

## Daniel James Walsh and Annie Evelyn Walsh (*nee Burke*)

By Brian Walsh (2006)

Daniel and Annie Walsh (later Annie Cron) were paternal grandparents to Nancy, Allen, Brian and Geoff Walsh. Within our family, we called them 'Little Grandpa' and 'Big Nin', to distinguish them from mum's parents, known as 'Big Grandpa' and 'Little Nin' because of their relative sizes.

Our father, Maurice (Maurie) was the only child of Daniel and Annie. (By the way, 'Annie' was her real name, and not derived from Anne or similar names).

While we can write from personal experience about Annie – she was a familiar figure to us well into our adult years – an attempt to put some 'life' into a story on Daniel can only be done by using a collection of dates and facts, with a few assumptions thrown in. By adding some of dad's memories and yarns about his father, we might get a glimpse of his character. Because Daniel died in 1930, when we were very young, Nancy, Allen and I have no personal memories of him. Geoff was born 5 years after he died, so he is a bit of a mystery to our generation. But, oddly enough, because Dad spoke about him often over the years, I have the feeling that we did know him in a way.

To begin with his parents and family:

- John Walsh migrated from Ballyhamill, co Limerick, with his mother and 3 sisters, leaving Liverpool on the 'Admiral Boxer' and arrived in Australia on 9 March 1857. He was a carpenter by trade.
- Mary Cunningham migrated from Clonmel, co. Tipperary, with 2 sisters, leaving Southampton on the 'Boanerges' and arriving in Melbourne on 9 July 1962. She was listed as a 'nursemaid' on the ship's passenger manifest.
- John and Mary were married in the partly-built St. Mary's Catholic Church in Geelong on 5 July 1863. (The church was completed in the 1870s).
- Daniel was born in Bright Place – off little Myers Street – on 20 April 1871, their sixth and youngest child. Two of his older sisters, Anastasia and Mary, had died as infants, and the eldest child, Honora, died in 1881 at the age of 18. His older brothers, Maurice and Peter, lived to adulthood and died at the ages of 30 and 55 respectively.

We know nothing of Daniel's childhood, but can resume that it wasn't blighted by poverty. His father was a carpenter, so we can guess there would be regular work for that trade in those times. Apart from the economic circumstances, there is no doubt that he would have been raised in a strong Irish-Catholic home atmosphere.

The area in which the family lived was nicknamed 'Irishtown', due to the large Irish immigrant population. According to Dad, Mary was one of the few literate Irish people there (being convent-educated in Clonmel, according to family folklore) and she would read letters from Ireland to illiterate locals, and help them to write letters to send 'home', or write letters for them.

In 1886, when Daniel was 15 years old, he became apprenticed to Mr. James Bell, the proprietor of the 'Geelong Times' newspaper, in 'The Art of Printing'.

He began by learning the trade of compositor. In those days, a compositor made up ‘galleys’ of type by assembling the type, piece by piece and line by line, with each individual piece of type being selected and placed by hand. By the early 1900s, machines such as the ‘linotype’ made composing much faster for most newspaper printing, but special font types and sizes still had to be set by hand.

I had always thought that Daniel was a compositor only, but that’s probably not correct. I’ve had the original of his apprenticeship debenture paper for many years, and was probably misled by the reference to his wages over the 7 years of his apprenticeship, where he had a fixed weekly wage for the first two years (six shillings, then eight shillings and sixpence) after which he was on piece-work at so much per thousand ‘ens’, which is a width of type a little less than 2 millimetres. This could imply that he did no work but composing for 7 years.

But, the indenture enjoins the employer to instruct his apprentice in ‘The Art of Printing’, which of course embraces much more than the compositor’s trade. So, during his apprenticeship and later, Daniel must have learned the art of printing thoroughly as, on his marriage certificate in 1901, when he was 30 years old, his profession is ‘printers’ overseer’, which would be a senior position in the printing office.

One aspect of his family life that I hadn’t noticed until recently was that his father, John Walsh, died in October 1886, just a few months after Daniel began his apprenticeship. His mother was probably not left destitute, as her two older sons, Maurice, 20 years old and a carpenter and Peter, 17 and a laborer, were living at home for some years after John’s death, so they probably kept the home fires burning.

Daniel’s six shillings or so per week wouldn’t have been much help early on, but one could get a fair bit for a shilling in those days. When Daniel was 30 years old and still living in Bright Place – the house where we was born? – he married Annie Burke on 19 November, 1901, at the High Church (Presbyterian) manse, Geelong. He was not the only Irish Catholic in our family to marry a Presbyterian lady – Annie’s father, Patrick Burke, had married Christina Ross in Bulla in 1875.

Dad’s version of the marriage was that Daniel was refused a dispensation by his priest to marry ‘outside the church’ so he effectively – and literally – said “to hell with the church” and married Annie in a Presbyterian ceremony. Dad said that Daniel never set foot in a Catholic church again, but surely it’s possible that he did on the occasion of any family or friends’ funerals, at least.

On their marriage certificate, Daniel’s address is ‘Bright Place’ and Annie’s is ‘Myers Street’. Why and when Annie moved to Geelong from Bulla, where she grew up, is another mystery to us. She was 22 years old at her marriage.

Now – what was Daniel Walsh like? And what manner of man was he? We have to rely mostly on Dad’s memories and yarns about him. From the only fairly clear two photos we have of him, he was a small man of slight build, with grey hair in his forties, and very well dressed in suits. In the attached photograph, he appears to have a moustache. In a word, he could be described as ‘dapper’. We don’t know whether he smoked or ‘took a drop’.

He apparently had a bit of the excitable Irish in him and was not averse to turning a colorful phrase. And it seems he had a keen sense of humor. Like most of the locals, he was a staunch supporter of the Geelong Football Club.

Dad told of one occasion at the Football with 'Bub' Heagney, when a free kick was given against Geelong. Bub dug Daniel in the ribs and yelled 'what was that for, Danny?' And Daniel yelled back 'How the hell would I know, Bub, why don't you jump the bloody fence and ask the umpire?'

Although not an active sportsman as far as we know, he took as keen interest in many sports, including horse racing, athletic meetings, dog racing and Football.

We never heard whether he was a gambler himself, but in one period in Geelong he acted as a 'commission agent' for businessmen, politicians and others, by going to various race meetings (horses, dogs and men) and placing wagers on their behalf. Dad told us that he would head off to race meetings with his pockets full of gold sovereigns, to place the various wagers. That of course implies that he was an honest man, to be trusted with heaps of other men's cash.

Allen remembers dad telling him of one occasion when Daniel was asked by a politician to place a bet but only if he could obtain certain odds. Apparently, he could not get the required odds, so didn't place the bet and the horse won. When he returned the stake, and explained why he didn't place the bet, the politician accepted that and said something like "that's ok Danny, worse things have happened at sea".

He was apparently well known in sporting circles in Geelong and we have a cutting of a letter written to a Geelong paper that says "Another well-known sport was Danny Walsh, of the Geelong Times".

Following are some of Dad's yarns about his father – you can believe them or no!

As the 'Geelong Times' was a morning paper, Daniel would work late into the night until the paper was 'put to bed', then walk at least some of the way home in the early morning darkness. Some neighbors had a talking cockatoo who knew dad's family and, on more than one occasion during his lonely walk home, Daniel had the daylight's scared out of him by a screech in his ear out of the dark. "Hello Danny, Hello Danny!"

Dad always swore this next one is true. Daniel, after arriving home, would get undressed in the dark so as not to disturb Annie, then drop backwards into bed. But one day, unknown to him, Annie did some spring cleaning, and moved the bed from its usual position. That night, Daniel came home, got undressed in the dark and – you guessed it – dropped backwards onto nothing but the floor! Dad claimed that the colorful language woke up people in the next street. Don't spoil the story by asking how he didn't bump into the moved bed, or other minor details.

Annie, although not tall, was a well-built buxom woman and, like other ladies of the time, when dressing up in fashionable clothes, used a full body corset which laced up at the back. Dad spoke of seeing his father helping Annie with her corset, with his knee in her back while he pulled mightily to tighten the laces in her corset. That would be a strenuous job for a small man, not to mention the strain on his wife's curves.

One historical occasion that Dad remembered well was in 1912, when he was an eight year-old boy. After the explorer, Amudsen, had beaten Scott to the South Pole in December, 1911, his first port of call on returning from the Antarctic was Geelong, where he was given a civic reception. The 'Geelong Times' must have had some part in it, as Daniel was among the dignitaries on stage with

Amundsen and his crew, and somehow had wangled a seat on stage for Dad with him. That would have been something for a schoolboy to tell his mates about.

I doubt that Daniel ever held any office in civic affairs in Geelong, or we would have heard of it from Dad at some time. He seemed to be busy enough with a range of friends and associates in sporting circles and quite likely in business circles, due to his newspaper contacts.

We assume that he worked at the 'Geelong Times' from 1886 until the early 1920s, when he and Annie moved to Melbourne and he began working at the 'Argus' newspaper.

(Note: The 'we' in these memoirs usually means Allen and myself and, sometimes, Nancy. We surprise each other recently with our ignorance of the movements of some of the older one in our family at various stages of their lives. It's probably due to the fact that some things were never told to children and/or we were not interested enough in our younger days to ask questions about matters that we would like to record now).

Daniel and Annie lived in Park St. West Brunswick through the 1920s. I have a photo of them with a group of family and friends of early 1920s vintage. The photo is printed on a postcard and addressed to "Mrs. D. Walsh 124 Park St. W. Brunswick". By whom, I don't know – another frustration. It was not postmarked or dated, so was possibly sent in an envelope of hand delivered. Most inconsiderate for future historians!

While we've gleaned some details of Daniel's private life in Geelong, we don't know what interests outside of work he may have had, during the 1920s, while living and working in Melbourne.

Daniel died suddenly of heart failure at home in West Brunswick on 25 June 1930. The death register shows cause of death as "arteriosclerosis – cardiac syncope". I recently obtained a copy. In those days, local births and deaths were registered at Brunswick Town Hall.

(An aside – Daniel's death was recorded by the same registrar who had registered my birth 16 months earlier. That was the woman who mistakenly wrote 'January' instead of 'February', and mum signed on the opposite page without noticing the error. I didn't know this until 60 years later, when I needed a full copy of the registration. Mum and Dad were dead, so there seemed no way to correct it, and I had to have dozens of my records changed to confirm with my 'official' January date of birth!).

A footnote to Daniel's break with his church at the time of his marriage in 1901: After he died, Dad had some difficulties with the local priest when trying to arrange a Catholic burial for him. So, with some of his father's "Irish" up, he went to the minister of Brunswick Presbyterian church, who was more accommodating than the priest, and Daniel was buried at Brighton cemetery on 27 June 1930.

The printer's ink in Daniel's blood carried through our family. Dad move to Melbourne in the early 1920s, and worked for a short time at the 'Argus' newspaper. Then, in 1925, the year he and mum were married, he began working as a proof reader at the 'Sun', 'Herald', 'Weekly Times', 'Sporting Globe' and some magazines. In the 1930s, he transferred to the 'Herald', the afternoon paper, after years of night shift on the 'Sun'. He worked at the 'Herald' until 1948, apart from a 5 years plus stint in the RAAF during World War Two, from 1940 until 1945. Apart from his regular job, he contributed sporting articles to the papers, and at one time compiled a series of sporting quizzes for the 'Sporting Globe'.

He left the 'Herald' to do freelance work, publishing some in-house company magazines and contributing historical articles to popular magazines. He was still writing into the 1980s and enjoyed some success with short stories written for competitions run by the veterans' affairs department.

Allen, Geoff and I were apparently not cut out to be newspapermen, and we took up careers in entirely different fields.

Then, after a generation's break, Eleanor began work as a 'Cub' reporter with the 'Daily Liberal' newspaper in Dubbo, NSW in 1979, went on to TV work in Sydney and today, among other jobs like looking after her husband Alan, does publicity work and press for the Consulate General of Monaco in New York, in many shades of printer's ink.

I wonder what Danny Walsh would make of that, 120 years after he began his apprenticeship? It's a pity I can't do as he suggested to Bub many years ago – that is, jump the bloody fence and ask him.

### **BIG NIN**

One of my earliest memories of Annie Walsh – called 'Big Nin' in our family, as mentioned earlier – was being bounced on her ample lap while she sang nursery rhymes. I was about 4 years old at the time. I've always remembered one particular song – "Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross, to see a fine lady upon a white horse. With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, she shall have music wherever she goes".

Some twenty years later, whenever Don Williamson and I drove down to London from the Midlands, we would usually take the A41, which runs from Birmingham to London through Banbury in Oxfordshire. I often thought of Nin when driving past the large 'Banbury Cross' in the market square of the town. I don't know how old the cross and nursery rhyme are, but the cross was still standing tall in 1955.

Sadly, Nin died before I returned home, so that was one of many things that I didn't get to telling her about. (I just caught up with some trivia in the 'World Book' – the original cross was erected in the Middle Ages, but was destroyed by the puritans. The present cross was built in the 1800s).

Annie Evelyn Burke (as she signed on her marriage certificate in 1901) was born at Bulla, Victoria, on 29 March 1879, the third child of Patrick and Christina Burke.

Patrick was a farm laborer, working on various farms in the Bulla and Sunbury districts. He apparently had a spell at being a publican, as it is on record that he was granted the licence to the Inverness Hotel in 1886-1887. Perhaps the family needed a hotel to accommodate 5 young children (and 6 after Hurtle was born in 1887).

Annie was one of eight children, two of whom died as infants. Of the surviving children, Annie had two sisters and three brothers, all of whom we knew for many years as we grew up. Annie attended the Bulla State School in School Lane, just up the hill from Bulla Bridge. We don't recall being told any details of her schooldays or younger life, but the family life must have been pretty spartan in the early years at least, with five children under the age of 6, two of whom were twins.

We don't know whether Patrick was a practicing Catholic before marrying Christina, who came from the Staunch Presbyterian Ross family, but the children were raised as Presbyterians. They probably went to Sunday School at the Bulla Church, which their grandfather, Donald Ross, helped to build, and where he was an elder of the kirk - he died in 1902, aged 74.

I have a small new Testament, printed for the British and Foreign Bible Society, which Nin gave me for a keepsake when I was heading overseas into the unknown in 1954. Inscribed inside is "Annie Burke February 14<sup>th</sup> 1889". She got that book when she was 9 years old – was it on a special occasion? – and kept it for 65 years before giving it to me. I must confess that Nin probably used it more than I have, but it is still a treasured memento. It was printed in 1885 and its price was one penny!

As with her schooldays, we know nothing of Nin's adolescence – (a term used long before 'teenagers' were invented). For some reason, she moved to Geelong from Bulla when about 20 years of age. We don't know who, if any, of her family moved as well.

Dad told a story which could be dated to about that time (late 1890s). Nin and her sister, Adeline (who later married George Gillon) attended an afternoon tea party on board the 'Cerberus', the flagship of the Victorian Navy. It could have been at Williamstown, where the 'Cerberus' was usually berthed. Janet and I have speculated that the girls' invitations may have been arranged through their great-aunt, Mary Auld (nee Walsh), who had married Hugh Auld, a ships' carpenter in the permanent Victorian Navy. Although Hugh had died in 1884, Mary, at 57, was still living in Williamstown at the turn of the century and quite likely still in touch with the Navy 'Types'.

The girls' 'tea party' was probably not a rare event on the 'Cerberus'. Since its arrival from England in 1871, it had not fired a shot in anger. The feared Russians (or anyone else) never did try to invade Victoria, so the 'Cerberus' and the few sailing ships of the navy kept in trim with occasional exercises on port Phillip Bay. This left ample time for the commander of the 'Fleet' to entertain visitors at tea parties.

Writing these memoirs prompts all kinds of questions that we didn't ask, or think of, in earlier times.

I wonder if Nin ever had any thoughts of her 'Tea Party' days, when visiting us during our holidays in the 1930s at Black Rock and Half Moon bay, sitting on the beach and looking out to the rusting hulk of the 'Cerberus', which had been sunk as a breakwater in 1926?

It must have been soon after moving to Geelong that Nin met Daniel Walsh. How and where we don't know. I had thought it unlikely that they met at a dance, such as at St. Mary's Church Hall, where Dad 'shook a leg' with his Irish mates while growing up.

And yet – Nancy reminded me recently that Dad told her Nin was a very good dancer and light on her feet for a solidly-built woman. Was Daniel Walsh a dancer? For a man interested in a wide variety of sports, dancing could conceivably be an interest. A more prosaic explanation could be that they met as near-neighbors, as they lived close by at the time of their marriage.

As mentioned earlier, they were married in the Presbyterian manse. Nin's bridesmaid was Lily Marshall. In later years, Nin often spoke of 'Lil' Marshall, but we don't know now she fitted into

Nin's life. Now, while our family might claim to have had many 'gentlewomen' in our ranks (and perhaps the odd 'gentleman'), Nin is the only one, as far as I know, who has been granted that title in print!

Mr. McNair, the minister, certified on the marriage certificate that he had that day celebrated marriage between 'Daniel James Walsh of Geelong, printer's overseer and Annie Evelyn Burke of Geelong, Gentlewoman'. The lack of a profession or work title is not surprising, as Nin could quite likely have spent her adolescence in helping to raise younger members of the family, and so would have no opportunity or necessity for work outside the home.

Nin and little Grandpa (as he became known) – and later, Dad – lived in various homes in Geelong from 1901 until the early 1920s. Dad used to talk of various streets, mainly in West Geelong, but we are unsure now about which ones the family lived in.

We know very little, if anything, of Nin's life or activities during those years, which included Dad's childhood, schooldays, and the First World War Dad's reminiscences seemed to be more about his father and other things, rather than about his mother – perhaps because she didn't do anything out of the ordinary to be the subject of a yarn?

The same applies to the 1920s, after Nin and Grandpa moved to Melbourne. We have to 'fast forward' to the early 1930s, after little Grandpa died, to the time when our own memories of Nin began.

From the time Nin was widowed in 1930, until about 1936, she lived with some of her close relatives, and Nancy thinks that she lived at one time in the Parkdale area. From my memory, she used to visit us often, as some of my earliest memories are of her singing nursery rhymes to us. I don't know if Grandpa had any estate to leave to her, and don't know what her financial circumstances were. Allen recalls that she had a sweet shop at one time – that was impressed on his mind because he thought it was great to be able to get some lollies without paying for them!

It was probably during 1936 that Nin came to our place to stay permanently.

To my mind, she was always bright and cheerful. In those times, radio was booming, and some of the stations ran competitions for listeners. Nin must have been fairly intelligent, as I remember her entering many of those competitions with mum and dad.

One in particular was the naming of racehorses with their breeding, (Dam and Sire). Prizes were given for the cleverest or funniest. A typical example (which wouldn't win) would be – "Sidney Myer – out of stock, by Friday night".

I was reminded of this recently, while reading the memoirs of a First War digger. One of his mates knew the names and breeding of all of the well-known racehorses. One night, he was in a forward post, when a shell landed close by and knocked out his two mates. He bolted back to the trenches but was challenged by a sentry for the password. In his confusion, he couldn't remember the password, but blurted out his name "Jackson", followed immediately by "out of shell hole by bloody big mortar". Nin would have enjoyed that yarn.

Apart from my memory of Nin singing nursery rhymes, Geoff told me recently that he well remembers Nin reading stories to him, while sitting in the armchair that sat by the kitchen window for many years. As Geoff is 6 years younger than I am, Nin must have spent many years during the 1930s in singing rhymes and reading stories to us kids.

While Nin was living with us in 1936-37, Alf Cron, a widower and an old family friend, began 'courting' Nin. Alf, a coppersmith at the Newport railway workshops, lived in Munro Street, Coburg. He would visit us regularly to visit Nin, and play cards – crib and euchre – with Dad and Nin. He was a very pleasant fellow and always welcome at our home. Nin and Alf Cron were married at the West Brunswick Presbyterian Church (later 'St. David's') in October 1937. It was a small wedding, with only 'Olly' Buck and Bub Heagney as witnesses. They came home to our place for a small wedding 'breakfast'. I recall Nancy welcoming Alf Cron as our new 'Grandpa', but Alf diplomatically declined the title and said 'you can call me 'pop''. So he was 'Pop' Cron to us for many years. At the time of their marriage, Nin was 58 years old and Alf was 53. Nin and Alf lived in Munro St., Coburg, and we would visit each other regularly.

Alf was not an active sportsman in later years, but had spent many years as a cricket umpire at district cricket level. Some years later, I inherited from him, through Nin, the cartoon of a boy who was 'The hope of his side', then 'out first ball'. I kept it for 50 years, then had it framed and gave it to Martin for Malachy last year. That is the only 'relic' we have from 'pop' Cron, except for a miniature tea kettle that he made from copper coins. The base is a halfpenny and the body was beaten out from a penny – a great example of the coppersmith's art – and Nancy has had that kettle for many years.

From 1937 to 1943, Nin and Alf Cron apparently had some happy years together. Alf was a good gardener and always had a great show of flowers and vegetables. They would often go on outings, and Nancy remembers their taking her on visits to relatives to Ballarat and other places, usually by train. We also have photos of them visiting us at Half Moon Bay in the late 1930s, during our annual holidays.

Their time together was cut short by the untimely death of "Pop" Cron, due to cancer, in 1943, and Nin was widowed for a second time. Nin stayed on at the Munro Street home for another 12 years, until her death in 1955. It was probably in 1939 that granddad, Patrick Burke – Nin's father – moved to Munro St. to live with Nin and Alf Cron permanently.

And over the next few years, until he died in 1946, he would entertain us with yarns about his early days in the bush, and later times in Bulla. It's a pity we didn't have tape recorders then, as we can now only recall some of the yarns he spun to us.

Allen and I have different recollections of granddad's literacy. On his marriage certificate, he marked his name with a cross, so he couldn't write his name then. At Munro Street, I recall Nin reading the newspapers to him, but Allen remembers granddad reading them himself. So, perhaps one or more of his children taught him to read and my recollections could be of Nin reading to him after his eyesight had dimmed.

After granddad died in 1946, Nin lived on her own until the early 1950s, when her cousin, Bub Heagney, came in from his farm at Tullamarine to live with her at Munro Street. After 1946, Nin was still fairly fit and active, and would often visit friends and relatives at Ballarat, as well as

regular visits to us and the Gillon Family in West Brunswick. (Aunt Adeline Gillon was her sister). During those years, Allen Geoff and I would ride our bikes – and later, motorbikes – to Nin's and do a bit of gardening or odd jobs to help out a bit. And in 1954/55, Nancy would walk the mile or so from home in Pascoe Vale to visit Nin, with Dianne in the pram and Julie tagging alongside. Nancy told me recently that Julie commented in later years that she always had to walk! There were probably compensations, as Nin always had lollies and drinks for visitors.

Her niece, Teany Fraser (Gillon) who lived in Pascoe Vale, would also visit Nin regularly, so she was rarely alone in her later years.

When I was planning to go to England in 1954, both Nin and Bub were as interested as anyone else. While I was away, I sent them cards and letters from various places. But fate intervened and I was not to see them again, as they both died in 1955, before I came home.

While touring Europe in the summer of 1955, I picked up two letters from Mum at the Cologne post office at the end of August. I still clearly remember reading those letters while sitting on the steps at the front of Cologne Cathedral. One was to tell me, among other things, that dad's cousin, Clarice Gillon, had died. That was no great surprise, as Clarice had been ill with TB for many years.

The other letter was to tell me that Bub had died suddenly on 23 July. That was quite a blow. It was the last thing one expected, as Bub was always in good spirits and I suppose we expected him to always be around.

We got back to England on 6 October and, on the next day, I sent Nin a postcard from London, saying that we had had a great trip and looked forward to telling her all about it when I got home in a few weeks time. Alas! – what I didn't know was that a letter from Mum was waiting for me at my digs at Kenilworth, which I picked up the following week, to tell me that Nin had died suddenly on 14 September from a cerebral hemorrhage. And so, Annie Burke-Walsh-Cron-Big Nin passed from our family, to be remembered with affection by all who knew her.

In 1901, Mr. McNair, the minister, probably didn't appreciate how truly he wrote, when he gave Annie Burke the title of 'Gentlewoman'.