

THE PIONEER

THE BUDERIM HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

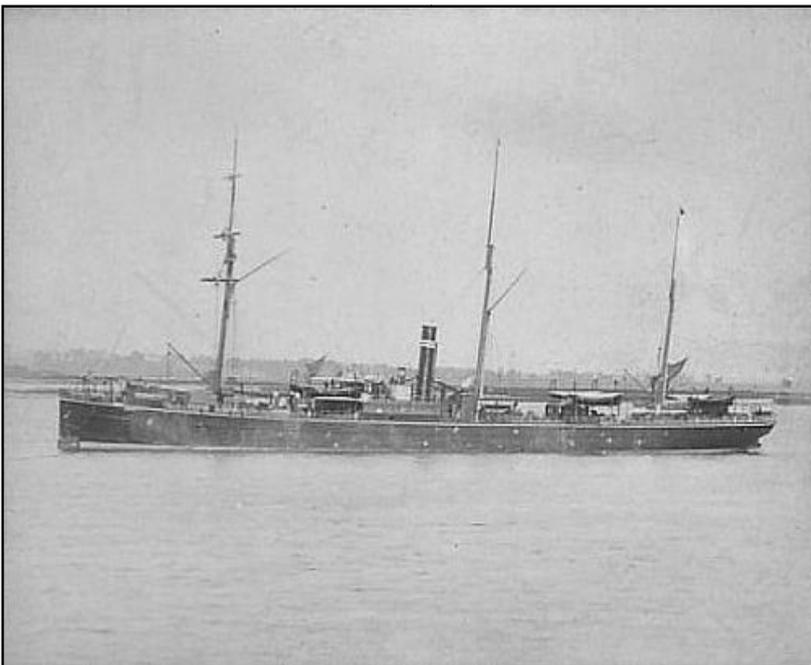
Historical accounts from the Buderim – Mooloolaba area

Number 18 September 2023

The Bells of Buderim

Bev and Bill Lavarack

William Fawcett Bell was born in Sunderland, Durham, England on 30 July 1841 and died on 11 January 1914 at Gympie where he was buried. He was a plumber. In 1865 he married Mary Ann Willcock (b. 27/7/1845, d. 4/8/1904). Mary was from Southwick, Sunderland, county of Durham. Mary's mother Elizabeth Voller (previously Elizabeth Willcock), became the second wife of James Lindsay and her daughter, from a previous marriage, Mary Willcock, went to live with the Bell family. Subsequently she married William Fawcett Bell.



James Lindsay was a Buderim pioneer who had migrated to Australia in 1870 and was living on Buderim. He then sponsored William Fawcett Bell with his wife Mary and family of seven to migrate to Buderim.¹

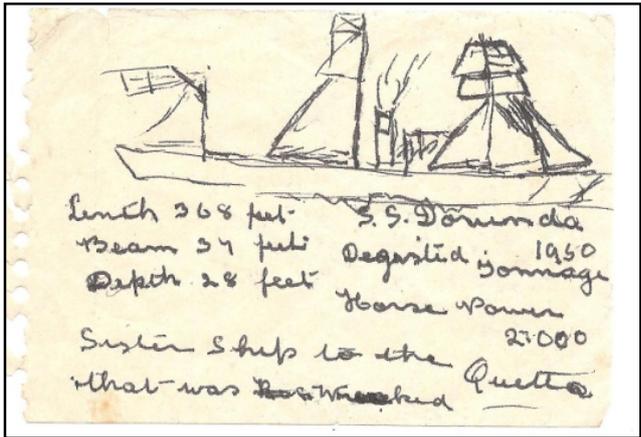
The Bells had five sons and three daughters – James Fawcett, William Fawcett junior, John Willcock, Elizabeth Voller, George Willcock, Robert, Mary Eleanor, all born in England, and Louisa, born in Australia, who died as a young child.

SS Dorunda (Photo Bell Family)

¹ This account of the Bell and Lindsay families in Durham, England is from an interview with Mavis Lindsay and others by Peg Sargood, a great grand-daughter of William Fawcett Bell (senior), held by the author and by Ken Chadwick.

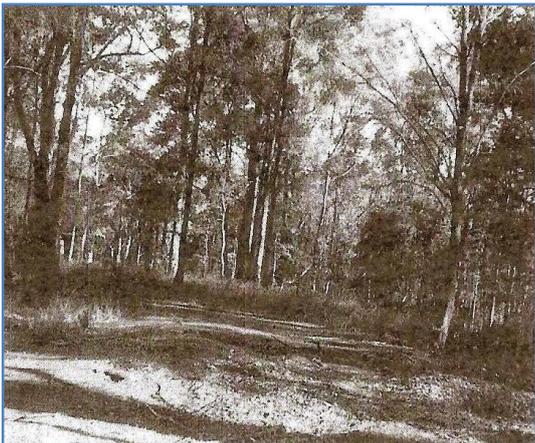
They boarded SS *Dorunda* and sailed to Australia and Buderim in 1884. The *Dorunda* is interesting. She was a passenger/cargo vessel built in 1875 and was a sister ship of S.S. *Quetta* which was tragically wrecked in Torres Strait in 1890 with the loss of 134 lives.

Right: sketch of S.S. *Dorunda* by W.F. Bell (could be W.F. senior or his son W.F. junior.)



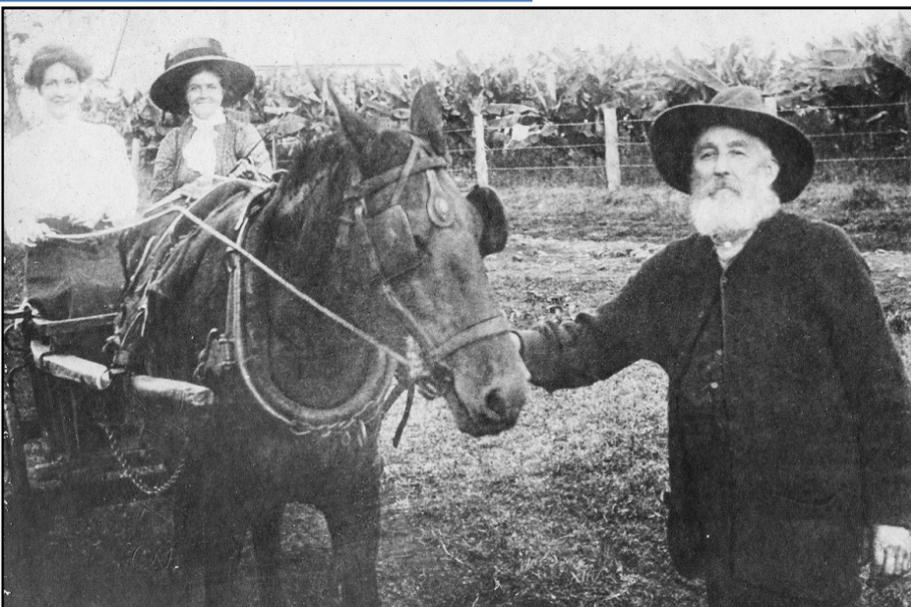
William Fawcett (senior) was a plumber by trade. He purchased portion 9v of 120 acres on the lower southern slopes of Buderim Mountain on what is now Crosby Hill Road. He built a typical four room, low-set cottage of pit-sawn timber with shingle roof, a front veranda and a detached kitchen.¹ The site is now marked by large mango trees, but otherwise no trace remains.

Today it is difficult to imagine how new families from the British Isles, like the Bell family, coped in this strange country. Three of the boys were old enough to help building the house and clearing the block, but imagine building a house with a detached kitchen on a virgin block in a hot climate with no experience. Did they have water available or did they need to dig a well? It is probably safe to assume they had help from the community, in particular from the Lindsay family.



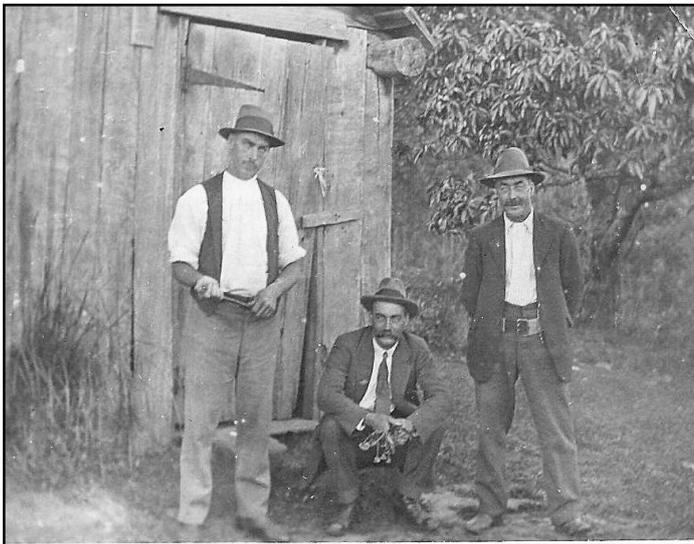
Site of the original Bell house at the end of the cleared area. Photo taken from the bend on Crosby Hill Road looking south by Stuart Weir in February 1984. The site reverted to bush and then forest.

The land proved difficult and unsuited to farming. William retained the land but resorted to his trade, working at the Buderim Mountain Sugar Company mill as a plumber and later working for Ernest Burnett.



William Fawcett Bell. The woman on the left is possibly his wife. (Photo Bell Family)

¹ Stuart Weir, February 3 1984, *William Bell Snr. House Site, Buderim*, Archaeology Research Group, Qld Museum, held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.



Left: Three of the Bell brothers. Left to right: Robert, James and George in front of a typical slab hut. ca. 1905. (Photo. Bell family.)

After his wife Mary's death in 1904, William married Hannah Maria Sudhoff in 1909 when he was 68. He died at the age of 72 and was buried at Gympie in 1914. Hannah Maria, known as 'Ria' (see right) lived on Buderim and died in Brisbane in 1937 at the age of 86. Hannah's obituary is in error as it states that she 'came to Buderim with her husband the late Mr. William Fawcett Bell, over fifty years ago'.¹



Photo: BHS

The Bell siblings, generally speaking, were quiet, hard-working members of the community, who did not seek important positions. Two of them will now be examined in more detail, the first, Robert Bell, was Bev Lavarack's grandfather.

Robert Bell (b. 3/1/1878, d. 17/11/1946) married Constance Ede (b. 1881, d. 25/11/1957). The marriage was performed by Baptist minister Isare Joseph Bugg on 16 March 1904 at Nundah, Brisbane. Bob was 26 and was a farmer, Connie was 23. Both are buried at Buderim Cemetery.

Right: Robert Bell, with wife Connie at a family picnic.

Below: their house at the top of the hill on Bell Road. Note the enclosed verandah was originally open.

(Both photos Bell Family.)



At the turn of the century Bob Bell bought the north west part of portion 48 which was on the top of the steep hill on Bell Road. In 1905 he built his house there (see above left). Bob's block was five acres and was previously owned by Dan Cogill and then by Joseph Dixon who sold all his property and moved to Montville. Portion 48 was then subdivided. It is unlikely that five acres was

¹ Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser, October 29 1937, page 5, Family Notices.

sufficient land for a living and it seems that Bob owned a second block. The house had sweeping views towards Mt Ninderry, but is now gone.

They had two sons, **Edwin** (b. 19/1/1905, d. 6/5/1971) and **Robert Lawrence**

Thelma Howard and Edwin Bell. (Photo Bell family)



(b. 8/7/1907, d. 9/5/1979). Edwin, who was working for Boyd McLean at Mooloolaba, married Thelma Howard of Eudlo and then postmistress at Mooloolaba (b. 10/12/1912, d. 16/11/2007). They had a daughter **Beverley** (born 17/6/1943), now Beverley Lavarack, long-serving former secretary of the Buderim Historical Society. Bob's obituary states: 'Although of a retiring nature, Mr Bell's opinion on agricultural matters was much sought-after and respected'.¹

William Fawcett Bell (junior). (b. 28/8/1872, d. 21/12/1963) was known as Bill Bell. He had various jobs as a labourer, transport driver and farmer. He bought land from John Ballinger on the southern side of Burnett Street near the present Lion's Park and built a house in the late 1890s. He had two farms, one known as 'Hilton' on King Street opposite Coggill Road.



William ('Bill') Bell and his daughter Ivy about 1912. (Photo: BHS)

In 1899 he married Alice Minnie Townsend, (b. 20/05/1877, d. 8/7/1900). They had a daughter Ivy. Tragically Minnie died shortly after child birth from septicaemia. Bill brought his baby daughter by train from Brisbane to Palmwoods, then by horse to live with her grandparents, the Townsends, on Buderim. Bill never remarried.

Bill Bell was a well known sportsman, playing cricket as a wicket keeper, tennis, golf and playing an important part in the establishment of the Mooloolaba Surf Lifesaving Club in 1923. 'Uncle' Bill Bell is regarded as the 'father' of the Club and held positions of Instructor of the Club and Captain of the surf boat crew over many years.

Bill Bell proudly leads the first Mooloolaba Surf Life Saving team in 1923. (Photo BHS)



Bill Bell was 51 years old when he obtained his Royal Life Saving Society qualifications in 1923, a considerable effort for a man of his age. To get the required level of fitness he would ride his horse to Meridan Plains from his Buderim farm in the evening, and train by himself in the freshwater lagoons. He was, in later years, dubbed 'the grand old man of Buderim sport'. His daughter Ivy married Bill Chadwick, who was to become a prominent Buderim figure.

¹ Nambour Chronicle, November 22, 1946, page 8, Obituary Mr R. Bell.



Bill Bell's House, on Burnett Street. (Both photos: BHS) Bill Bell at the lagoon on Meridan Plains.

Acknowledgements

Photographs are from the Buderim Historical Society Inc. and from Beverley Lavarack's Bell family documents. Some historical family information is from 'My Heritage'. Thanks to Helene Cronin for records of some Bell family members.

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CHILDREN OF WILLIAM AND MARY BELL

In 1914 William Fawcett Bell's death certificate lists six living children and two deceased (both females Elizabeth and Louisa). Louisa was the only child born in Australia.

James Fawcett Bell (b. 1867, d. 31/5/1945). He never married. There are records of James on Buderim in 1905, and in the 1920s he drove a horse-drawn transport from the Buderim Tram to Birdwood Boarding House. In his later years he lived with his sister Mary Eleanor Cross, in Red Hill, Brisbane.

Elizabeth Voller Box (b. 1868, d. 19/7/1908). Married Josiah (Joe) son of James Box, Stoke-on Trent, England, on 6/4/1886 at the residence of the Rev. J. Stewart, Arthur Street, Fortitude Valley. Children William James (b 1886, d 1971); Mary Amesbury (b. 1891, d. 1946), Josiah (b. 1888, d. 1957).

George Willcock Bell (b. 13/3/1870, d. 10/08/1943). In 1890 he married Elizabeth Ann Woof (b. 18/6/1870, d. 17/4/1924). He lived at Red Hill, Brisbane then Mooloolaba but moved to Red Hill to stay with his sister Mary shortly before he died, buried in Toowong Cemetery. Nine children: Louisa Frances (1894 – 1971; Robert Woof (1892 – 1960); Daisy (1894 – 1980); Frances Ashburner (1896 – 1991); William Fawcett (1900 – 1966); Daisy; Mary Willcock; Elizabeth Voller; George Raynah; Hester Maria.

William Fawcett Bell (junior) (b. 28/8/1872, d. 21 /12/1963). Married Alice Minnie Townsend (b. 20/5/1877, d. 8 /7/1900), daughter Ivy (b. 8/7/1900 d. 2/10/1988). Alice Minnie died shortly after childbirth. Bill Bell was a well known sportsman playing cricket, tennis, golf and was one of the founders of the Mooloolaba Surf Lifesaving Club. See page 4 for more detail.

John Willcock Bell (b. 1875, d. 23/8/1954), migrated to NZ, served in World War 1 (Wellington Mounted Rifles), m. 7/11/1925 to Louise Norman (1885 – 3/7/1950) of Woollahra (?) NSW at St Barnabas Church, Mill Hill Rd., Waverly NSW. In 1925 he was 50 and lived in Gisborne, NZ, she was 40 and from Paddington in NSW. In 1941 he was on electoral roll listed as an 'engine driver', Louise also at same address, 294 Aberdeen Rd, Gisborne, both buried Taruheru, NZ.

Robert Bell (b. 3/1/1878, d. 17/11/1946). Married 16/3/1904 to Constance Ede (b. 1881, d. 25/11/1957), two children, Edwin (b. 19/1/1905, d. 6/5/1971) and Lawrence (b. 8/7/1907, d. 9/5/1977). Farmed land on Bell Road, grandfather of Beverley Mavis Lavarack long-serving past secretary of the Buderim Historical Society. See pages 3 and 4 for more detail.

Mary Eleanor Cross (b. 18/4/1880, d. 1969). Married Thomas Brant on 19/6/1902, two children Elizabeth Grace b.1902, George Thomas b. 1907, Thomas died 22/12/1908 in a sawmill accident, at Woombye, Mary then married Arthur Rupert Cross (b. 26/6/1885, d. 1/1/1942), Brisbane on 31/3/1915 and lived at Red Hill, Brisbane, son Stephen John (b.1918 d. 1957). It seems that Mary's brothers James and George came to live with her at Red Hill in their declining years.

Louisa Bell (b. 1889, d. 1891).

Death Certificate of William Fawcett Bell

DEATH in the District of Gympie in the State of Queensland

1914

Registered by Stanley Wilson
District Registrar

CAUTION.—Whoever shall unlawfully alter any Certified Copy of an Entry in any Register of Births, Marriages, or Deaths, whether by erasure, obliteration, removal, addition, or otherwise, is guilty of a CRIME and liable to the punishment by law provided in that behalf. (Vide Sections 486 and 488 of the "Criminal Code.")

Marginal notes (if any)	Column 1 Number	5948
	Description—	
	2 When died and where.	11th January 1914 Gympie Hospital
	3 Name and surname; profession, trade or occupation.	William Fawcett Bell Plumber
	4 Sex and age.	Male 72 Years 6 months 12 days
	5 (1) Cause of death	(1) Cancer of Stomach
	(2) Duration of last illness.	(2) Exhaustion
	(3) Medical attendant by whom certified.	(1) over 1 year (2) gradual R.A. Macleod
	(4) When he last saw deceased.	10th January 1914
	6 Name and surname of father. Profession, trade or occupation.	James Spence Bell Hosier
	Name and maiden surname of mother.	Mary Eleanor Middlemass
	7 Signature, description and residence of informant.	Certified in writing by Hannah Maria Bell Wife Buderim Mountain
	8 (1) Signature of Registrar.	S. Wilson
	(2) Date.	15th January 1914
	(3) Place of registration.	Gympie
	If Burial or Cremation Registered—	
	9 When and where buried or cremated.	12th January 1914 Gympie Cemetery
	By whom certified.	Walter Geo. Ambrose
	10 Name and religion of minister, and/or names of two witnesses of burial or cremation.	A.T. Craswell Church of England H. Trott William Bines
	11 Where born and how long in Australian States, stating which.	Bishop Wearmouth Durham England 29 years in Queensland
	If deceased was married—	
	12 (1) Where.	1st Bishop Weirmouth Durham England,
	(2) At what age.	24 Years, Mary Willcock 2nd Buderim Mountain
	(3) To whom.	Queensland, 68 Years, Hannah Maria Sudhoff
	13 Issue living, in order of birth, their names and ages.	Living Years By 1st Marriage James 47 George Willcock 43 William Fawcett 41 John Willcock 39 Robert 36 Eleanor Mary 33
	Deceased, number and sex.	Deceased 2 Females



I, Bruce Gilbert Zahner, District Registrar, do hereby certify that the above is a true copy of an entry in a Register of Deaths kept in the District Registry Office at Gympie.

Extracted on 4 February 1986

Exd. by LK

[Signature]
District Registrar