

Sports Obsessive

George Vining Rogers 1865-1934
Fanny Caroline Mulcahy 1867-1941



George Vining Rogers
Source: Anne Tussup

Telegraph operator

George Vining Rogers was born in Milang, South Australia on 12th May 1865, the second of 10 children to be born to **George Vining Rogers**, a boatman of Milang and **Rebecca Jane Fox** who was born in Northern Ireland. George's father came from a family of merchants and doctors of Hampshire. His mother's family were weavers and small farmers of Derg in Co. Tyrone.

Nothing is known about George's schooling, but he must have enjoyed maths. In September 1877 the *Evening Journal* reported in 'Answers to Problems' George and two other students of the Milang School had correct answers to the previous week's arithmetic puzzles.

George's father captained steamers trading up and down the Murray River. Milang, then a busy town situated on Lake Alexandrina at the mouth of the Murray River was central in the export and import of goods between Port Adelaide and the eastern states. Growing up in Milang he would have gained much knowledge about the thriving sea and river trade, and the primary produce being traded and transported. George began work as a telegraph operator, then a mercantile clerk and later became a grain broker.



Main street of Milang showing the post office. Photo: J. Draper c1896. Source: State Library of South Australia, Milang collection

The Mulcahys in Clunes



Fanny Caroline Mulcahy. Photo: Paterson Bros. Carlton c 1890
Source: Glenys Foreman

Born on April 10th 1867, **Fanny Caroline Mulcahy** was the eighth and youngest child of **John Mulcahy** and **Sarah Payne** of Clunes, Victoria. She grew up with four older brothers and three older sisters and it was said she was born at *The Mount* in Clunes. Her birth certificate says East Clunes. Her parents had arrived from London at Port Adelaide in 1853, and gradually the family made their way across to Victoria, living for a short time in Ballarat, and finally settling in the busy gold-mining town of Clunes. Her father was a boot-maker and when Fanny was growing up, had his own business in Fraser Street, the main street of Clunes, in partnership with his eldest son John Stephen.

After her birth, the next record of Fanny is of her vaccination in Clunes the same year. Clunes' records show the Mulcahys as very active in the local community – sports, the Bible Christian church, hospital committees etc. In 1882 when Fanny was 15, the family suffered a great tragedy when her brother Thomas George was killed in a mining accident at Ballarat. Her two eldest brothers married in Clunes, and eventually all her sisters married in Melbourne. It is not known exactly when her

parents left Clunes to settle in Melbourne, but it was at least by 1891 when Fanny married. Her brother John Stephen maintained his ties with Clunes attending the Clunes In Melbourne 'conversazione' at the Vienna Café in Melbourne in 1901, a social reunion. Later in 1925 George and Fanny attended his Golden Wedding Anniversary at her sister Hilda's home in Auburn. Given as a surprise, the celebration was reported in *The Clunes Guardian* with a list of all the family and friends attending and the gifts they presented. Fanny and George gave a pair of silver serviette rings.



Engraving of Clunes, Vic. by W.C. Fittler 1886. Source: The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia (1886-8)

A new job in Melbourne

In Milang, George worked in the telegraph office, once situated in part of the old Primitive Methodist Chapel on the corner of Stirling and Chapel Streets. In October 1883, he moved 50 kilometres north to Mt. Barker to take up a job with the Mt. Barker Post and Telegraph Office, earning an annual salary of £65 as an Assistant Operator. On November 6th 1885, *The Mt. Barker Courier and Onkaparinga and Gumeracha Advertiser* reported that:

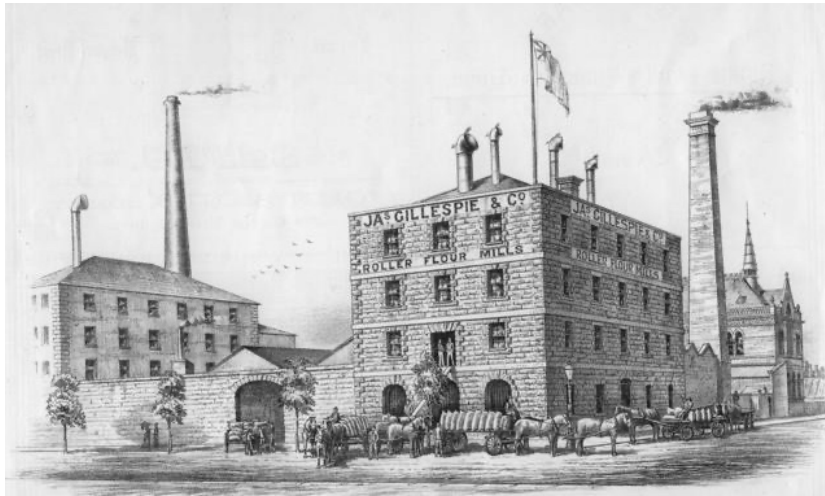
'Mr. Rogers, who for some years held a position in the Mount Barker Telegraph Office, has resigned and gone to Melbourne. He was courteous, hard-working, and intelligent, and had made himself a general favourite.'



George's first places of employment: Left: The old Primitive Methodist chapel, Milang, once partly housed the telegraph office. Right: formerly the Mount Barker Post and Telegraph Office, now a lawyer's office. Photos: Euan McGillivray 2015

On January 1st 1886, the same newspaper reported that:

'Mr. Rogers, late of the Mt. Barker post and telegraph office, has obtained a position in Gillespie's flour mill, Melbourne.'



James Gillespie & Co's Patent Roller Flour Mills, Leicester Street Carlton c1888. Source: PictureVictoria

Later that year George's mother Rebecca, died in Milang from tuberculosis, at the age of only 42.

George worked for almost 20 years for James Gillespie, who by all accounts was a well-liked employer. A news report of 1889 in the *North Melbourne Advertiser* described a 'surprise social' put on by Gillespie's employees at *Cannon's Artillery Hotel* in Elizabeth Street Melbourne, to express their appreciation of their employer's work and management. Several toasts were made to various sections of the business, including one from George to 'Our lorrymen and drivers'. Gillespie's roller mills in Carlton and Kensington, were reported to be the largest in the colony.

Marriage in South Yarra

In 1891 on June 9th at 26 years of age he married 22-year-old Fanny at her parents' home at 8 Toorak Road South Yarra, where her father had a boot-making business. A Bible Christian minister performed the marriage ceremony. On the marriage certificate George gave his 'usual residence' as the *Oriental Coffee Palace* in Victoria Street, North Melbourne (now the Polaris Building apartments). He gave his 'present address' as 3 Park Street Parkville in Melbourne. Witnesses at the wedding were Fanny's sister Eliza and her brother John.



Former Oriental Coffee Palace, North Melbourne, the 'usual address' of George Vining Rogers in 1901. Photo c1900, then called Gladstone House, now the Polaris Building. Source: PictureVictoria

Babies and horse thieves

George and Fanny spent their married life in several parts of metropolitan Melbourne, beginning at Park Street, Parkville, then living for about ten years at 110 McIlwraith Street North Carlton where their first three children were born - George Vining (yet another of the name) in 1893, Vera Olive in 1894 and Victor Lance in 1898.

By 1900 they had moved to Rennie's Road Coburg about 8 kilometres further north. It was then a semi-rural underdeveloped suburb with its share of sanitation problems, speculative subdividing and inappropriate industrial developments, although some parts were considered 'respectable'. The Rogers were at *Elm Bank* Rennie's Road in 1900 when their two ponies went missing. An advertisement appeared in *The Age* on December 4th:

'Lost, small brown Pony Mare, silver mane and tail; also chestnut Filly, yearling, star. Reward. G.V. Rogers.....'

Whilst there on January 22nd **Valdis Muriel** was born. By 1901 they had moved to 184 O'Hea's Road and lived there up until 1908 during which time Fanny gave birth to five more babies (Zelma, Carl, Alma, Ailsa and Esme). In 1908 they had another horse disappear, or rather stolen, as reported in the *Victoria Police Gazette* of November 5th:

14. GEORGE VINING ROGERS, grainbroker, 184 O'Hea-road, Coburg, reports stolen at Coburg West, on the 30th or 31st ult., a bay buggy horse, 5 years, 14-2 hands, branded B on near shoulder, small star, broken to light harness only. Value £20. —O.6791. 4th November, 1908.

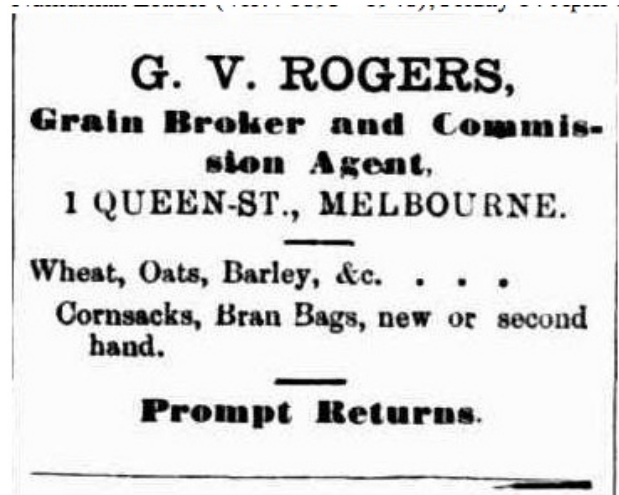


Coburg Post Office c1900 at the time the Rogers lived in Coburg. Source: PictureVictoria

In 1913 Fanny's father John Mulcahy died at 89 years of age. He had been living with his daughter Sarah at 187 Bell Street Coburg. George's father had died at the age of 79 in 1910 at Swan Hill where his daughters Ida and Lucy lived. They also came to live in Coburg in the next couple of years - Ida, husband Charles Amiet and Lucy, a machinist, all lived in Reynard's Road.

An independent grain-broker

George's employer James Gillespie decided to liquidate his Melbourne mills in 1904, and this must have been what prompted George to become an independent grain broker.



Advertisement in the *Numurkah Leader* April 1905.
Source: National Library Australia

Historic buildings

George's first grain brokerage business location was at 1 Queen Street, Melbourne. Oddly enough, this building (built in 1878, now only the facade existing, and currently waiting on a hotel development) was called the *Cobden Building* (later *Fletcher Jones*), named after his ancestor Richard Cobden, but I doubt that George was aware of this at the time.

From about 1912 until his death, George's business for over 20 years was located on the ground floor of what was known as the *Old Wool Exchange* (later the *Winfield Building*) in Collins Street Melbourne. This building which is adjacent to *The Rialto* forms part of Melbourne's heritage listed Queen Anne style (1890s) streetscape of Collins Street. Sadly, again only the facade remains, with a large hotel looming up behind.



George's city business premises. Above: *Cobden Building* (*Fletcher Jones*) 1 Queen Street, corner of Flinders Street
Source: Melbourne Heritage Action. Left: *Winfield Building* Collins Street. Source: Heritage Council Victoria



Moving to the bay

In 1914 the *Brunswick and Coburg Star* reported correspondence to the Coburg Town Council 'from G.V. Rogers complaining of increased valuation upon his property in O'Hea's-road.' Perhaps the Rogers sought lower council rates elsewhere. So by 1914 George, Fanny and family had left Coburg and moved south east of Melbourne to Lochiel Avenue in bayside Aspendale. By the 1930s George and Fanny lived at Charman Road Cheltenham, later Railway Avenue Cheltenham and finally at 5 Moama Road East Malvern.

The nine children of Fanny and George

Between 1893 and 1912 Fanny and George had nine children. All lived to adulthood except for one – Alma Mavis who died at 6 months of age in 1907. Their eldest son George Vining was a bachelor and suffered from heart trouble for many years, dying prematurely at 39 years of age in 1932. His occupation on his death certificate states he was an orchardist and his usual address was that of his parents. All the others married and had their own families.

The daughters were mainly employed in office work before marrying – Vera Olive (b.1894) was a typist, married Alfred James Hawkes, a tailor, and moved to his home town Adelaide. They had two sons. Vera died in Adelaide in 1976; Valdis Muriel (b.1901) was a typist in her father's office before marrying roof tiler John Skidmore and having seven children; Zelma Beatrice (b.1903) married motor-driver Allan Horsey, had three children and died in Melbourne in 1968; Ailsa Decima (b.1908) was a clerk before she married architect Stewart Kipling McIntyre and had two children. She died in 1992 in Brighton; Esme Voni (b.1912) was also a typist before marrying labourer Robert Basil Ferguson and having two children. They lived near Yarrowonga and she died in 2007 in Melbourne at 95 years of age.

Miss Ailsa Rogers gave a jolly party at her Cheltenham home on Wednesday of last week. Her guests were Misses M. Browne, E. Green, Lucille and Ruth Pointon, Tommy Sherer, Esme Rogers, and Messrs R. Holmes, Ray Nankervis, C. Western (Adelaide), H. C. Allen, E. De Lacey and V. L. Rogers.

From the Social page of *Table Talk* November 1928
Source: Trove, National Library Australia

Of the other sons Victor Lance (b.1898) was a joiner and on April 26th 1916 at the age of 18 years, he enlisted in the AIF as a soldier in WWI and subsequently left for France and the Western Front. He was to return three years later, discharged being medically unfit due to receiving shrapnel wounds. He married Margaret Jean Reidy and had twin daughters. His post-war occupations included mail officer and watchman although prior to these jobs he is listed as having 'no occupation' in the electoral rolls of 1931, 1936 and 1937.

Report in the *Seaside News* October 1917. It should read Private V L not W L. Source: Trove, National Library Australia

Official word has been received by Mr and Mrs G. V. Rogers, of Lochiel avenue, that their son, Private W. L. Rogers has received a gunshot wound in the left arm, and is at present in the Duchess of Connaught's Red Cross Hospital, Taplow, England.

Carl Geoffry (b.1904) was a driver and storeman who served in the RAAF during WWII. He was married to Veronica Jane Cusack, lived in East Malvern and had four children. He died in 1949 at the early age of 45.

However, most of George and Fanny's children had long lives.



Fanny Rogers (right) with her daughter Esme and son Carl.
Source: Anne Tussup

Strange sobriquets

Apart from some having interesting given names, (some named after racehorses or characters in books), many of Fanny and George's children also had unusual nicknames: Victor was known as Uncle Blink (and called my mother his 'little toothbrush'), he was also called Dig as he had been a soldier. Zelma was Aunty Blue because she had blue eyes, Carl was Uncle Bon (he was a bonny baby), Ailsa was Aunty Tot (known for being a 'dear little tot' when a child), and Esme was called Aunty Den (.... why?).



George and Fanny Rogers with their children: Back: Zelma, Esme (on Fanny's knee), Ailsa and Valdis; Front: Carl and Vera. c1916. Source: Glenys Foreman

Love of sports

Football may have been an early interest for the young George in South Australia. Local Milang news sports reports in the early 1880s mention a Rogers playing for the 'Milangs', but there were other Rogers families in the area so this may not be George. More likely however is the report in the *Southern Argus* of September 14th 1882 where a George Rogers along with three others 'were charged by Police Trooper Ockendon, stationed at Milang, that they did on the fifth day of September instant, play in a public street of Milang, a game of football, contrary to subdivision 10 of Clause 79 of the police act of 1882.' They pleaded 'not guilty' in the Magistrates Court at Strathalbyn, were cautioned and discharged.



The old Strathalbyn Courthouse and police station where George pleaded 'not guilty' to playing football in the street in the 1880s. Source: National Trust of Australia

Fast forward to the 1930s and a mature George living in Aspendale, participated on the committees of several community organisations, as reported in the *City of Chelsea News* July 1934: 'He took a very active part in any function that was held in the public and the rate payers' interest in the district.' He was the secretary of the Aspendale Fire Brigade and the Aspendale Tennis Club, a committee member of the Aspendale Life-saving club, secretary of the Aspendale Progress Association Cricket Club and a Vice President of the Aspendale/Regents Park Football Club.

I wonder if, whilst rearing a large family, Fanny had the time for sports or any other form of recreation. I noticed the little tennis racquet brooch she is wearing on her collar in her 1890s portrait suggesting a love of tennis. She did however at least attend and helped organise social events at the Tennis Club as reported in the *Frankston and Somerville Standard* of October 24th 1923 when the Annual Tennis Club Ball was held at the Aspendale Racecourse Hall and the ladies' dresses and jewellery were described: 'Mrs G Rogers coral robe and jet' and her daughter Valdis: 'Almond green georgette, golden beads'.

Conflict in the Progress Association

A report in the *Frankston and Somerville Standard* of November 15th 1923 described 'A large and enthusiastic meeting of the Aspendale Progress Association' the previous week at the Aspendale Fire Station, where George appears to have aired a few grievances. He pointed out the previous minutes had omitted some agenda items, and that an important 'certain discussion' had not been mentioned, he requested a copy of the Association's rules, and he complained that he missed a

previous meeting because it had been called on the 'wrong night'. This last incident was explained, but his other grievances and requests were accepted.

During the meeting George moved a motion to grant the Regent Park Reserve committee 5/- for expenses, gave a report from the Tennis Club, and strongly supported a call for Association members to attend a meeting of a proposed high school committee to work towards obtaining a high school for the district.



Aspendale postcard c1920s. Source: Trove National Library of Australia

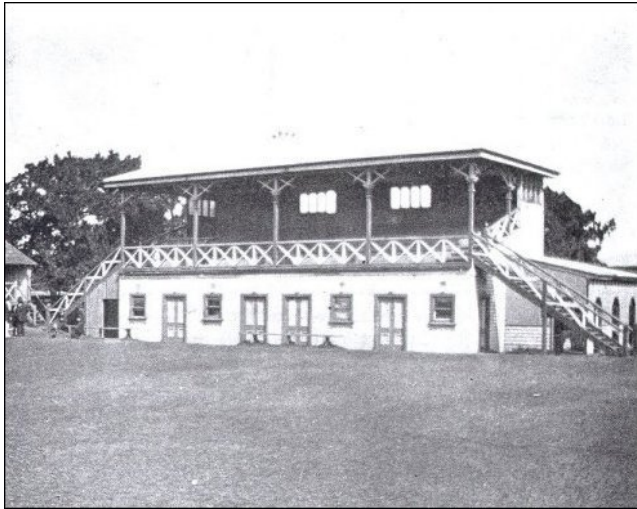
George stands his ground

However, the atmosphere became strained when the 'Notices of Motion' came up. It seems there was a grievance by Mr R. Taylor, a committee member, concerning the Aspendale Tennis Club (of which George was the secretary) being involved in organising the Fireman's Ball, and Taylor had put a motion asking that the Progress Association committee vote to disapprove of the arrangement, and that a new sub-committee be elected. However, the chairman wanted this motion (and another motion from Mr Touzeau that rate payers needed the consent of the committee members to act on anything that the committee had voted on), withdrawn 'for the good of Aspendale' and several others agreed with him. But George did not agree. He said it would be better to thrash it out then and there and he wanted the opportunity to explain the 'true facts' of the situation to the large attendance at the meeting. Several members expressed their opinion that the three men, were too valuable to lose over this issue and that they should shake hands and make up. Mrs Hopkins said: 'Don't bicker, make up and be friends again.' But George was adamant saying: 'Well, in view of the opinions expressed, it is no good going further.....I hereby hand in my resignation (from the committee). I will not sit with Mr Taylor after the way he has treated me during the past twelve months.' The committee asked George to reconsider, which he refused, then they asked him to hold his resignation

over until the next meeting which he also refused. Then Mr Touzeau said he'd withdraw his motion and resign from all the committees, to which the Chairman replied 'you're worse than Mr Rogers'. Mr Taylor decided to withdraw his motions but not to step down from the committee. The following year George was back on the committee with Mr Touzeau and no Mr Taylor.

Larrikins in seaside suburbs

George gave evidence at a trial in the Chelsea Court in 1925, regarding two men who attempted entry to a dance at the Aspendale Racecourse Hall. Apparently when entry was refused, they became aggressive and used 'vile and filthy language within the hearing of women'¹. Goodness!



Aspendale Racecourse Hall and Grandstand where 'larrikins' caused trouble. Source: Kingston Local History

Kiwi cousins connect

Towards the end of his life, by coincidence, George came into contact with his English relatives via a New Zealand cousin he didn't know he had. In May 1933 he described the event to one of his newly discovered cousins in England, Agnes Rogers²:

'On Sept. last I had the misfortune to lose my eldest son who was then in his fortieth year. Of course, the death was advertised on the leading Melbourne dailies. A Mr (Frank) Parker son of Robert George Vining (Major Parker) of that ilk, was in Melbourne for the Agricultural Society show and his wife, living at Shepparton, Victoria and saw the notice and was struck with the names George Vining Rogers and sent a copy to her husband in Melbourne and he called on me in my office.' George then received a letter from Major Parker, his father's cousin, who lived in New Zealand (Major Parker was the son of George's great aunt Elizabeth Rogers and Robert Parker in Hampshire) The letter outlined their family connection and history in England, and also expressed sympathy with George about losing his son, as Robert had experienced the same tragic loss of a son. George 'greatly appreciated' the contact and family information which he said he found 'most interesting'.

Bodyline

Because of this connection being made, another cousin in England, Bertram Mitford Heron Rogers, wrote to George on May 11th 1934. George subsequently replied after receiving this 'very welcome and informative letter establishing beyond doubt our relationship'³. After briefly apologising for writing in pencil, George's letter went on to discuss the England versus Australia cricket test and the previous year's controversial 'bodyline' series including having a bit of a dig at the English cricket team. Bertram was at a loss as to how to reply to this 'extraordinary' letter, but before he could do so, a letter from George's daughter Ailsa was received, informing him of George's sudden death on July 11th.⁴



UGLY SCENES ON ADELAIDE GROUND headlines in *The Sporting Globe* January 18th 1933 popular newspaper George would have been familiar with.
Source: Trove National Library of Australia

George's death

George died at his home, 5 Moama Road East Malvern, where the family had been living for at least a year. He had not retired from work, and his daughter Ailsa described his death as 'a terrific shock to us, and was due to heart failure.' She described in a letter⁵ to Bertram how her father had been unwell for about a month, but the day before he died, he spent a few hours at his office, returned home to dinner, listened to the cricket test and went to bed. Then 'at about 2.30am Wednesday suddenly spoke a few words to my Mother and passed away.' A sad event at only 69 years of age, but apparently not suffering pain and 'taken the way he wished to be'. Her heartfelt letter goes on to say how proud she was of her father and that she hoped the connection to her English relatives would continue. In closing Ailsa wrote 'I would like to say that if Father was a typical "Vining



Ailsa McIntyre (nee Rogers) and son - a photo she sent to England 1942. Source: Family Papers of James E T Rogers

Rogers" then I am indeed proud to bear that name.'

George's funeral, in addition to family and community members, was well attended by his colleagues in the grain trade. It was conducted at his home and he was then taken to the Cheltenham Cemetery to be buried with his son George. His obituary⁶ spoke of his great community spirit and many floral wreaths were received from various organisations to which he had contributed.



5 Moama Road, East Malvern, the last home of George Vining Rogers.
Photo: Ann Hurley 2002

Fanny's last years

Around 1939 or 1940 Fanny moved to 23 Tollington Avenue (since demolished) in East Malvern close to the beautiful Hedgley Dene Gardens. Most of her children had married and had moved away. Carl and his wife were living just around the corner in Nyora Street. She had suffered with heart problems for a few years and on September 30th 1941 Fanny died at her home. It is said she had just put some cakes in the oven, felt a bit tired and went upstairs to bed. There she passed away peacefully. Fanny was buried at Cheltenham Cemetery with George and their son.

During her life Fanny experienced many family losses including her 6-month-old baby in 1907 and later two infant granddaughters, as well as in the 1930s the deaths of her husband, her eldest son and two of her brothers. The hurried wedding of her daughter Valdis probably caused some social embarrassment, and her son Victor suffering from his war injuries was a constant worry. However, with George's successful career, their involvement in many community and social activities, and the arrivals of 20 grandchildren, life turned out pretty well for them.

My mother's memories of her Nana Rogers are of a warm and fun-loving old lady who liked things to be 'easy'. She seemed tall but slightly built, and had thin, wrinkled hands. She is remembered wearing long black dresses, a coat with an astrakhan collar and a polka dot scarf. My mother recalls that when their grandmother visited, a

sick brother or sister unable to get out of bed, would be teased with 'nana's in the kitchen' as a reminder of the fun they would be missing.



The grave of George Vining and Fanny Caroline Rogers and their son George Vining Rogers at Cheltenham Cemetery, Melbourne, Anglican Section. Photo: Ann Hurley 2000

Ann Hurley

2020

See my story **The Depression War and Divorce** for more about their daughter Valdis Muriel Rogers.

hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au

Notes:

¹ *The Age* September 1st 1925

² *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

³ *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁴ *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁵ *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁶ The City of Chelsea News July 1934 newspaper cutting in *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

Other resources:

Australian Imperial Force Service Record

Faul, Jim - *Alexandrina's Shore – A History of the Milang District* (1981)

Foreman, Glenys -Vic., Rogers/Mulcahy descendant

Heritage Council Victoria <https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/>

Hurley, Corinne - Vic., Rogers/Mulcahy descendant

Medlin, Elaine -Vic., Mulcahy descendant

Melbourne Heritage Action <https://melbourneheritage.org.au/>

Mt. Barker Local History Centre, Mt. Barker, South Australia

South Australian records <http://www.familytreeoz.com/>

State Library of South Australia, Milang Collection

The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia

Trove (National Library of Australia)

Tussup, Anne - Rogers/Mulcahy descendant

Victorian Birth Marriage and Death certificates

Victorian Electoral Rolls (Ancestry.com)

Victorian Government Gazette and the Victorian Journal of Agriculture from 1930 to 1933