

A SOUTH MELBOURNE TRAGEDY



Editorial

A chance conversation between MPHG's Sonya Cameron and her dentist led to the discovery of a privately prepared history of events in Middle Park's past. The history was prepared by Tony Satchell, a descendent of one of the participants. He has kindly made his story, photographs and associated documents available to MPHG.

James Satchell, a painter and decorator, and his family settled in Cobden Street, South Melbourne in 1855. He was welcomed by the nearby Chinese community and worked on the original joss house in Napier Street where he decorated the 1866 temple.

His grandson William is the hero of this story. William's uncle John (1845-1938), was our author Tony Satchell's grandfather. Tony remembers him as part of his childhood and can report that the Cobden Street family home is still standing.

Tony's typewritten 1994 manuscript, written on the centenary of the event, has been reset here together with most of his original photographs and documents as a special edition in the format of our newsletter.

The MPHG thanks Tony Satchell for allowing the group to share his interesting family history.

Gary Poore

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A SOUTH MELBOURNE TRAGEDY

by
TONY SATCHELL
1994

Version edited for the Middle Park History Group, 2017

Introduction	4
Chapter 1 Hannah McLennan	5
Chapter 2 Kerferd Road Pier	7
Chapter 3 William Satchell	10
Chapter 4 The Satchell Inquest	13
Chapter 5 The McLennan Inquest	15
Chapter 6 Farewell	19
Chapter 7 The Royal Humane Society	20
Chapter 8 A Memorial	21
Chapter 9 Ernest Bailey	23
Epilogue	25
Bibliography	25



Kerferd Road Pier, late 1800s

Introduction

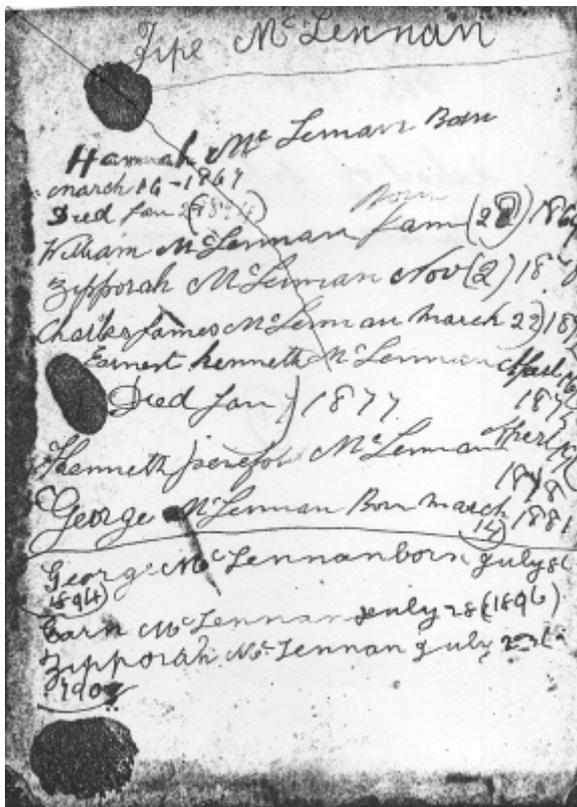
One warm evening in January 1894 a young woman named Hannah McLennan stood on Kerferd Road Pier, Albert Park. She placed a small phial to her lips and drained its contents. With an impatient gesture she threw the bottle towards her male companion and cried out hysterically 'Good-bye Alf; I am gone!' She immediately jumped off the pier into the sea and, as will be explained later, was drowned in sensational circumstances.

A young man, William Robert Satchell, who was on the pier at the time, heard her cries of distress and being informed that the woman was drowning, took off his hat, coat and waistcoat, and plunged in to rescue her. It appears that he caught her at the first attempt and raised her to the surface, but the struggling woman threw her

arms around his neck and pulled him beneath the water. Both lost their lives.

This tragedy happened 100 years ago. It therefore seems appropriate to mark the centenary by publishing an account of the events leading to, and ensuing from, the deaths of these two people. The dramatic newspaper journalism of 1894 appears to give a more realistic picture of the event than any independent account prepared subsequently. Thus much of this story is based on articles contained in Melbourne and South Melbourne newspapers of the day.

William Satchell and the author are descendants of James Satchell who arrived at Melbourne with his family from Leicester, England in 1855.



Extract from McLennan family Bible



Newspaper sketch of Hannah McLennan

Chapter One — Hannah McLennan

Hannah McLennan was born on 16 March 1867 in Warrnambool, the second child of Kenneth and Sarah McLennan (nee Alsop). This couple had a number of other children over a 15-year span. Their names were:

Sarah-Ann Born (b. 5 February 1866, d. 24 April 1866), William (b. 20 January 1869), Zipporah (b. 2 November 1870), Charles James (b. 22 March 1872), Ernest Kenneth (b. 16 April 1875, d. 7 January 1877), Kenneth Penfold (b. 19 April 1878), and George Augustus (b. 14 March 1881).

Hannah came to Melbourne when she was about 16 and obtained work as a cook. While living in East St Kilda she met a Scotsman named George Bailey. She married him at aged 18 on 31 December 1885 with the written consent from her father. The service was held at the Westbury Street Church, East St Kilda. Bailey was aged 28, and apparently had received little education, as both his Christian name and surname were spelt incorrectly in his signature on the marriage certificate. He was described as a bachelor.

The couple went to live in Williamstown where George was employed as a painter. Their life on the whole seemed quite happy, although Bailey demonstrated on a number of occasions that he had a violent temper.

In 1886, a child, Ernest Kenneth, was born and shortly after the pair began to quarrel. Affairs reached a climax when Hannah discovered amongst her husband's papers, a document which revealed that he had been married previously in Scotland. Confronted with this evidence, Bailey admitted that he had left his wife in that country. Hannah decided to leave Bailey and fled with her child to the home of her former employer in St Kilda. She resumed her position as a servant but was ultimately hunted out and harassed by Bailey who was infatuated with her. He was heard to remark that she would never re-marry.

Suddenly Bailey disappeared and Hannah thought that he may have moved to another state. She obtained a domestic position in Coventry Street, South Melbourne, and believed herself to be safe from him.

One day when she was standing on the veranda, Hannah caught sight of her husband talking to a stranger on the opposite side of the street. It seems that she attempted to hide but Bailey noticed her and before she could seek refuge of the house he raced across the street, seized her and struck her quite violently. He then disappeared again but Hannah remained apprehensive that he would return and beat her. About September 1892, Hannah met Ronald Alfred Birtles, a storeman aged 29. Birtles had been friendly with Hannah's brother 'Brusher' McLennan, a well known Warrnambool footballer who also played with Essendon.

An intimacy developed between them. Hannah told Birtles the story of her bogus marriage to Bailey and his subsequent violent behaviour towards her. Birtles seemed to be quite affected by her story and swayed by the opinions of her girlfriends that Bailey was dangerous. At first the couple got on well but Hannah began to reveal that she also had a bad temper, and an increasing number of quarrels took place between them. Because of this, and the possibility that Bailey might return and confront him, Birtles decided to terminate the relationship. Hannah now threatened suicide if he left her, and Birtles would later tell an inquest that he had had to take a bottle of poison from her on more than one occasion. They saw each other intermittently for some months and their last quarrel arose because he refused to take her to the Melbourne Cup. Hannah did not see Birtles for three weeks prior to the evening of the tragedy. During this period she had repeatedly spoken of suicide to her friend, Janie Carter, who did not believe that she would carry it out.

188 MARRIAGES solemnized in the District of *Warrambona* in the Colony of Victoria.

No. in Register.	Wife, and Surname.	Name and Surname of the Parties.	Condition of the Parties.		Birthplace.	Residence.			Parents.	
			Single or Widowed, or a Widow or Widower.	Single or Married.		Street.	Town.	County.	Name (Mother's Name First).	Father's Rank or Profession.
1	<i>Elizabeth E. Bailey</i>	<i>George Bailey</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>James Bailey</i>	<i>Labourer</i>
	<i>Widow E. Bailey</i>	<i>Hannah McLennan</i>	<i>Widowed</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Agnes Bailey</i>	<i>Labourer</i>
	<i>Widow E. Bailey</i>	<i>Hannah McLennan</i>	<i>Widowed</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Warrambona</i>	<i>Agnes Bailey</i>	<i>Labourer</i>

I, *Ellen Sykes*, being a Minister of the Gospel, do hereby certify that I have, this *31st* day of *December*, 188*8*, solemnized the marriage between *George Bailey* and *Hannah McLennan* after Notice and Dispensation duly made and published in accordance with the written consent of *the Minister*.

Dated this *31st* day of *December*, 188*8*. *Ellen Sykes*

Marriage Certificate of Hannah McLennan



Hannah McLennan's employer, AT Craven, Chemist, Albert Park



Hannah's mother, Sarah McLennan



Janie Carter's residence, Faussett Street, Albert Park

Chapter Two — Kerferd Road Pier

At 7 pm on 2 January 1894, Hannah McLennan was watering flowers in the back garden of the house belonging to her employer Mr AT Craven, a chemist of Bridport Street, Albert Park, who had engaged her as a domestic servant about one month before. She asked Mr Craven if she might go out, 'Certainly ...' he replied. Hannah left a little later and met her friend Janie Carter at her home nearby in Faussett Street, and after having spoken to Janie's parents for some time, the two of them left at about 8 pm.

The couple went for a walk towards the beach and presently saw Alf Birtles. He was with some friends and Hannah said 'Let's go on the pier and we'll see him there.' The pier was crowded with promenaders who were seeking some relief from a breeze after a very hot day. Others were being entertained by a fireworks display and a musical program from a band seated in the rotunda near the Hotel Victoria.

About 9.30 pm the music and fireworks display ceased. The crowd had begun to disperse and shortly after only about a dozen or so people remained. They were seated along the pier chatting in groups of two or three, Hannah McLennan and Janie Carter among them. A little later Birtles walked past them without speaking. Hannah appeared hurt and turned to Janie and said, 'Here Janie, take my watch and chain and send it to my mother at Warrnambool. They will do for my little boy. I am going to drown myself, and there is no use in jumping into the water with the watch and chain on.' Janie Carter refused to take these items as she did not believe that Hannah was serious in threatening to drown herself.

A few minutes later Birtles came along again. Hannah called to him and he stopped. She spoke with him for a considerable time and appeared quite calm and certainly more friendly than Janie had anticipated. She had expected a quarrel but instead she saw smiles and apparent good will. Believing that Hannah and Birtles had made up

and having become tired of being alone, Janie called to Hannah that it was time to go. Hannah replied 'Alright I am coming.' Hannah said something to Birtles which was not overheard and he moved away after raising his hat and saying 'Goodnight Miss McLennan, Goodnight Miss Carter.' Birtles then said 'I must be going now,' and she replied, 'Yes I suppose you want to get rid of me.' He remarked that he had to get home and that her friend Miss Carter was waiting for her. He said 'Goodnight Annie' and turned away. It was then about 10.30 pm.

Hannah looked towards him for an instant, and then taking a small chlorodyne bottle from her pocket drank its contents. She threw the empty bottle towards Birtles crying out hysterically 'Goodbye Alf, I am gone.' She then jumped off the unprotected south side of the pier into the sea.

For a moment there was a hush upon the jetty. It was broken by a wild exclamation from Birtles 'Oh my God! Help! Help!' Then he ran to the life buoy which hung on the pier, tore it loose and cast it into the sea. It fell wide of the struggling woman. Panicking he then unfastened a grappling hook and threw it towards her. He did not jump because he could not swim. There was no other life saving equipment on the pier and, as it was quite impossible to regain possession of the buoy in the water, the spectators were in a dilemma.

One spectator was a young man named William Satchell, who was walking along the pier with Miss Minnie Milton. He had not witnessed what had happened, but arriving at the scene now saw Hannah McLennan in the water. He threw off his hat, coat and vest, and handing them to Janie Carter dived off the pier. He was a good swimmer and in a stroke or two caught hold of Hannah, and began calling to the people on the pier asking where the buoy was. No one could tell him, because it had floated away in the darkness and could not be seen.

The Herald

THE "HERALD" HAS THE LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY EVENING NEWSPAPER IN AUSTRALASIA.

MELBOURNE, WEDNESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 3, 1894

THE
SOUTH MELBOURNE
TRAGEDY.

A WOMAN'S PLUNGE

A BRAVE MAN'S DEATH.

RECOVERY OF THE HERO'S
BODY.

SORROW AT SOUTH MEL-
BOURNE.

AND MATTERS FOR INQUIRY.



Victoria Hotel, Beaconsfield Parade, Albert Park

He struggled desperately to free himself from the clutches of the drowning woman but soon became exhausted. He feebly called 'Goodbye Phoebe!' before disappearing beneath the surface of the water. In the meantime someone had run to the Hotel Victoria for rope, and the proprietor Mr McGregor cut down his clothes line hoping that it would be of use. But it was too late because both Satchell and Hannah McLennan had disappeared. The stunned spectators now turned their attention to the recovery of the bodies. News of the terrible event spread fast and Constable Halpin was quickly on the scene.

Mr McCarthy who was a close friend of Satchell set out in a boat and began to drag for the bodies. Criticism was subsequently levelled at the water police who did not arrive at the pier until 8 am the following day. There was a telephone at the nearby Hotel Victoria but constant efforts to get in touch with them were unsuccessful. For some four hours Mr McCarthy and a friend dived repeatedly into the deep water in search of the bodies. They were assisted by Mr John McGregor and two young labourers, Charles Mathews and a man named Johnson. At 2.30 am they saw a dark object floating on the surface of the water a few paces from the shore. Mr McCarthy's friend waded in knee-deep and found it was the body of Hannah McLennan. Froth was coming out of her mouth and it was suspected that poison had done its work before she had drowned.

The following letter from Mr McCarthy was published in *The Herald* on 4 January 1894:

With regard to the conduct of the police on the night of the fatal occurrence at Albert Park, allow me to say that I was on the pier at 11 o'clock and during the only beat present from 12 o'clock to 3.30. During all that time the police made no apparent effort to recover the bodies. Most certainly they never once entered the boat engaged to dragging for them. The boat was manned by civilians only.

I am etc.

CF McCarthy,

30 Kerferd Road, 3rd January.

Early the following morning, crowds swarmed to the scene of the accident. At 10 am the water police discovered Satchell's body. It was lifted to the pier, placed on a vehicle and conveyed to a room in one of the outbuildings of the Hotel Victoria. Following requests from a large number of Satchell's friends, his corpse was not removed to the morgue as was customary. His body was clothed in his shirt, collar and tie, trousers and boots, showing how promptly he had attempted to rescue the woman. His arms were rigid and extended as if he was catching at something, and his legs were drawn up. Family folklore has it that William's face had been severely scratched from the fingernails of the drowning woman.

Mr Craven, Hannah's employer, made the following statement at the pier. 'During her service Miss McLennan had conducted herself becomingly and had given no evidence of weakness or deficiency of intellect. She apparently extracted as much enjoyment from life as most people in her circumstances, and except under impulse or sudden insanity, would not be deemed as one who would be likely to take her own life.' He added that it was utterly impossible for Hannah to have obtained any poison in his establishment. The bottle of chlorodyne that she had was a common and harmless medicine. Mr Craven disclosed that a young man had come into his shop on the morning of the tragedy to see Hannah, but no special significance was attached to that. He could not say whether her visitor was the young man who was speaking to her that evening on the pier.

The sad event was front page news in *The Herald* that evening (reproduced on page 7).

Chapter Three — William Satchell

William, born in 1872, was the third son of James and Alice Satchell and lived with his parents at 165 Albert Road, South Melbourne. His father was a tradesman fitter and turner who had emigrated from Leicester in 1854 when he was 13 years of age. Alice, his mother, was the daughter of Frank Hogan a stonemason who came from Tipperary in Ireland. James and Alice had 12 children over a remarkable span of 26 years.

The press described William as a handsome young man, tall strapping and 21 years of age. He was a good swimmer and apparently in fine physical condition. He was employed as a salesman by Mr Eckman, a distant relation and a furniture warehouseman of North Melbourne who spoke in the highest terms of his general efficiency. William and his brother James were members of the South Melbourne branch of the Australian Natives Association.

William was a prominent bicycle rider, having won an important event at the 1893 Austral Wheel meeting held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. He was also a keen yachtsman, and a photo of a trophy he won is reproduced on the next page. William was a member of the Northern and South Melbourne Bicycle Clubs, as well as the Federal Yacht Club. He also had some dramatic ability, and his services were often sought in amateur theatrical circles. He seldom missed opportunities to entertain the blind and gave his services to other charitable organisations on a number of occasions.

The following article appeared in the cycling column of *The Argus* on 4 January 1894:

Will Satchell (better known as Bill) was an athlete of some standing. For many years he had taken an active interest in yachting being in the foremost ranks. He also took a very lively interest in cricket, where he was very



James Satchell 1839—1912



Alice Satchell (nee Hogan) 1841—1927



William Robert Satchell 1872—1894

successful; but amongst his club mates where he was best known, the feelings are the saddest and most heartfelt, his sociability and genial manner making him loved by all. It is not possible to define the love and esteem in which he was held, even on short acquaintance one felt irresistibly drawn towards him. Enough he is gone, the light has departed from his bright and sparkling eyes, his fond and merry heart lies still and subdued in death. Thus at the age of 21 years, goes one of the brightest and most hopeful young lives it has been my sad and bitter experience to know and part with.

‘A quiet fellow’ said a friend of his when questioned by a bystander after the body had been brought ashore, ‘Quiet was no name for him. He was the best and most decent fellow in the world was poor Billy.’

The following letter from Mr C Crooke of St Kilda was published in *The Herald* on 4 January, 1894, under the heading ‘MY OLD PUPIL’



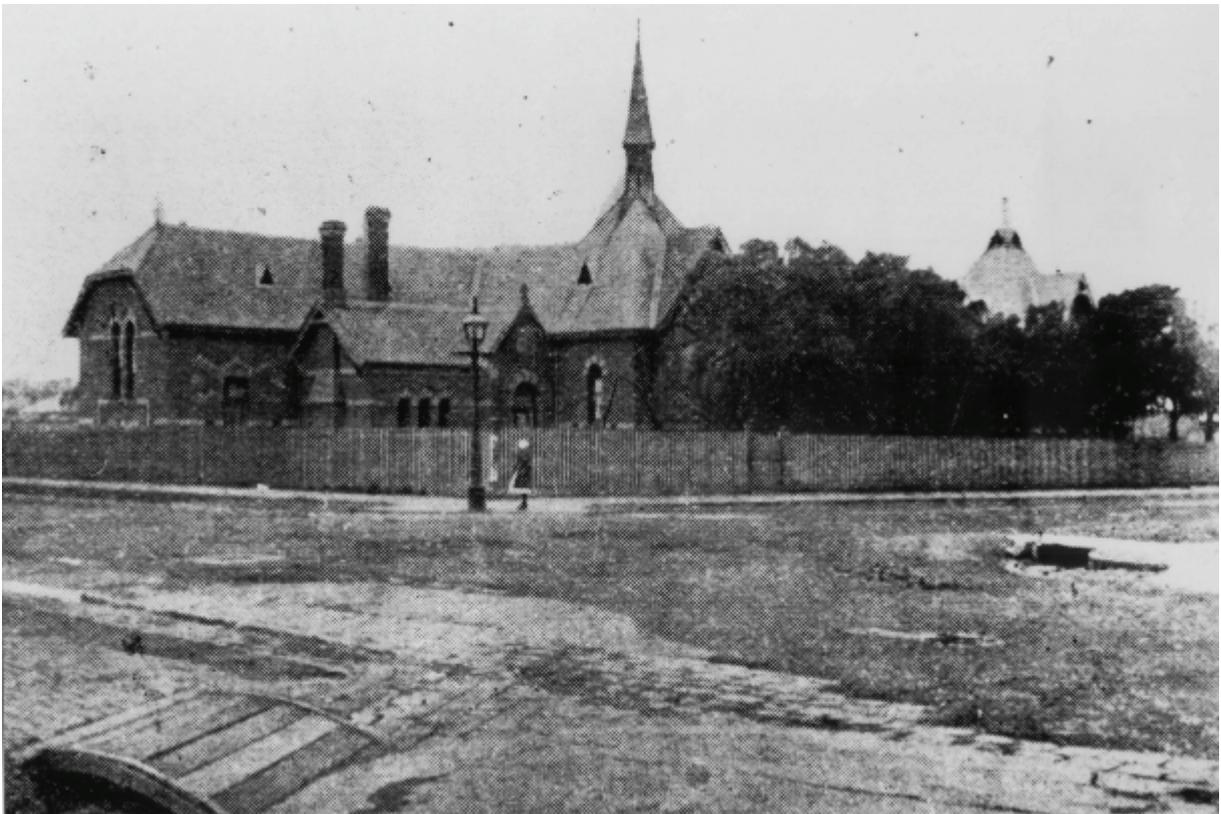
Yachting trophy won by William Satchell
19 March 1892

Only the other day, while standing in High Street St Kilda, a fine well favoured young man alighted from a bicycle, and reminded me that he was my old pupil, Willie Satchell. I needed no reminder. I knew him at once, though grown from a child to man's estate. I remember him well as a lad at school in South Melbourne, and often observed his fearless demeanour on the football field, in our gymnasium, and when attacked by other boys. He had that peculiar glitter in the eye when roused, which tells of the indomitable spirit within, and was just the lad to undertake such an enterprise which cost him his life. The colony may well be proud of such an act, and I consider young Satchell as well deserving of a monument as many that have been accorded that honour.

Speaking for the teachers and scholars at the Eastern Road State School as constituted in his days of happy childhood, I can safely say that our tears have been shed while reading your (The Herald) report and his parents whom I have known and esteemed for thirty years, have our heartfelt sympathy.



Satchell family home (on left), 165 Albert Road, South Melbourne (now demolished)



Eastern Road State School, South Melbourne

Chapter Four — Satchell Inquest

The inquest into the circumstances surrounding Satchell's death was conducted by the Coroner (Dr Youl) at the Hotel Victoria, Albert Park on 4 January 1894. The proceedings were reported in The Herald that evening (in part) as follows:

The first witness called was James Lester Satchell, engineer. He stated that the deceased was his brother, and his name was William Robert Satchell. He was a furniture salesman, and was 21 years of age.

The Coroner: Could he swim?

Witness: He was a splendid swimmer and it was his habit to go to the baths every morning at 6.30 to swim.

Was he subject to fits? – No, he was in the best of health.

He left home on Tuesday night? – Yes about 7.45pm.

Did he say where he was going? – Yes he said he was going for a stroll with his young lady who lived near the pier. Naturally we concluded they were going to walk there as a band was playing there.

Do you know anything else? – I have heard of course of the accident. I saw the lifebuoy which was thrown to my brother. There was not enough rope on it to reach from the pier to the water.

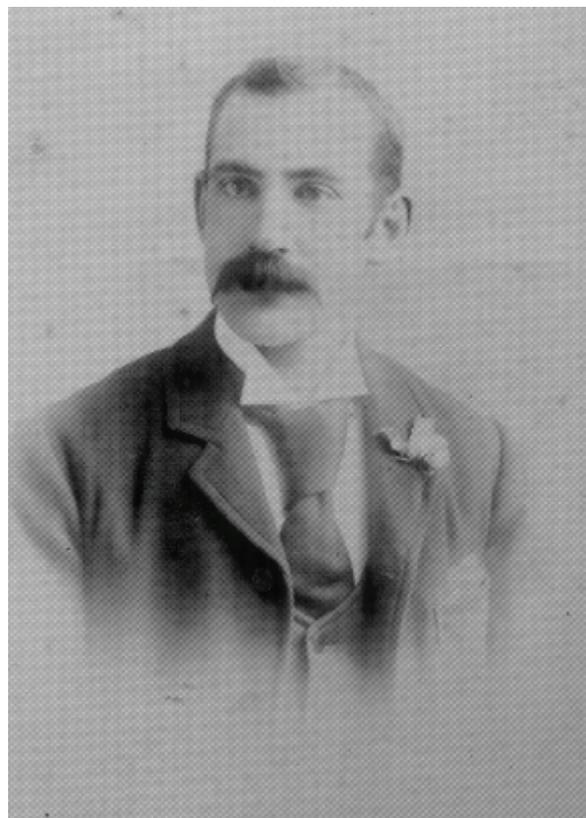
At this point the coroner gave permission for James Satchell to take his brother's body away from the hotel.

Other witnesses including Mary Jane Carter testified, and they confirmed the events that occurred on the night of 2 January which have been described in Chapter Two. There was discussion on the state of the life buoy and other safety facilities on the pier and the evidence concluded with a statement from the coroner that more appliances should have been available.

In the course of his summing up the coroner said, 'The woman McLennan appeared to be one of those hysterical people sent into the world to

annoy others, and had thrown herself into the sea while in a hysterical state, which was much like insanity, though she could not be called insane. She might have lived for years if she got over this week or two of mental excitement. She had been quarrelling with everybody, had been unhappy in her love affairs, and suspected that someone was trying to do her some injury. The young man Satchell had pluckily jumped in, and in trying to save her had been drowned. The real point the jury had to consider was whether the appliances on the pier for the purpose of saving life were sufficient. Supposing it became a fashionable thing for people to go and drown themselves it would be wise to have means of saving them. There should be more lamps placed there by the Harbour Trust.'

The jury, after a few minutes deliberation, returned a verdict to the effect that Satchell was accidentally drowned in trying to save Hannah McLennan. They recommended that the Harbour Trust should place additional lights and life-saving appliances on the Kerferd Road pier.



James Satchell Jr (William's brother)

CORONER'S INQUEST.

VICTORIA, TO WIT.

This Deponent * James L Satchell

on h oath saith, I am a Engineer

residing at South Melbourne

* Christian and Surname in full.

The deceased was my Mother
 her name was William Robert
 Satchell his age was ~~70~~
 my years he was a Salesman
 he was unmarried he was
 a splendid swimmer. he is
 not subject to fits. He left
 home at 7.45 in the night
 of the second instant he was
 going to the Pier

James Satchell Satchell

Statement by James Satchell Jr to Coroner's Inquest

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS. No. 6

No. Words 15

Check 19R

By 19R

Time rec. 8-45 From Mell Dated JA 3 79

Telegram for M^{rs} K. McLennan

Jelly K Satch

All complaints to be addressed in writing to the Postmaster-General.

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Come at once Ann
 dead state what time
 will come will meet
 You reply paid

Time lodged at the Sending Station 8.30

(Signature) Miss M. E. Sykes
121 Coventry St W
Sth Melb

* * No pecuniary liability is incurred by the Crown by reason of any delay, default, or omission, in relation to any Telegraphic Message sent or received, or omitted to be sent or received, in Victoria.

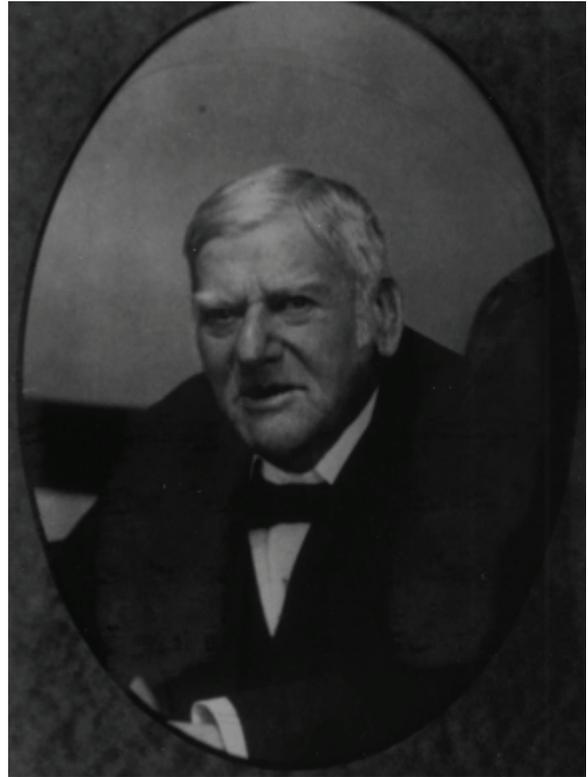
Telegram sent to Sarah McLennan, Hannah's mother by Miss E Sykes

Chapter Five — McLennan Inquest

There was only a small attendance of the general public at the City Morgue, when Dr Youl the coroner opened the inquest on the body of Hannah McLennan on 5 January 1894.

The first witness called was Sarah McLennan, wife of a labourer living in Warrnambool, who identified the body as that of her daughter. She outlined particulars of Hannah's early life confirming that she had been married to a bigamist, and also that she had had a child in that liaison. She last saw her daughter alive at the Warrnambool railway station on 19 October 1893, when she said to her 'Good-bye and God bless you.' She did not know anything about Hannah's troubles which led to her suicide. Mrs McLennan was shown a letter found in her daughter's pocket and identified it as being in her handwriting. This letter, parts of which had been destroyed by the salt water, read as follows:

My dear Mother, Father, Brothers, Sister, and my Child –Forgive me, mother dear, what I am doing, as I cannot face this world of misery any longer, as Alf Birtles drives me to this. He has seduced me under the promise of making me his wife. For fifteen months he has just gone on like this. I have been like a wife to him. Nothing but a convenience to him. Now he is tired. He has turned on me and treats me with contempt. I cannot stand contempt from him. I have begged him to turn, but he is stubborn. He will not make me his wife now, as he promised, or have anything to do with me. Now it matters not. When he took me out he always seduced me, and made me believe he cared something for me. Nothing but false deceit. He even took me last Easter, from the Good Friday to the Monday, to the Frankston Coffee Palace. He placed a wedding ring on my finger and called me his wife, and then put his arms around my neck and kissed me. He took another name, Buckley instead of Birtles, and told me afterwards. I can see it all now. He



Dr Richard Youl, Coroner

filled me with false hopes and deceit. Mother, I cannot bear this disgrace on my mind. Mrs Fuller [her employer] got to know about it, and she turned me away from my situation. She said she could not believe it of me that I was guilty of such things. Mother I trusted him, but he has deceived me. It breaks my heart as I love him. I cannot be parted from him to live. I shall part in death. Then he will see what he has done. Mother, look after my child. God spare you to see him grow up, and may he prove a blessing to you. As mother, I am always parted from him, never let him know his mother's fate. Do not fret for me as I will be better off, as there is now no future now for me. My life is blighted now forever through Alf Birtles. No man would ever make me his wife now. No, I could not deceive one after being a mistress to him, Good-bye, and God bless my child – Heart Broken daughter, H. McLennan.'

On another slip was written:

My brother punished Alf Bertles for what he has done to me, and drive me to God. Pay debts without money. He will not prosper now. No life for Alf to laugh. A slur at me now. I have hit him when he treated me with contempt, and he sent me an angry letter to send an apology to him after the way he has wronged me. Good-bye mother dear, good-bye. God have mercy on me. My child good-bye. God bless him.

The letter was simply folded over and on the outside bore the address 'TO MY MOTHER'. The coroner stated that the post-mortem examination revealed that Hannah McLennan was not enceinte [pregnant].

Alfred Birtles was then called, and said he was a storeman, residing at Little Raglan Street, South Melbourne. He had known the deceased for the last 17 months.

The coroner – You heard that letter read. Are those allegations true?

Birtles – Some of them are not.

Were you engaged to marry her? – No.

Which of these allegations is true? I don't

want you to compromise yourself. Did you live with her as man and wife at Frankston? – Yes, I intended to go by myself but she insisted on accompanying me. She said 'You cannot do worse to me than you have done.' Birtles said that he had previously intended to marry Hannah but had been deterred by her violent temper. He had not seen her for three weeks prior to her death and claimed he did not meet her by appointment on the pier.

Two letters which Birtles said were written by him to Hannah and returned by her were produced at the inquest. They read as follows:

South Melbourne, 24 Little Raglan Street, April 27 1893.

Dear Miss McLennan, In answer to yours of the 26th, I must say it would be a waste of time for both of us to meet by appointment again. As for the slip of a word, they have always been slipping, as you call it. It is not the first, second, or third time, but a time; in fact it is habitual with you. We could not, as we have not, agree long together. I am sorry you are taking it so hard, but one would not think so if they had heard your language when you have



Alf Birtles' home, 24 Raglan St (now 85 Thomson St, South Melbourne



Hannah McLennan's home in 1893, 57 (now 42) Dundas Place, South Melbourne

been calling me them nice names, which I could stand off no one, no matter who they are or where they come from. Remember other people as feeling as well as you. However, I forgive you for all you have said, which I hope you will forgive me if I have done or said anything, and I will leave you to judge me by my actions and conduct generally towards you during the time we kept company together. I remain your well wisher, RA Birtles.

South Melbourne April 28th, 1893. Dear Miss McLennan, In answer to yours of today, I must say you are talking a lot of nonsense. I will see you on either Saturday or Sunday, Saturday if I can make other arrangements. But mind you it is not for my pleasure but for yours, as nothing will never come of it. I am yours, etc., RAB.

The letter was addressed to Miss H McLennan, 57 Dundas Place, Albert Park.

Birtles continued his evidence, and said that Hannah had met him on the pier, and he had wished her a happy new year. 'She did not say anything to me about marrying her. She asked me who a girl was that I was with on Christmas Day. I told her that I was 100 miles away from Melbourne on that day, and she appeared to cool down.' This was the evening of her death. There was no quarrel, and she said nothing about drowning herself. Had she done so, Birtles felt that he could have prevented her as he had done on several other occasions. Birtles told the inquest that he could not swim a stroke to save himself let alone anyone else. He threw the buoy into the water but believed that Hannah had swum away from the pier.

The Coroner turning to Birtles said '*If you had not thrown the lifebuoy with the rope, Satchell's life would not have been lost. It is not pleasant for you, but two people's lives have been lost through your conduct. The deceased merely charged you with what you have admitted. Wild horses would not have drawn*

from me the admissions you have made.'

Birtles – *But it is true.*

Dr Youl – *Never mind. If you compromised a woman you should lie to save her reputation.*

Janie Carter substantially repeated the evidence given by her at the inquest on the body of William Satchell. She agreed that Hannah had a hasty temper and was a very excitable person.

Constable Richard Halpin said that he was on duty at Beaconsfield Parade, at about 3 am on the morning of 3 January when the body of Hannah McLennan was found close to the shore. He took the body to the morgue and found in the pockets of her dress a silver watch, a purse containing some money and the letter which was addressed to her mother. A small bottle picked up on the pier was handed to him. The bottle was handed to the coroner who said it was an ordinary chlorodyne bottle.

The coroner summed up briefly, stating that it was simply for the jury to decide whether the deceased was sane or not at the time of her death. No doubt she had believed that Birtles would marry her, and as he refused to, that probably brought about all the quarrelling and the state she had got into. He had already commented on the need to have life-saving equipment on the pier, but it was impossible to keep things there because of the behaviour of vandals who removed or damaged it. He added that there appeared to be no value for the pier except for people to drown themselves.

The jury returned a verdict that Hannah had committed suicide while in a state of temporary insanity.

Justifiable criticism was levelled at Dr Youl in the following article which appeared in *The Warrnambool Standard* on Monday 8 January 1894:

Everyone knows that damp dank corpses, from all sorts of out the way places career down rivers and pass swiftly through the tempest

tossed waters, for the express purpose of getting within the jurisdiction of Dr Youl and being 'sat upon' by the popular city coroner. The doctor's reputation is proof against almost anything. No matter what he says or does, suicides and others have the most lively – or should it be deadly? faith in him. The doctor ought not however to go too far. Some things he is in the habit of saying were better left unsaid. To tell a witness when giving evidence on oath that he should have lied is a

remarkable magisterial freak even for Dr Youl. We do not propose to argue what, under the particular circumstances, the person Birtles, to whom Dr Youl addressed the remark, ought to have done. A woman's reputation is something to be concerned about, and a due sense of chivalry is sometimes as high a virtue as truth. But it is the business of the magistrate to be discreet. Surely so experienced a coroner as Dr Youl ought to know that!

The SOUTH MELBOURNE TRAGEDY

Written through respect to the memory of
brave William Satchell – Age 21 years 6 months
who lost his life in trying to save another from the sea
at Albert Park on January 2nd 1894

Farewell, faithful William Satchell
Loved and liked by all he knew
Even now though dead and buried
We can scarcely believe it true

Farewell from your dear companions
From the club you loved so well
and the name of William Satchell
ever in their hearts will dwell

Farewell from the girl that loved you
And whose name you spoke in death
'Goodbye Phoebe' the words he uttered
From his quick departing breath

Farewell from your poor dear mother
Her sad heart is filled with pain
But there is one consolation
you will meet her once again

Farewell from the population
All Victorians join with me
Asking God to grant His mercy
to the hero of the sea

Farewell brave undaunted hero
You a noble deed have done
and your memory lives for ever
Dear Australia's bravest son

January 4th 1894
Written by James Purcell
13 Waterloo Road,
off Wellington Street
Collingwood

Chapter Six — Farewell

William Satchell was buried at the Melbourne General Cemetery on Thursday 4 January 1894. The following article appeared in *The Age* the next day:

The last sad rites were paid yesterday to the remains of William Satchell, the brave but unfortunate youth who lost his life last Tuesday evening ... The circumstances of his death touched a strong chord of public sympathy, and great public interest was exhibited yesterday at the funeral. The cortege was advertised to leave the residence of the parents of the deceased situated at Albert Road South Melbourne at 3 pm on that day. At the hour named, there was a gathering of several thousand spectators about the starting point. Shortly after the advertised time, the funeral cortege proceeded on its way to the cemetery. The hearse was preceded by the members of the Federal Yacht Club, the South Melbourne Bicycle Club, the Northern Bicycle Club, the Fernside Bicycle Club, the South Melbourne branch of the Australian Natives Association, and the Albert Park Dramatic Club, each member carrying a wreath of flowers. The coffin was covered with wreaths, prominent amongst which was one sent by members of the Cyclists Club. Several members of the South Melbourne City Council also joined the cortege. The flags were half masted along the route, which was crowded with spectators. At the cemetery where several thousands of people had gathered the funeral obsequies were conducted by the Rev S Kent.

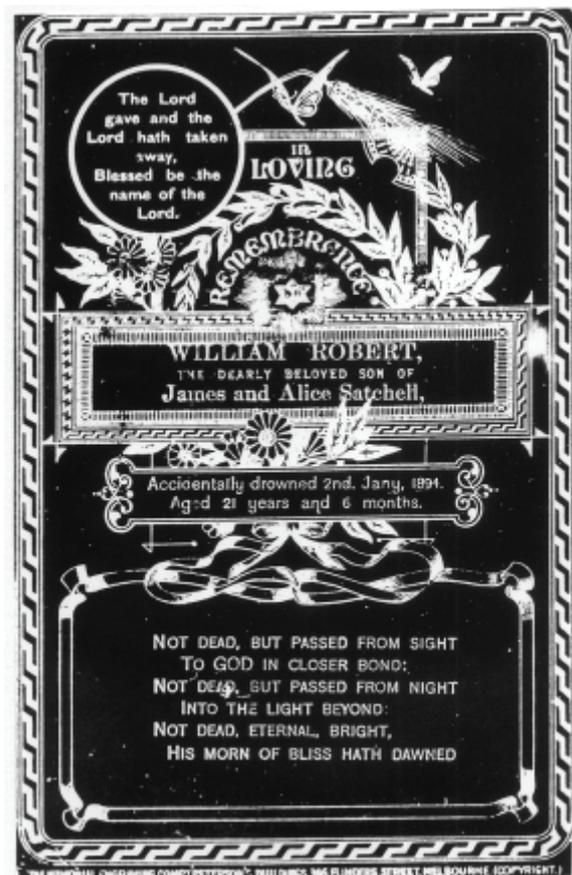
The following article appeared in the *South Melbourne Citizen* on 13 January 1894:

On Sunday 7th January, 1894, a sermon was preached by Rev S Kent at St Silas' Church Albert Park in relation to William Satchell who had been a respected and valued member of St Silas' Choir. His vacant seat was draped, and the Girls Friendly Society contributed a handsome wreath which was

placed on it.

The Reverend gentleman praised the heroism of young Satchell, and in concluding his sermon, implored each man to treat every woman as he would wish to see his sister treated. At the close of the service the organist played the 'Dead March in Saul,' which greatly affected the congregation, which taxed the seat holding capacity of the church to its utmost.

Details of Hannah McLennan's funeral were not mentioned in the press. She was buried on 5 January 1894 in an unmarked grave number T.174 in the Church of England section at Melbourne General Cemetery, approximately 130 metres from Satchell's grave. Particulars of her marriage and her child Ernest were omitted from her death certificate.



Chapter Seven — The Royal Humane Society

Mr George Lush, President of The Royal Humane Society, spoke to a representative of *The Herald* on 5 January 1894, concerning life saving apparatus at Kerferd Road pier. The solitary buoy on the pier was supplied by the Society on the recommendation of the police. Mr Lush's remarks were reported in *The Herald* that evening (in part) as follows:

A lifebuoy is apt to be of very little use in the hands of a man who loses his presence of mind. You have heard how this man Birtles threw the buoy into the water, without holding on to the end of the rope. If he had done this, he might have pulled the buoy in and thrown it out again if necessary. But not satisfied with that he threw the grappling irons in after it. The probability is that if there had been a cartload of life saving appliances there, they would have been treated in the same way. Besides where a woman has made up her mind to drown herself it is a difficult matter to save her. Probably the woman did not make any effort to save herself by clutching at the buoy. In cases of accident it is different.

We are not responsible for the short rope attached to the buoy. The regulation length of rope about 43 feet is provided with every buoy. In some cases larrikins cut the rope and take it away, or throw it into the sea, and that may have been done in this case.

Probably Mr Satchell had not learned the precautions directed by the Society to be taken in such cases. The Society seeks by the presentation of medals in school competitions and other ways, to stress the necessity of not seizing a person when he or she is struggling in the water, but of keeping off for a few seconds till the drowning person becomes quiet, which will be after he gets a mouthful or two of salt water: for it is sheer madness to take hold of a struggling person in the water. Then there is the necessity of taking fast hold of the person's hair, turning him quickly on his back: giving a sudden pull to cause him to float, and of swimming ashore on the back.

These remarks were generally supported by the following article which appeared several years earlier in *The Record* on 4 February 1881, concerning an aquatic event arranged by the South Melbourne Swimming Club:

By far the most important event will be the exhibition of saving drowning persons. It is well that this club has given to this branch of the natatory art such prominence. How often have deaths from drowning been recorded even in instances in which swimmers were at hand at the time, when the unfortunate one was struggling for life. However good a swimmer may be, unless he has practised life saving, it is generally a very difficult undertaking to rescue a drowning man, and the attempt often ends in death for both.

The Secretary of the Society was somewhat kinder in the following handwritten letter to William's father. A typed version of the Secretary's letter is as follows:

Dear Sir,

I am instructed to inform you that at a meeting of the Board the heroic conduct of your late son James [William] who so bravely lost his life in his humane attempt to rescue Hannah McLennan aged 27 years who committed suicide by jumping off the Kerferd Road jetty at about half past ten on the night of the 2nd instant was brought under their notice and it was decided that an account of his heroic conduct should be recorded in the archives of this Society and handed down as an example of bravery to be followed by others in similar circumstances. I was further requested to convey to you the sincere sympathy of the Board with you and your family circle in this most trying bereavement.

Yours faithfully

William Hamilton

Secretary

Chapter Eight — A Memorial

On Tuesday 9 January 1894, the Northern Cycling club held a meeting at the Hotel Victoria, Albert Park, to determine the most appropriate means of establishing a fund for the purpose of erecting a suitable monument for William Satchell. The meeting was attended by representatives of cycling, swimming and yachting clubs, the Australian Natives Association and other bodies.

The Northern Cycling Club, the originators of the movement, suggested that a massive pillar, surmounted by a lamp, be erected near the spot where the tragedy occurred. It was unanimously agreed that this suggestion be adopted, and a committee was formed to explore the means of doing so. A large sum was subscribed at the hotel and it was decided to call a public meeting at an early date.

Meanwhile an aquatic carnival was held at Stubbs South Melbourne baths to raise money for the fund. About 1000 persons were present for the five race program, and valuable trophies were offered. It was anticipated that 50 pounds would be raised from this carnival.

A further meeting was held in the South Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday 16 January, 1894 the Mayor Cr Gittus presiding. The Hon. Sir Graham Berry moved that the memory of Satchell's courageous conduct should be perpetuated by a suitable public monument. In seconding the resolution, The Hon. AJ Peacock MLA believed that the memorial appeal should not be restricted to South Melbourne but should 'take on a national character' He stated that he fully expected that a very substantial sum should be subscribed to provide a lasting memorial. The resolution was then put and carried unanimously.

On 29 January 1894 a concert was given in the South Melbourne Town Hall in aid of the proposed memorial. There was a naval brigade band present and quite a number of professional and amateur singers. A limelight picture of the Kerferd Road Pier and a portrait of William Satchell were exhibited. The mayor Mr T Gittus

expressed regret that there was not a larger audience, and the press did not mention how much money was collected from the concert. Certainly the total amount ultimately received seemed significantly less than expected.

Twelve months later an article appeared in *The Argus* on 23 March 1895, disclosing that a sum of only 60 pounds had been subscribed towards the cost of a memorial for Satchell. Most of it had been paid over to the treasurer of the fund Cr Gittus who was then Mayor of South Melbourne. However there was a sum of sixteen pounds nine shillings outstanding. In the meantime plans for a monument to be erected over Satchell's grave at the Melbourne General Cemetery were approved by the committee and James Satchell, father of William. The tender of Mr Hughes of Bourke Street, Melbourne, to erect the monument was accepted but significant delays had occurred because the Treasurer had not received the outstanding amount. However ten pounds of the sum of sixteen pounds nine shillings was now paid over, and the remainder promised within a few days. The monument would then be erected. There was much financial distress in South Melbourne at this time and many people were retrenched from their work because of the deepening depression. Appeals were established to help the needy and it seems that because of this, the 'national appeal' for William, after an initial flurry, did not gain any momentum. Many people may have had second thoughts about subscribing to this memorial once the press coverage had ceased and general excitement had died away.

The unveiling ceremony was subsequently held at the Melbourne General Cemetery on 5 August 1895 and a report of the event appeared in *The Argus* the next day as follows:

The ceremony of unveiling the monument erected over the grave of William R Satchell, the young man who lost his life while attempting to save a young woman from suicide by drowning at Albert Park, took

place in the Church of England division of the Melbourne General Cemetery this afternoon at three o'clock. The foundation and basement of the structure are both of blue stone, the former rough hewn and the latter finely chiselled. The superstructure is of Stawell stone in which is fixed a handsome panel of Sicilian marble bearing the following inscription:

This monument was erected by public subscription to the memory of William Robt.

Satchell aged 21 years, son of James and Alice Satchell, Albert Park, who sacrificed his life in a brave attempt to rescue that of a drowning woman off the Kerferd Road jetty South Melbourne on the night of the 2nd January 1894.

An ornamental capping with cross with wreath surmounts the superstructure. Mr T.B. Williams was the architect and Mr M. Hughes the monumental builder.



Hannah McLennan's unmarked grave number 174 in Melbourne General Cemetery



The William Satchell Memorial in Melbourne General Cemetery

Chapter Nine — Ernest Bailey

Mother, look after my child. God spare you to see him grow up, and may he prove a blessing to you –Never let him know his mother's fate.

These words were included in Hannah's suicide note which was produced at the inquest.

Had she been able to return to this world 100 years later, Hannah would have been pleased to discover that her child had lived to the ripe old age of 87, and in 1994 had 80 descendants. She may not have been so pleased to learn that her grandchildren knew that something tragic had happened to her, although the secret was apparently kept from subsequent generations of the family.

In accordance with his mother's wish, Ernest was brought up by his grandparents, Sarah and Ken McLennan, in Warrnambool. Ken died in 1901 aged 74 and Sarah in 1909 aged 67. Sarah's will prepared shortly before her death bequeathed the following: *'I give unto my son George McLennan my black pony and the picture of his father. I give all the rest of my personal estate unto my son William McLennan. I devise all my real estate unto my grandson Ernest Kenneth Bailey, subject to the payment by him of all my just debts funeral and testamentary expenses. I appoint the said Ernest Kenneth Bailey sole executor of this my will.'*

Civil Registration records reveal that Ernest Bailey married in 1913 and died in 1973. His death certificate indicated that he had six children, five of whom were living at the time of his death. A subsequent check of directories and electoral rolls, ultimately put me in touch with three of Ernest's children, who gave me details of their father's life which is summarised below.

Young Ernest cleaned stables at Warrnambool for some years. The pay was poor and he subsequently joined the Navy where he worked mainly as an electrician for six years. He left the Navy when he was about 27 and in 1913 married Lillian Duff. They settled in Brunswick and had children, Alec (b. 5 June 1914), Isabell (b. 27 October 1915), Esmeralda (b. 16 May 1917), Beryl (b. 4 September 1918, d. 1969). For

some years he utilised his skills as an electrician, wiring houses locally and working at his father-in-law's bakery in Lygon Street. About 1919 he bought 130 acres at Koondrook, on the River Murray near Kerang. He chose this location because his brother-in-law Les Duff lived nearby. Ernest grew oranges, and tomatoes, had some cows, and did electrical wiring in the town. A further two children were born at Koondrook, Alma (b. 27 August 1927) and Leslie (b. 4 January 1932).

Ernest was a kind and generous father, and seems not to have been affected by the unfortunate events of his early life. In 1960 he and his wife retired from the farm and went to America to visit their married daughter Esmeralda or Esme as she was called. They stayed for three months before coming to Melbourne where they lived with their eldest daughter Isabell. In 1962 they bought a house in Newport and remained there for the rest of their lives. Lillian died in February 1973, and Ernest in August the same year. Both are buried at Koondrook Cemetery.

Towards the end of his life Ernest suffered from dementia. It is typical of this disease that many sufferers can at times vividly recall events that happened many years before, although their short term memory is generally diminished. A recollection of an event apparently told to him by his grandparents astonished his daughter Isabell. One day when she was taking her father for a drive along the beach front at Albert Park, Ernest pointed to the Kerferd Road pier and exclaimed – 'That's where she died!' Up to this time he had never mentioned to his children what had happened to their grandmother. He had kept the secret from them for so long, and now refused to elaborate on what he had said when pressed by Isabell to do so. A faded press cutting of his mother's suicide was found among his possessions after his death.

On the other hand the family knew about his father George Bailey. George had been married three times, once in England and twice in Australia. His previous two wives found out

about the third, and each wrote to Hannah informing her of George's deceit. The letters were kept by the family but were discarded when the farm at Koondrook was sold. A picture of George resplendent in military uniform remained

with the family for many years but its whereabouts are now unknown. George never tried to get in touch with his son after the fatality and nobody knows what happened to him.



Above: Mr and Mrs E K Bailey with infant

Left: Ernest Bailey on tricycle, presumably with Hannah and her father at Warnambool, c. 1890

Below: Bailey family. L-R back row, Les, Ernest, Alec
L-R front row, Alma, Lillian, Isabell



E p i l o g u e

Efforts to trace the fortunes or otherwise of participants in this story have been partially successful. There is no marriage or death entry for Ronald Alfred Birtles, Bertles or Burtles in Victoria, nor any marriage for him in New South Wales and Tasmania. Because he changed his name to Buckley during his weekend with Hannah at Frankston there is a strong chance that he would have done so after the inquest in which he figured so ignominiously.

At the time of the tragedy Minnie Milton lived with her parents George and Sarah Milton in Merton Street, South Melbourne. She was only 17 when she knew William Satchell in 1894. Her father was a prominent tailor and cutter who subsequently moved his business and residence to Hoddle Street, East Melbourne in 1897. On 18 February 1902, Minnie (now 25) married James Charles Elton, 38, a printer and publisher, at the Milton's residence at 105 George Street, East Melbourne. There were no children born to this couple up to 1913, and no death registration in Victoria for her to 1975. It seems that she may have moved interstate shortly after her marriage.

Dr Youl, a medical practitioner, was born in 1821. He became coroner in 1854 and showed himself to be a disciplinarian in strict accordance with the penal code. He reputedly covered over 12000 inquests including the inquest on William's grandfather, James Satchell, who drowned in the same location on 2 April 1870. He favoured flogging, and considered the death penalty a kindness. However he deplored locking up lunatics and performed many private kindnesses for released prisoners. He had eleven children and remained coroner until a few days before his death on 6 August 1897.

The chemist shop founded by Mr AT Craven c. 1892 is still trading. Mr Craven died in 1936, aged 75.

It is interesting to note that the average life span of William Satchell's six sisters and three brothers who survived into adulthood was 82 years. On this basis it could be assumed that had he not drowned, William may have lived for another 60 years. Thanks to modern computer technology it has been possible to prepare from his photograph a graphic image of how he may have looked later in life.

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McLennan family Bible



William Satchell as he may have looked in later life



The author Tony Satchell with Hannah McLennan's eldest granddaughter Isabell Cathery on Kerferd Road Pier, May 1994

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