

WEEKEND

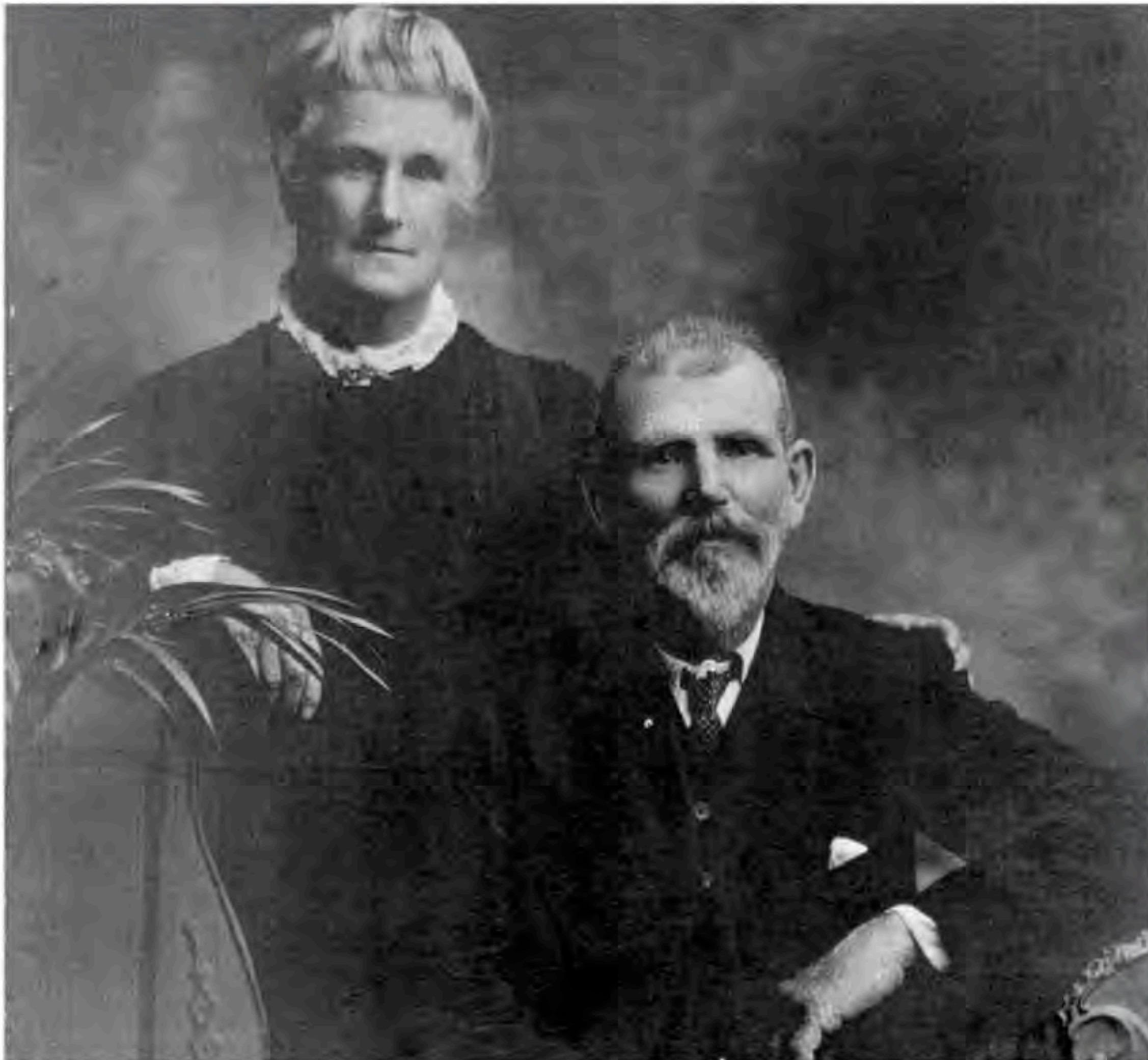
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Emily's story

SHELLEY STRACHAN WRITES ABOUT A BURIAL SITE ON INSKIP POINT THAT REVEALS A 120-YEAR-OLD TRAGEDY. STORY P.19

WEEKEND

Did you know? Emily Jane Reilly was accidentally shot by her younger brother 120 years ago. Her grave at Inskip Point is to be restored.



THE REILLYS: This photo of Emily Jane Reilly's parents, Emily and Samuel, was taken in 1906, 15 years after Emily's death. The couple had a total of 17 children.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

A young life cut short

THE terrible tragedy of Emily Reilly's death at Inskip Point more than 120 years ago will be officially acknowledged for its place in the history of the Cooloola Coast when Queensland Parks and Wildlife restores the grave, possibly this year.

Seventeen-year-old Emily was accidentally shot and killed by her 13-year-old brother Will in mid-1891, as she dusted some photos in the kitchen of the family home at Inskip Point.

Their father, Samuel Reilly, was a coxswain pilot stationed at Inskip from 1875-1902. He had loaded his pistol the night before with the intent of putting down a dog. Will found the revolver hanging on a nail in the parlour after the picture it was concealed behind was taken down to be cleaned.

He thought it wasn't loaded. He pointed it at his sister, who stood about 4.5m from him, and said "It ain't loaded" a split second before it went off and shot her below her left breast.

In Will's deposition to a magisterial inquiry the next day he said Emily immediately said "Oh Will, you've shot me," and threw her arms out. She ran out to the front gate and fell down, unconscious, and died a minute or two later.

"Mrs Dewar (the Reilly's neighbour) then came up but

It was seen as a shameful episode and Emily's father was most remorseful that he left a loaded gun in the house

my sister did not speak," Will told the inquiry.

"I was about five yards from her when the pistol went off. I saw where the bullet struck her afterwards. It was right under the breast."

Griffith University research fellow Dr Richard Walding is Emily Jane Reilly's great nephew and a descendant of three generations of men who worked the Inskip Point light and signal station.

"My great grandfather was Samuel James Reilly who joined the Queensland Light-house Service as the pilot and receiving officer at Inskip Point on December 1, 1875," Dr Walding said.

"He arrived at Inskip with his wife Emily and five-month-old daughter Emily Jane, born in Maryborough."

Dr Walding said his father often talked of Emily's death

and how it rocked the family.

"It was seen as a shameful episode and Emily's father was most remorseful that he left a loaded gun in the house," he said.

"It only came to light in 1980 when my father drew a map of the area and marked 'grave' on it (and I queried him about it). He said there was also another 'seaman's grave' there as well."

Dr Walding said Emily died at the gate to her family's home, beside a palm tree at the bottom of the steps.

"That very same tree is still at Inskip, right in the middle of the roundabout outside the camping ground," he said.

Three generations of the Reillys went on to work and live at Inskip Point.

In March last year, the (then) Environment and Resource Management Minister Kate Jones told Gympie Regional Council that Queensland Parks and Wildlife was aware of the grave site and had managed it in a way to protect it from potential vandalism.

"The grave site has been considered in draft management planning documents, including an option to develop it as a potential feature for a heritage trail themed walking track, pending environmental and cultural heritage assessment and approval processes," Ms Jones said.

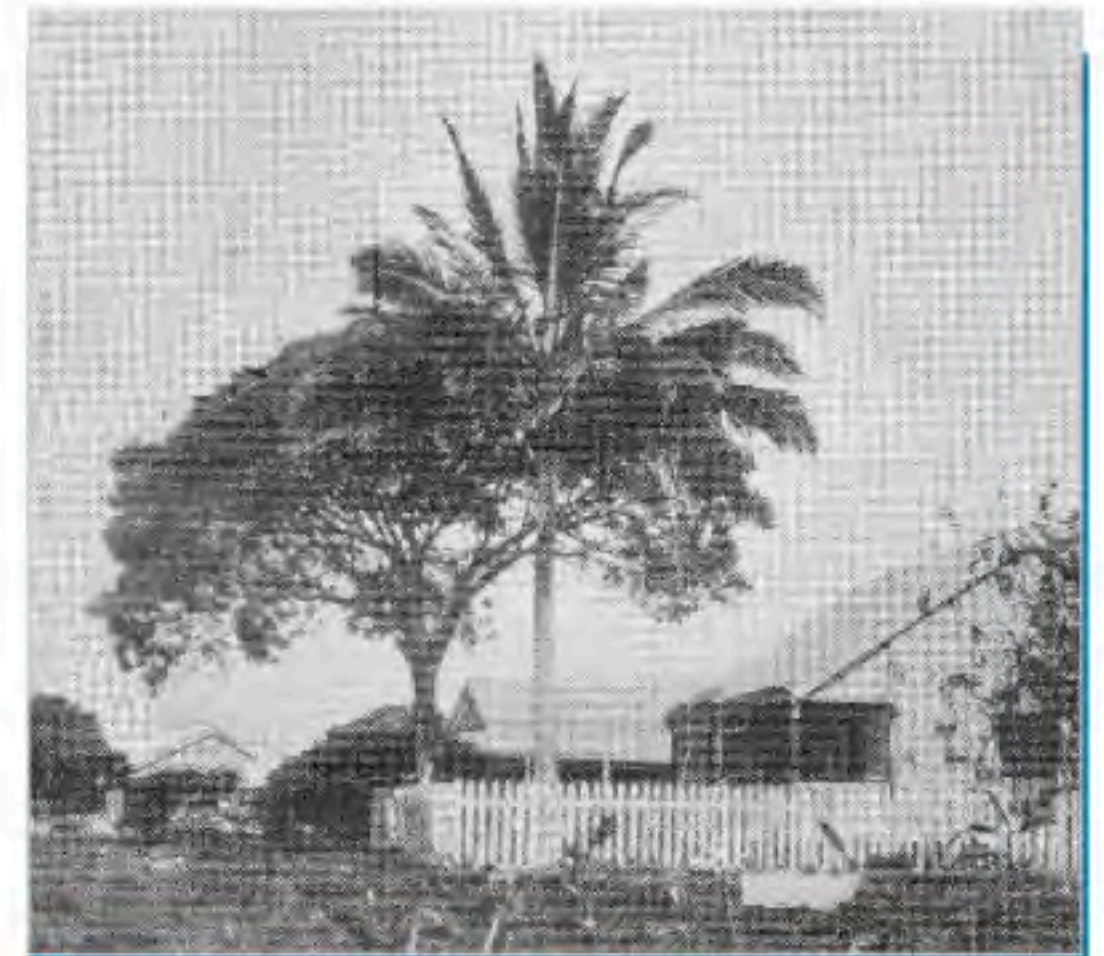
"In the interim, QPWS officers will undertake immediate rectification works as described in your letter and will consider options for establishing a memorial plaque as suggested."

Those rectification works have yet to be completed and QPWS officers on the Cooloola Coast said this week, through a DERM media spokeswoman, there was no intention to make the site any sort of tourist attraction.

They also said they did not want people attempting to locate the site as there was a great deal of broken glass in the area.

— SHELLEY STRACHAN

B For a full history on the light and signal station at Inskip Point, visit the website indicatorloops.com/inskip.htm where a comprehensive research document has been compiled by Griffith University research fellow Dr Richard Walding, the great-grandson of the 1875-1902 pilot, Samuel James Reilly, grandson of the 1933-1949 light keeper, Oscar Robert Walding, and great nephew of Emily Jane Reilly.



Fatal testimony

A MAGISTERIAL inquiry was held at Inskip Point on June 16, 1891, into the circumstances surrounding the fatal accidental shooting of Emily Jane Reilly by her brother the day before.

The following are the depositions made by young Will Reilly, his father Samuel and their neighbour, Margaret Dewar, as reported in the *Maryborough Chronicle*.

The photo at top is the Reilly family home at Inskip Point where Emily was shot:

William Walter Reilly: Am the son of Samuel James Reilly, and brother of deceased; on the 15th instant my father left the house leaving my sister and myself alone; my sister was cleaning pictures in the kitchen; there was a revolver hanging in the parlour; took it down off the nail; I was standing on a chair; my sister was in the next room (the kitchen) standing at the table; did not think the pistol was loaded; looked at the chambers and saw the cartridges were all dented in; as I stood on the chair I turned round towards my sister and said to her, "It ain't loaded" at the same time pointing towards her; I had previously snapped the hammer down, but it was not at my sister; when I pointed it at her I pulled the trigger and it went off: she immediately said "Oh Will, you've shot me," and threw her arms out; she ran out to the gate and fell down; Mrs Dewar then came up but my sister did not speak; I was about five yards from her when the pistol went off; I saw where the bullet struck her afterwards; it was right under the breast.

Samuel James Reilly: Am a coxswain pilot stationed at Inskip Point; the deceased Emily Jane was my daughter; she was 17 years of age; on the 15th instant left home at Inskip Point a little after 2pm, leaving William Walter, aged 13 years; before leaving I took down some pictures off the wall of the front room for the deceased to clean; there was a revolver hanging on one of the nails that I took a picture from, which had one chamber loaded with ball cartridge; loaded it myself the evening before with a pin-fire cartridge; about 4pm. I was called, and returning to the house; saw the deceased lying at the gate in the front of the house; when I went up to her she was still breathing, but did not speak, and died in about a minute after my arrival; examined her after death, and saw a wound under the left breast and a slight mark of blood; the body of the deceased lay in the house; it was not usual to keep the revolver loaded; loaded it the previous evening for the purpose of shooting a dog, but had not discharged it; had warned the deceased not to allow the revolver to be touched.

Margaret Dewar: Am the wife of John Dewar, a boatman at Inskip Point; live next door to the father of deceased, a distance of about 20 yards; about 3pm on the 15th June heard a shot at Reilly's house; I looked out at the front to see what they were shooting at; then went to the back, and heard the lad Sam Reilly screaming; he was frightened, and said "shot"; ran up to Reilly's gate, and there saw the deceased lying down: lift her head up and spoke to her, but she was unconscious; some other neighbours came up and I ran away for deceased's father; did not return immediately to the deceased; if deceased died in a minute after her father arrived, she must have died in about five minutes after I heard the shot.