

THE MILES FAMILY

The Miles family were a presence in Brookvale from 1865 virtually up to the present day. Thomas Miles came from Newcastle-on-Tyne in the north of England and earned a living as a carter, as he is described in the Sands Directory of 1877. He initially was living in Manly where he married for the first time but the marriage ended in divorce , although there were several children. Thomas acquired land from William Parker about 1865 and the property was located on Old Pittwater Road , immediately to the south of where Clearview Place is now located.

The second marriage with Eliza Pogue, a native of Baillieborough in Northern Ireland, was more successful and after marrying in Manly, built a house on his block. Thomas and Eliza went on to have five children of their own, Henry(Harry),Abraham, Thomas, Sarah and Robert. In 1887, Robert Miles and his sister Sarah were two of the first enrolments at the Brookvale Public School, a school that has been the initial seat of learning for number of generations of Miles children.

A number of children of the two marriages made their mark on the local community. Emily Miles, a daughter of the first marriage became the postmistress in the period from 1901 to 1906. Harry, the eldest was a storekeeper at Brookvale for 23 years (1902-1925) and a well loved fixture in the community. The general store was located on the western side of Pittwater Road, roughly opposite Sydenham Road, where the road bends and where Col Crawford is now located. The Sands Directory of 1904 describes him as a gardener and his commercial life was a rich mix, including deliveries to Paddy's market with fruit and vegetables from his small farm nearby. Harry (1873- 1929) in 1896 married Emily Bloomfield, a daughter of another prominent local family and they had eight children, five girls and three boys.

Harry was for a term a councillor on the Warringah Shire Council and was a keen participant in local politics, on the conservative side, until his death in 1929. Harry died at his home "Lone Pine" on Old Pittwater Road which was part of the 60 acres that Thomas had acquired and added to. The 8 acres at "Lone Pine" possessed its own small golf course and an orchard and was eventually sold in 1957 as Brookvale industrialised.

Robert Miles was the youngest son of Thomas and he too was heavily involved in the Brookvale community. In the Sands Directory of 1904, he was identified as a dairyman and indeed his first job on leaving school was on a dairy farm on the north coast. In 1911 Robert married Elsie Jane Fraser, who he had met at Peak Hill while working on the western plains. They returned to Manly where he took up work as a builder and the family grew with the addition of four girls and three boys. They originally lived at Eastern Hill in Manly but later moved to Old Pittwater Road in Brookvale and built a home on part of the 60 acres owned by his father. The house they called "Gumbooya", the name given to a reserve in Allambie which is the site of Aboriginal engravings.

Robert was active in local government as well owning a remarkably smart Chevrolet which won a prize at the first Brookvale Show.

Bruce, the eldest son of Robert, grew up in a similar mould to others in the clan, going to Brookvale Public School and then to Manly High, playing cricket and rugby but then World War intervened.

He had a distinguished air force record spending most of the war in England where he met his future wife Lillian. They returned to make their home in Brookvale and named it "Corfe Castle" after a place in Dorset in England where they has spent happy times. Bruce continued the family tradition of being involved in local activities ranging across many sports, the church and youth work. He also had a distinguished legal career spanning nearly 50 years and was a prominent defender of Aboriginal causes. He was awarded an OAM in 2002 and died in the same year.

While this is a brief sketch of the generations of the Miles family and their contribution to life in Brookvale, it is an interesting glimpse of that period when Brookvale was an outer suburban community with the commercial centre at Manly. Land was put to agricultural use while life gradually incorporated local sport, progress associations, the church and participation in the Brookvale Show.

The impact of the Miles family expressed itself in other ways with various parts of the landscape taking on the name of the family, which unfortunately has largely not been continued. The small waterfall on Brookvale Creek in Allenby Park used to bear the name Miles Falls. This creek then flowed down to Miles Pool, a well known swimming hole to the western side of where Warringah Mall now stands, The Pool was known for its crystal clear water, before the pollution of today and streams disappeared under rivers of concrete. There was also reference to Miles Gully which more or less referred to the area along Old Pittwater Road to south of the present Clearview Place. The name of the Miles family is now remembered by Miles Street, which is on the western side of Harbord Road, just to the south of Greendale Creek.