



MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS

MANDURAH COMMUNITY MUSEUM

The Wearne Family

The Wearne family's involvement in Mandurah actually starts with the marriage of Matilda Tuckey (of the original Tuckey family) to John Wearne, a mining engineer in the Victorian Goldfields. It was here that eight of their children were born. Theodore (Theo) was their last child, and was born in the Tuckey house on Mandurah Terrace, where Matilda was staying at the time, with her parents who had returned to Mandurah to live.

Charles Wearne and his brother Theodore were both important to Mandurah. The brothers undertook training in Singapore as engineers and in the early 1900's opened a car and transport business which prospered and extended into Malaysia. The business was known as Wearne Brothers, later changing its name and becoming WBL, under which name the company continues in Singapore and Malaysia today although with no Wearne members taking part in it.

Charles and Theodore continued to consider Mandurah as their Australian home and both later built homes in Leslie Street. Carinya, more commonly known as Wearne House was built by Charles, and remains a feature of Mandurah today. Bonnie Doon was built by Theodore and has been removed from its original site in Leslie Street to Country Road Estate in Greenfields, Mandurah. Its name is commemorated by the units built on the property in Leslie Street.

Leaving Singapore hours before the Japanese invasion, Charles and Theodore escaped on the last ships to Western Australia, where their wives were awaiting them. Charles' sons Walter and Foster remained, and were taken as Prisoners of War. Theodore made his home in Perth supervising business interests and Charles came to live in Mandurah.

During the second world war Charles undertook coastal surveillance with the Naval Auxilliary Patrol using the purpose built boat 'Selamat' on Mandurah waters.

During this time many young men served on the 'Selamat' patrolling the waters with Charles. It was after one of these patrols in 1944 that he became ill after becoming extremely cold, and died several days later.

Theodore appears to have shifted from Perth to the Channel Islands, where he died in 1969.

These two Wearne Brothers were well known within Mandurah for their philanthropy.

References: C Fyfe *'Wheels in Malaya: The Wearne Brothers and Their Company.'* Newspaper reports sourced from local collection, on line from Trove and from the museums Oral History Collection.