wee Waa.

Alice died on Sept 30 1959, aged 77, and is buried in Wee Waa as Mrs Alice Georgina Dwyer.

Her obituary appeared on the front page of The Namoi Valley Echo on Saturday, October 1, 1959, and reads;

Obituary
Mrs. A.G.Dwyer

“The death in the District Hospital on Wednesday night of Mrs. Alice Georgina Dwyer saw the passing of one who had for many years been a staunch friend, a keen businesswoman and an ardent supporter of local institutions. She was in her seventy seventh year.

She was a native of Baradine and had lived in the Wee Waa district for something over sixty years. In October, 1915, her first husband, the late Edward Spencer, passed away, leaving her with a young family and the business of Spencer & Collett. Her success in both spheres stands as a monument for us all to see.

She later married Mr. C.J.Dwyer, who survives her.

The late Mrs. Dwyer was ever an ardent supporter of local organisations, as records of the Hospital, the Auxiliary, the C.W.A., and the Show Society stand witness. Both the Hospital Board under the old regime, and the Show Society conferred Life Membership on her some twenty five years ago in recognition of her services; and her interest has been a continuing one.

She had not been in robust health for some years, but had been able to take an active part in the running of the business until Tuesday last, when she had two consecutive seizures from which she did not recover.

The last rites were observed yesterday afternoon, the Rev.H.J.Mills officiating at St. Augustine’s Church and at the cemetery. A great concourse of district folk attended to pay tribute to one who had lived respected and died regretted.

Sincere sympathy is extended to her husband, and to her two daughters, Mrs. GW Wilson and Mrs.EM Mulcahy, and her son. Mr. EE Spencer, all of Wee Waa, in their bereavement. In her own generation she is survived by one sister, Mrs. P. Morrissey, of Coonabarabran, and two brothers, Messrs. C and E Matthews, of Baradine.

At the time of Alice’s death, Earle Spencer and Clarry Dwyer both received many condolences from suppliers of Spencer & Collett, and several of these show the sincere respect they had for Alice;

Grocery and General Merchants Limited,
Country Stores Division,
Botany 16th November, 1959

Dear Clarrie,

I would like to offer you my sincere sympathy in the loss of your wife.

I, personally, had the utmost respect for her over the whole 20 years that I have had the pleasure of knowing her. Nobody in the Storekeeping field was held in higher respect for ethical trading, devotion to her customers, her loyalty to her family and her outstanding contribution to all things in Wee Waa over half a century.

G.A.Tickle

On a more personal note from the same business, was;

Dear Earl,

On my own behalf, and on behalf of my Company and the Country Stores Division, I desire to send you sincere sympathy in the loss of your Mother. Had I known, I would have been anxious to attend the service.

Your Mother will always be remembered as one of the most outstanding characters in the retail storekeeping trade of NSW. Her conduct of the business for over 50 years, I am sure, is unequalled to the best of my knowledge, in any business. The respect that she was held in the trade and, in our case, her competitors, could not have been higher. She was a wonderful Mother and a wonderful town’s person.

Nina joins me in sending you her sympathy....

MATTHEWS FAMILY

This shows all I know of Alice Georgina Matthews ancestors:

In England, George Matthews and Margaret Maria Seath had one son;

GEORGE MATTHEWS: CONVICT Born 1814, Kent, England
Died 25 August, 1894 in Gulargambone, aged 80
Buried 26 August, Gulargambone, NSW

George Matthews was convicted at Kent Assizes for 14 years on 11 March, 1833. Described as a Grazier later in NSW. Arrived on barque "Neva", depart England 27 July, 1833, arrive Sydney, 21 November, 1833. George was one of 170 convicts on board.

Married **Jane Grimes** on 29 July 1849 in Mudgee, NSW
Jane was 16 1/2 and George was 35

Jane Grimes was born 19 September, 1832 in Parramatta, and baptised 11 November, 1832, at 2 months, in Parramatta. She died 27 July, 1896 in Coonabarabran, NSW, and was buried there on 29 July, 1896. Her occupation was Domestic Duties.

Jane Grimes' parents were both CONVICTS; her father was **James Grimes, "Malabar" 1819 (1797 – 1877)**, and her mother was **Catherine Long, "Woodman" 1823 (1807 – 1871)**

Catherine Long arrived in Australia on the 'Woodman' in 1823. The 1825 muster shows Catherine Long assigned to Mr. Lloyd of Liverpool. The 1828 NSW Census has a Mr John P Lloyd and his family living in Liverpool. He was an Auctioneer who arrived free in 1824 on the "Alfred". Catherine Long was sentenced to 7 years transportation for "Larceny from a shop" in Cork City in Spring 1822 assizes. She came to NSW from Cork City, Ireland. She stated that her native place was Woolwich, England, but she was born in 1807 in Kingston on Thames, Surrey, England. "Woodman" arrived on 25 June 1823, after sailing from Cork, Ireland in 151 days. It embarked 97 female convicts. The 1823 Journal of the ship "Woodman" Surgeon Superintendent, George Fairfoul, makes numerous mentions of Catherine Long; She was described as aged 19 years, of spare habits, and had led a "vicious life" (meaning - not genteel). She was also sick on the voyage, and there were several entries made about her illness.

James Grimes arrived on "Malabar" in 1819. She departed Spithead on 17 June 1819, and arrived at Port Jackson on **29th October 1819**, anchoring in Sydney Cove the following day.

The *Malabar* took four months to complete the voyage. James Grimes came to New South Wales on the "Malabar" on 30 October 1819, as a convict sentenced at Lancaster Assizes on 20 March 1819, and serving 14 years for uttering forged notes. Malabar sailed on 14 June 1819 with 170 convicts. James was born in Bolton, Lancaster in 1797, and was a calico printer by trade. After his arrival in Australia he was employed as a carpenter.

He was convicted and transported with William Entwistle and Peter Howgate. The Times of Apr 13, 1819, in reporting the events at the Lancaster Assizes, also notes that on the same day, James Grime, the elder, 56 years, and Henry Entwistle, 56, were also convicted of uttering forged bank notes. They were sentenced to death but the judge commented that, in James Grime the elder's case, there may be some possibility, without assurance, of mitigation of the punishment.

On 5 November 1819, James is on the List of Convicts disembarked from Malabar & forwarded to Parramatta for Distribution - Reel 6007; 4/3501, p13

George Matthews & Jane Grimes had 8 children;

George Matthews: born 2 June, 1851, Maitland, NSW. Baptised 14 December, 1853 in Maitland. Died 7 September, 1900 in Baradine, NSW, Buried 8 September, 1900 in Baradine. George was a labourer. He married Ellen Jane Cavanagh (born 29 August, 1858, died 27 August, 1939) on 30 March, 1876 in Coonabarabran. Ellen was 18, George was 25.

James Michael Matthews: born 29 March, 1854, and baptised 16 July, 1854 in Tambaroora, NSW. Died 14 April, 1910 in Baradine, aged 56. Buried 15 April, 1910 in Baradine. Married **Helen Mary Cockburn** (1859, died 19 September, 1936) on 16 May, 1876 in Baradine, registered Coonabarabran NSW BDM Reg No. 2406/1876.

Margaret Maria Matthews: born 12 August, 1856, Dandry, near Coonabarabran, baptised 22 April, 1858, Mudgee. Died 28 November, 1922, Coonamble, NSW, buried there 30 November, 1922. Married **Matthew Thomas Kennedy** (born 23 February, 1848, died 19 November, 1926) on 19 November, 1873 in Coonabarabran.

Mary Anne Matthews: born 1858

Seath Matthews: born 28 April, 1860 in Goorianwa, NSW. Died 17 September, 1936 in Gilgandra, buried Gulargambone, NSW. Seath was a builder. Married **Helen Craigie Richardson** (born 27 May, 1861, died 24 September, 1933) in 1884 at Gulargambone.

Emily Jane Matthews: born 12 May, 1862 in Goorianwa, NSW. Baptised there 3 November, 1863. Married **John Hall**.

Georgina Ellen Matthews: born 14 January, 1867 & baptised 1 November, 1867 at Goorianwa, NSW. Died 19 May, 1941, and buried at Narrabri, NSW. Married **John Charles Boyle** (born Mat 1863, died 27 November, 1945) in 1889 in Baradine, NSW.

Charles Matthews: born 1 February, 1869, Whittenbri, NSW. Married **Margaret Ryan (Donovan)** (born 1875) on 22 March, 1902.

James Michael Matthews & Helen Mary Cockburn had 8 children;

Alice Georgina Matthews : born Baradine 1882 (BDM: 23437/1882, Coonabarabran), died 28 October, 1959, Wee Waa Wee Waa, NSW (NSW BDM Reg No. 33059/1959) Buried Wee Waa, NSW Alice Died as Alice Dwyer, after second marriage to Clarry Dwyer. Confirmed 16th September, 1901 by H. Gauntlett, Baradine. Married **EDWARD SPENCER**

Beatrice M Matthews 1884, Coonabarabran (BDM:27003/1884)

Edith I Matthews 1889, Coonabarabran (BDM: 28692/1889). Married **Patrick J Morrissey**, 1912, Coonabarabran (BDM: 507/1912)

Margaret A Matthews 1891, Coonabarabran (BDM: 11174/1891). Married **Alfred H Davis**, 1909, Coonamble (BDM: 7822/1909) He was born 1891.

Enid B Matthews 1894, Coonabarabran (BDM: 10730/1894)

Clarence Charles Matthews 1897, Coonabarabran (BDM: 11576/1897) Died 19

October, 1961 (BDM: 30710/1961). Married Hazel Blanche Penny 1920 in Coonabarabran (BDM: 8235/1920). She died 27 May, 1977 in Baradine.

Cladis B Matthews

1899, Coonabarabran (BDM: 29770/1899)

Eric George Matthews

1902, Coonabarabran (BDM: 11488/1902) Died 11 August, 1965, Baradine (BDM: 32042/1965). Married Charlotte Botfield, (born Coonamble, died Baradine, 1970) 19 July, 1926 (BDM: 17657/1926)

Helen Mary Cockburn's parents were;

David Cockburn: Died 1869, Dubbo (BDM: 3605/1869), registered Coonabarabran. His father was John Cockburn, died 1869, Coonabarabran.

Mary Bell Campbell: They married in 1857 in Mudgee (BDM: 2212/1857), having one daughter, Helen Mary Cockburn.



Thomas & Mary Spencer



Edward Spencer and Alice Georgina Matthews

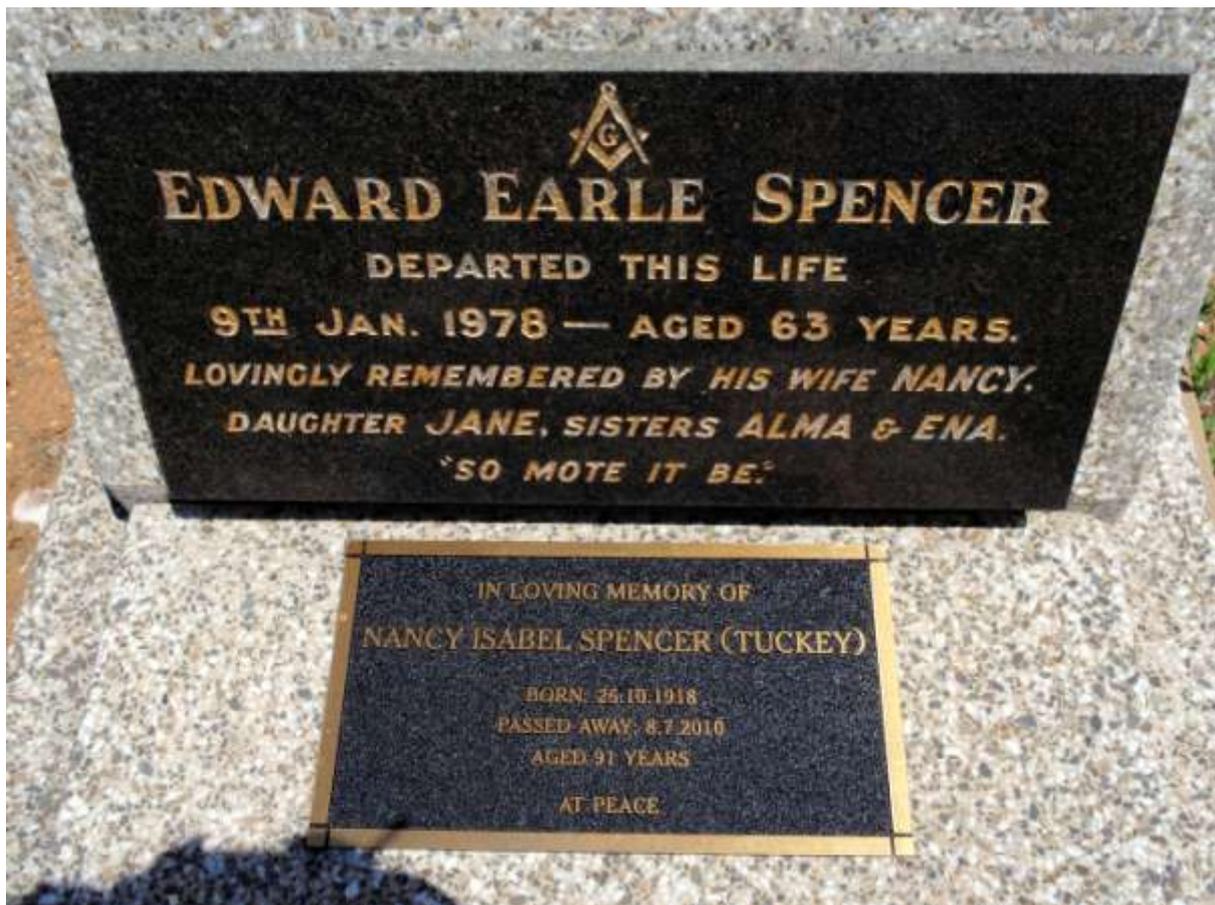


Alma Ruth Wilson (nee Spencer), Edward Earle Spencer, and Ena Mulcahey (nee Spencer) 1973



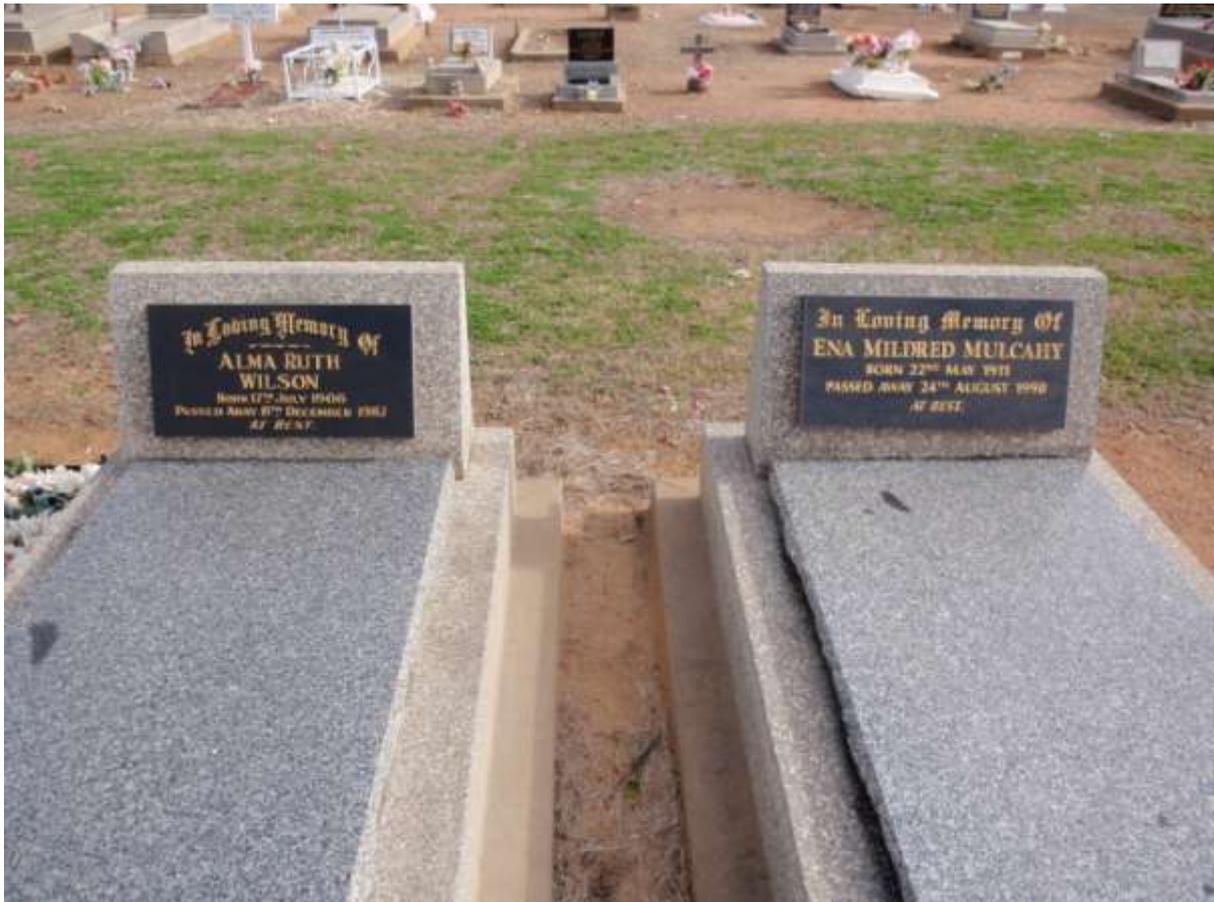
George Wilson with Thelma Sherwood Spencer

Headstones





Alice G Dwyer, Edward Spencer & Lillian Irene Spencer, Wee Waa Cemetery



Alma Ruth Wilson (nee Spencer) and Ena Mildred Mulcahey (nee Spencer)-Wee Waa Cemetery

In Loving Memory
Whose Last
Token

OF
EDWARD SPENCER

DIED 14TH OCT. 1915

AGED 53 YEARS.

FOND MEMORY CLINGS TO THEE.



Mary Spencer (nee Hodge) – Edward Spencer's first wife



Thelma Sherwood Spencer, Wee Waa



Thelma Spencer and George Wilson



View over Spencer graves, Wee Waa Cemetery