

John Aloysius Harford 1873 -1966

John Aloysius was born at Armagh on 15 January 1873. His childhood was spent on the land at Wandearah. He was four years old when Stephen bought the land in 1877 and ten when it was sold.

The Barrier Daily Truth, 16 January, 1964 featured an article on John for the celebration of his 91st birthday. This showed a photo of him taking his axe to railway sleepers and cutting them for firewood on a hot Broken Hill summer's day. The article briefly recorded his life story:

“ Mr. Harford came to Broken Hill on one of the earliest trains to run from South Australia in 1888 and lived with his sister Mrs Acres who ran a bakery and boarding house in Argent Street. He came from Wandearah. He helped excavate the second 50 feet of ore from the Big Mine open cut, carried limestone to the smelters by bullock wagon, fired boilers for about a decade and then after the 1909 Lockout turned to the bush.

For some time he carried out tank sinking, wood chopping and bullock driving at Mundi Mundi Station, then bought a camel team and carted rations to stations and wool back to Broken Hill ranging well over the border into Queensland on these travels.

Many years ago he sold his camels and came to Broken Hill to live. For a time he lived out at the Whim not far from Stephens Creek and near the hut that Charles Rasp occupied. At that stage he was frequently known to trundle a wheelbarrow in to Broken Hill picking up wood on the way.

He told the reporter that he had his axe for 35 years and pointed out a nick that it had in the blade. He said, “When I made that, it cut halfway through one of those spikes they use in railway sleepers. You wouldn't believe it would you?” The reporter's response was: “This reporter could not believe that a 91 year old man could do that!”

John and his camel team are also mentioned in the book *The Afghans of Australia*:

“Another resident of Broken Hill, John Harford, remembered the era of the Afghans very well. For twenty years he worked his camel teams for hundreds of kilometres north into Queensland, as well as making periodical trips to the White Cliffs opal fields and the inland port of Wilcannia on the Darling River. As a Teamster, he came to know the Afghans very well as on many occasions he worked and camped with them. They were friendly and would give to anyone anything they could spare. He remembers that during the resting time, the Afghans would drink hot sweat tea and would empty a pannikin of sugar and a tin of sweetened milk into a billy of tea. They were also fond of stew, from which none of the fat was removed and to which very little water was added.”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 1964



John Aloysius 1964 91st Birthday

John sold his bullock team to Elders or Goldsborough Mort for 1000 pounds sterling (a princely sum) and semi retired. He accumulated a portfolio of Blue chip mining stocks.

John lived at William Street for a short time when he moved to Broken Hill but a 1919 Electoral Roll shows his address as Newmarket Hotel and his occupation as Carrier. Later entries show he lived at McCulloch Park, with the occupation of Labourer (1925 & 1926) and in 1932 at Thompson's Siding. In later years, he bought a house at 39 William Lane opposite the old family home at 44 William Street.

John Aloysius died at age 93 years on 29 November 1966 at Broken Hill. He is buried at Broken Hill Cemetery in the same plot as his father, mother and two sisters, Elizabeth and Matilda. His presence is marked by a simple hand made wooden cross, painted white and now starting to peel. We suspect this is the handiwork of John's nephew and

our research colleague, Broken Hill veteran, George Acres who knew him well and loved him as a caring great uncle.

George wrote the following obituary in 1998:

“He spurned riding in motor vehicles (always breaking down) and preferred to walk at all times even up to his death at 93. He would walk miles to save a halfpenny on a bottle of kerosene (used for lighting his wood stove a concession to luxury).and never bought marmalade jam because he liked it so much it never lasted long enough. He was a quietly spoken unassuming Anglo/Irish gentle man who never harmed anyone unlike his English born father who would take his riding crop to any person who got in his way, including his own family.

John never married seemingly contented with independence and family relatives nearby. He was never ostentatious or a spendthrift especially when applied to himself. His epitaph should fittingly have read "No swollen creek could stop this Teamster's supplies from getting through.”

At his death, as well as his house in William Lane and a holding of about 1500 Pounds of Commonwealth Bonds he had the following portfolio:

	Value at December 1966
2700 Rio Tinto Zinc Corporation	\$17,928
1600 Broken Hill Proprietary Company Ltd	9,584
2575 Mt Isa Mines Ltd	10,506
1100 North Broken Hill Ltd	<u>4,554</u>
Total Value	<u>42,572</u>