

Memorial Windows of Camberwell Uniting (Methodist) Church

Alexander Bowie and Louisa Jane Millar

Preamble

Sometimes, it seems to be that one person's misfortune turns out to be someone else's good luck. And sometimes this can lead to the most amazing coincidences.

Readers will recall that sadly, on 16 April 2017, Jean Provan died. In attendance at her funeral was Alan Lawton, who, in the post-service celebration of Jean's life, caught up with one Len Millar. The two had known each other in the past, but had not come into contact for decades (since their Methodist Youth Fellowship days).

Len was attending the funeral, as his late brother Alex had been married to one of Jean Provan's sisters, Frances.

As luck would have it, your correspondent had been speaking to Alan previously about the "Millar" stained glass window, and I had indicated that I was struggling to find much information on this couple, and Alan had said that he had known Len Millar (Alexander's grandson) in his early life, but that they had not had contact for some time.

The matter had rested there, as research continued on the people commemorated in other windows. Until now!

Alan kindly mentioned my quest, and secured Len's contact details, which I subsequently used to contact Len myself, and, to my delight, Len has provided me with a wealth of information which I have accessed to put together the article below.

Thanks Alan and Len. I feel strangely blessed in the shadow of the Provan's time of sadness.

Millar Family History

In Len's words, "the following is an email from my beloved sister-in-law, Frances, who was married to my late brother Alex, and Fran has quoted the Miller/Millar website.

Alex and Frances (Fran) were the instigators of a 150th re-union at Murtoa, for which they cobbled together a grand tome on the extended family of Millers and Millars who landed at Port Adelaide in 1849 from Scotland.

Joseph Bass and Rose Jean Miller left Scotland with their first child, Isabella, and arrived with Samuel who was born on the "Calphurnia" en route. **Alexander Bowie Millar** was born two years later in 1851 at Salisbury (SA), followed by Joseph Bass, William Eaton, Josiah Huntley, Alice Jane, George, Elinor (Nell), Arthur Danesbury and Beatrice (born in 1868).

Alexander Bowie Millar was instrumental in building two churches in South Australia (at Salisbury and Rosaville, Mount Gambier). The large family gravitated towards the Wimmera in Victoria.

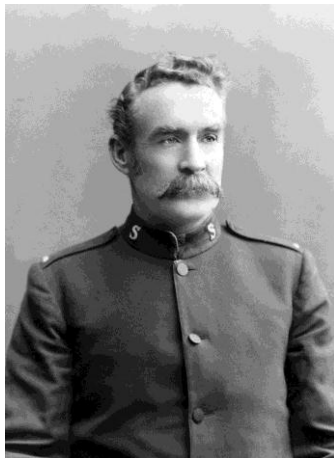
'Alex was a fine-looking young man. Red-headed and tall with an upright stance'. He was good at sport. He married **Louisa Jane East** (from Penshurst) in May 1878. The family were members of the Salvation Army. A. B. Millar rose in the ranks and was appointed to the Salvation Army chapels in a succession of cities and towns in

New South Wales including Dubbo, Woolloomooloo and North Shore. Then he was appointed to the Adelaide Prison Gate Brigade and, after a sickness, was appointed to the Prison Gate Home and the People's Palace in Sydney. The growing family accompanied A.B. to these many postings, and the disruption to home life and schooling was ever-present. Touring duties extended from northern Victoria to South-east Queensland. After representations to the Salvation Army command he was given some time off – but upon return to duty was shunted off to Adelaide and Perth. But his wife's health deteriorated – and reluctantly in 1905 he gave up his commission.

Soon after he bought a business, Joyce and Co – Manufacturing Works, in North Melbourne which galvanized steel products to prevent them rusting, and where he invented a seam-less milk can. This product was superior to existing seamed cans, and sold well to dairy farmers.

In 1913, A.B. changed his family's surname by deed poll to **Millar**, and they became adherents of the Methodist Church. In 1915 he bought the family home, "Eastleigh", on the corner of Burke and Inglesby Roads – quite close to the then Camberwell Methodist Church.

A.B. Millar died on 4 August, 1922, aged 71 years. Louisa died on 17 October, 1928, aged 73 years.



Alexander Bowie Millar

Picture taken 1890
in Salvation Army Uniform
A.B. Millar aged 39 years)

Louisa Jane Millar
(nee East)
Picture dated 1889
Louisa is 44 years old

His family worshipped at Camberwell and daughter Gertrude was a loyal daughter of the church through until her death in 1968 when Len was 27.



Gertrude did some missionary work (in Papua & New Guinea) during her adult life and was instrumental in commissioning the stained glass window that was almost above the family's traditional pew down towards the front of the church on east side."

(Photo of Gertrude Millar, taken in 1967, when she was 87 years old).

In David Street's unfinished manuscript on "*The Church at the Junction*", Gertrude is remembered as a "*spritely 80 year old,*" who subsequently had a fall and broke her leg. "*She praised God for that because it gave her the opportunity to witness about her faith to people she would come into contact with in hospital.*"

Len continues, "I worshipped with my parents (Norman Howard and Sylvia Stella Millar) and Aunt Gertie each Sunday, sang in the choir, taught in the Sunday School and was a member of the Methodist Youth Fellowship."

Len concluded by saying "I hope that this potted history is of use to you. I never knew my Grandfather (he having died well before me) – but he was revered by our family as a stalwart Christian who served in many places around Australia with the Salvation Army, but who left after prolonged and disruptive postings. The Methodist Church gained a wonderful man."

Immediate Family of Alexander Bowie and Louisa Jane Millar

Astute readers who have followed the Millar family history to this point may have noticed the earlier picture of Louisa Millar, in her Salvation Army Uniform, with the handwritten caption "*Heroic Mother of Eight*".

"Heroic" indeed, but perhaps not unusual for the times. However, Louisa was not done yet – she went on to have 10 children! All born between 1879 and 1898:

- Two of her children (her first, Bertrand, and her fifth, Arthur), unfortunately, died in infancy at ages 4 and 5 months respectively;
- Four children (Gertrude, Edgar, Herbert and Alick) never married;
- Stella married Henry Denniston and they went on to have 8 children;



Photo of Stella Millar, aged 17 years, picture dated 1899.

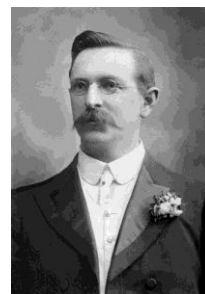
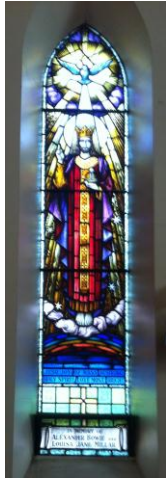


Photo of Henry Denniston, taken at age 32, picture dated 1906.

- Alyce married James Madden and had 4 children;
- Ruth married Carlyle Wood and had 3 children. Ruth, who was the youngest child, was born in 1898, lived the longest, and died in 1989, aged 91 years; and
- The Millar's 7th child was Norman H. Millar, who lived from 1890 – 1978. Norman married Sylvia (Crosbie) and they had two children, Alexander Crosbie Millar (who was subsequently to marry Jean Provan's sister Frances), and Leonard, who provided the family information at the outset of this article.

Alex and Fran had 3 children. Alex died in 2007 (aged 73 years). Len did not marry.

Dedication of Memorial Window



“At a special Service of dedication in December 1957, a new and beautiful memorial window was added to those already in the Church, when a large congregation paid tribute to the memory of the late Mr and Mrs Alexander Bowie Millar.

Tributes were read from two of the staff of the Salvation Army, Col. Frederick Saunders and Col. Percival Dale (S.A.) Historian, Mr W Buck (for the Local Preachers Association), and Mr J E Poppins (for the Laymen’s Missionary Movement).

The window was provided for by the late Edgar Millar as a memorial to his father and mother. The design is based on the theme of the Holy Spirit, the dominating figure being that of the Risen Lord, and the inscription runs:

*“Jesu, Joy of man’s desiring, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Love most bright”.
“In Loving memory of Alexander Bowie and Louisa Millar.” ”*

(Excerpt from “The Camberwell Methodist”, February 1958)

Final Resting Place

Alexander and Louisa Millar are both buried at Box Hill Cemetery.

They are buried in the family plot shown below. The plot includes separate stone plaques to Alexander, Louisa, and fourth son Edgar, and two plaques on the front left hand side for seventh son Norman and his wife Sylvia Millar.





Plaques for Alexander and Louisa's sons Edgar and Norman (and his wife Sylvia).



At a separate location in the Box Hill Cemetery is a memorial plaque for Norman and Sylvia's eldest son, Alexander Crosbie Millar, brother of Len, who died in 2007.



Of the remaining six surviving children of Alexander and Louisa Millar:

- Sisters Gertrude and Ruth are buried in Burwood Cemetery;
- Stella, Herbert, Alyce and (Stafford) Alick were all cremated at Springvale Cemetery.
- I can locate no record of the two boys who died young.

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