

## Hugh and Sarah White, their family and descendants

### Summary



*Hugh and Sarah White at their home in Seventeen Mile Rocks*

Hugh Eston White emigrated from County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1913 with his wife Sarah and 5 children. After spending some years in the Darling Downs area, Hugh acquired and worked a dairy farm of approximately 88 acres from 1920 until 1937 in the former Seventeen Mile Rocks farming district. The Sinnamon Park section of the White farm extended from Oldfield Road to the Brisbane River including a significant section of the current park in Windermere Estate.

During the period that the Hugh White family was in the district, all family members contributed significantly to the social and cultural life of the local church, of whose congregation they were members, and community. The White family is remembered warmly by neighbours of the period. A surviving grandchild remembers Hugh as a wonderfully kind and generous man, very much loved by all who knew him.

Some members of subsequent generations of the Hugh White family lived in Jindalee and participated actively in community organizations and voluntary services. Though no longer living in the area, they continue to take an interest in developments including preservation of the history of the area.

The photo below, taken from the front garden of the White home Carrig-Na-Gule on the southern side of Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, looks north across Hugh's farmland toward the river. This shows the gully in which the current park is located - on the Hugh White farm.



## Hugh and Sarah White Family Connection with Sinnamon Park including Windermere Estate and Jindalee

**The Family Move to Seventeen Mile Rocks.** The family left Ireland primarily because Hugh had received medical advice to move to a warmer climate. Sponsored by Sarah's brother Andrew Thompson, the family settled initially at Kaimkillenbun near Dalby. However, the cold winters on the Darling Downs were not good for Hugh's health. The family sought a warmer climate, closer to medical services and in an area offering more opportunities for their daughters. Hugh, who had been very active in the local Methodist Church in the Kaimkillenbun area, sought a location with a Methodist Church and associated community. As the family had enjoyed water-based activities in Ireland, the close proximity to the river in Seventeen Mile Rocks was an added attraction. Seventeen Mile Rocks, with the Methodist Church, the warmer climate, its proximity to Brisbane and the river met all criteria. They moved to Seventeen Mile Rocks about 1920.

**White Family and Home.** Hugh and Sarah had three sons and two daughters who were in late adolescence/young adulthood by the time the family moved to Seventeen Mile Rocks: Violet (the eldest of the five), son William Thomas (second child and eldest son), Samuel John Clarke (third child), Jemima Florence [Florence] and Andrew Hugh Thompson (youngest child).

The White family lived in the house on Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, Sinnamon Park formerly known as 'Shine Hall' that was built by the Belz pioneers. It was named Carrig-Na-Gule, the name of the White family flax farm in Brookend, County Tyrone, during the White period of ownership. The house was on the southern side of Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, opposite Windermere Estate, but the farm was on both sides of the road.

**Hugh and Sarah White's Farm.** Hugh White's dairy farm, while centred in the above-mentioned homestead, was comprised of five original land portions, all purchased from the Belz family. The farm included part of the current Windermere Estate and parkland including the land where Hugh White Place is located and also including the land from which Thomas Macleod had earlier launched his historic glider flight. The White farm extended to the river. The farm also included approximately 30 acres at the western end of what is now Burrendah Road, Jindalee, and along Mt Ommaney Drive towards the Jindalee Boat Ramp.



Hugh, formerly a flax farmer in County Tyrone, had gained experience in dairy farming by working his wife's brother's dairy farm 'Fairfield' in the Kaimkillenbun area for a number of years before acquiring the farm at Seventeen Mile Rocks. Building on this experience, he developed a very successful dairy farm in Seventeen Mile Rocks, with assistance from each of his three sons through most of this time. The farm supported Hugh, his wife and sons, and also the two daughters until their marriages.

*Hugh White and Sons at Seventeen Mile Rocks*

The eldest son William Thomas ('Bill') never married, Andrew Hugh Thompson ('Thompson') married in 1938 and

Samuel John Clarke ('John') married later. Hercules Sinnamon recorded that all three of the sons volunteered for war service.

Hugh was included in a list of 'energetic and enterprising settlers' in an article about Seventeen Mile Rocks farming district in *The Brisbane Courier* on 12 July 1930. Two years later, an article (24 September 1932) that reports the ways in which experienced dairy farmers dealt with a recent dry spell mentions Hugh White's use of silage: '*Mr. Hugh White [who] has excavated a pit silo underneath an old shed, and this has produced good ensilage.*' The method must have been successful. Thelma Dempster née Counihan, daughter of neighbours, recalls that Hugh, in addition to the above-mentioned silo near the farm buildings, also had two large pit silos down near the river where the family cultivated fodder crops for the cattle.

**White Family Social Life and Local Community Involvement.** The White family were members of the congregation of the local Methodist Church of Seventeen Mile Rocks, now known as the Sinnamon Memorial Uniting Church. The family was very musical. The musical talents of Hugh and Sarah contributed to Church-associated events, as illustrated in reports in the Brisbane newspaper about Church activities in May and November 1932.

Both of the White daughters, Jemima Florence and Violet, were noted for their fine singing voices. They often contributed to social and fundraising events. Colin Hamilton MacDade, who married Jemima Florence White, was also very musical and often played the piano for social and fundraising events in the Seventeen Mile Rocks community. Colin and Jemima lived in the White family home at Seventeen Mile Rocks for some years after their marriage in 1930. Colin had his own band 'The White Heather Jazz Band' that played in Brisbane and Ipswich during the 1920s and 1930s. His brother-in-law Andrew Thompson White played the drums.

The family was well liked in the local community. In November 1933 they were guests at a birthday party for Mr P Sinnamon at 'Rosemount' (their next door neighbours), as reported in 'The Brisbane Courier'. Thelma Dempster née Counihan remembers the White family as having all been 'lovely people'. Two young grandsons, Violet's sons, occasionally went fishing with her father Tom Counihan.

The White girls entertained socially holding croquet and badminton games on the farmland.



The Brisbane River on the White farm provides a backdrop for photos taken on multi-generational family occasions and also for younger family members courting on the banks of the river.



*The 17-mile rocks island, photographed by a White family member, to which the family often rowed.*

### **Later Generations' Involvement with/Contribution to the Centenary Suburbs**

Individuals in later generations of the White family have been associated with the Centenary suburbs and/or Sinnamon Park. Colin and Jemima Florence MacDade's son Colin John MacDade (ie Hugh White's grandson) felt such a strong affinity for the area, based on his childhood memories of associations and experiences at the White dairy farm, that he settled in Jindalee with his wife and family in the mid 1960s.

Colin junior and his wife Alwynne and family were much involved in the Jindalee community. Alwynne was active in fundraising for the Jindalee Methodist/Congregational (later Uniting) Church, a particular contribution being fundraising events to raise money to buy a new organ for the church. Their daughter Sharn taught Sunday School there. Sharn and her sisters were also members of the Church Youth Group. In that capacity Sharn along with other members visited Sinnamon Retirement Village and provided musical entertainment for the residents. Colin was a member of the Jindalee Golf Club and Sharn and her sisters were all members of the Swimming Club.

Later Colin junior's mother (Hugh's daughter Jemima Florence MacDade née White) spent her last years in Sinnamon Village and was an active community member despite having lost her vision. She attended the centenary of the Seventeen Mile Rocks State School.

The MacDade family home was just above flood level in 1974 due to Colin's foresight when purchasing a property in the area. Alwynne did a lot of cooking for flood victims as she had a gas stove that functioned during the prolonged period without electricity. Sharn, then a teenager, was one of a group of young people whose flood relief activities were organized and supervised by Graham Nimmo (Jindalee Primary School teacher) and his wife Joan, leaders of the Uniting Church Youth Group. With Graham's boat, this group assisted flood victims. This included diving into the local supermarket to obtain canned foods and also traversing the flooded Jindalee Creek to obtain milk from the Sinnamon farm and delivering it to families with infants.

Jemima Florence MacDade née White's daughter Mrs Charmaine Sheehan and her husband attended the unveiling of the Thomas Macleod monument that was installed on her ancestors' land in 2010. She and her niece Sharn White, daughter of Colin MacDade junior, have both donated photographs to the Centenary Suburbs Historical Society. Sharn and Charmaine have also provided information about the White family background and connection with the district. The information and photographs provide a valuable insight into social life in a small rural community in the 1920s and 1930s.

**CENTENARY SUBURBS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

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