## **MARTIN, Ernest Arthur**

Ernest Arthur Martin was born on 7th February 1880, at Parramatta, son of William Arthur (1854-1928) & Esther (nee Bellamy; 1862-1941) Martin, who were married in the district of Ryde in 1879.**1**

In 1896 Ernest was participating in the Beecroft Wesleyan Chapel Band of Hope.**2**

In January 1900 Ernest appeared in court appeared in answer to a summons issued by the police, charging him with having, at Cheltenham, on January 10th, cruelly ill-treated a horse by working the animal while it was suffering from sore shoulders. The defendant, who

said the horse was a young one, and that its shoulders were merely scalded, pleaded not guilty. The defendant was fined 10s with 4s 10d costs of Court; or 14 days imprisonment.**3**

Ernest married Catherine (also spelt Katherine & Kathleen) Olive Strangman on 2nd June 1902, at St. Mary’s Church, Llandilo (near Penrith).

She was born on 23rd June 1882, at Ultimo, daughter of Robert Henry & Catherine Therese Strangman.**4**

They would have 15 children between 1903 and 1922.

In August 1915 Ernest, a Beecroft gardener, was committed for trial at the Ryde Police Court on a charge of occasioning actual bodily harm to Thomas Bellamy, a neighbouring orchardist, at Beecroft, on August 19. The jury acquitted him of the charge.**5**

In September 1928 Ernest’s father, William Arthur Martin, of Murray Farm-road, Beecroft, and late of Hunter-street, Hornsby, died. He was buried in the Church of England Cemetery, Northern Suburbs.**6**

By 1930 the couple had 15 children, 14 boys and one girl. He and his wife were interviewed by the newspaper, The Sydney Morning Herald, as follows:

FAMILY OF FIFTEEN.

Mother Who Never Knew Help.

Mrs. E. Carr [?] Martin, of Murray Farm-road, Beecroft, is the mother of 15 sturdy Australian children (says the Sydney "Morning Herald"). All were born in the same street. All attended the Beecroft School. The three eldest boys are now married; one has three children, and another one child. But there still remain 12 in the home nest.

Mr. Martin conducts a carrying business at Beecroft with the assistance of three sons. Mr. and Mrs. Martin, were married in 1901. Russell, the eldest son, now himself a father, was born in the following year and David, the baby of the family, in December, 1926. In this family of 15 there is only one girl, Jean, naturally the apple of her father's eye, who is 20. Her mother has never known the luxury of domestic help. The only assistance she has received in attending to the requirements of a family that would appal the average mother has been from Jean.

Russell, Bert, Bruce, Spencer, Jean, Jack, Reg, Ernest, Claud, Peter, Dan, David, Silas, Steven, and Paul. Mrs. Martin had not the slightest difficulty in rattling off the names of her large family. Who, for that matter, should know them better? As for the secret of her success as a housewife, Mrs. Martin was not quite certain. A moment's thought. Yes, routine. If each day was not carefully planned, even with three sons flown from the nest, Mrs. Martin readily agreed, she would not have been able to carry on. Each hour is noted. For instance, one day must be devoted to washing - perhaps the most arduous day of the week. Then, cooking, mending, cleaning, all demand a whole day of undivided attention from Mrs. Martin and Jean. Each member of the family helped the other. An extra baby was almost unnoticed. Somehow, he fitted in. Only the mother really knew what extra work each little newcomer entailed. For eight of the children Mrs. Martin secured the baby bonus. Surely, no Australian family was ever more justly entitled to it!

"Sometimes even now I look back and wonder how I managed to get through the work," said Mrs. Martin reminiscently. "All my neighbours consider me a bit of a wonder."**7**

 

In 1936 Sydney Bailey, of Gould-street, Campsie, sought to recover from Ernest Martin, of Murray Farm-road, Beecroft, £400 damages for injuries received as the result of being struck by a motor lorry while he was riding a push bicycle across Bridge-road to Carey-street, Drummoyne, on September 24, 1936. Plaintiff alleged that the accident was due to defendant's negligence. The defence was a denial of negligence, and a plea of contributory negligence by plaintiff. Judgment was given for defendant.**8**

In February 1947 thieves broke open an explosives magazine at Beecroft and stole three cartons of gelignite. The magazine was near a stone quarry, the property of E. G. Martin Pty. Ltd, Murray Farm-road.

The sandstone quarry was operated by the Martin family. At the time sandstone blocks were used as foundation for houses and were all hand cut and trimmed on site and then transported by horse and dray up the two-wheeled track that is now Midson Road. Some years further on, the quarry was developed as a housing complex of 56 apartments called “Orchid Grange.”**9**

In October 1950 Mr. and Mrs. Martin had their say about their large family to the Daily Telegraph, as follows:

LET'S DO OUR OWN POPULATING (says father of 15)

A Beecroft man who has a family of 14 boys and one girl does not believe in immigration to populate Australia.

He is Mr. E. Martin, 70, retired carrier, of Murray Farm Road. "Every Australian couple should do the job expected of them and help populate Australia with Australians," he said. "The Australian man is a wonderful chap," he said.

Tall, grey-haired, strongly-built Mr. Martin and his small, cheerful, grey-haired wife think they have created a record by having such a large family (all of whom are still living) of so many boys.

49 Years Married

Mr. and Mrs. Martin will celebrate 49 years of marriage next month. They have lived all their married life in their small weatherboard cottage at Beecroft, where all the children were born. The children are: Russell (47), Bertrand (45), Bruce (44), Spencer (42), Jean (41), Jack (40), Reg (39), Ernest (38), Claude (37), Peter (36), Daniel (35), David (34), Silas (33), Stephen (28), and Paul (24).

And this is the summing-up of the parents:

DAD: “I cannot understand the young married people of today who grumble and say they cannot live on present day wages and have families.

"When we started out, I earned 5/- a day and there was no child endowment.

"You have to be a good manager and know how to economise to have a large family."

MUM: "A family of three is sufficient these days with the high prices and housing difficulties."

Would she have 15 children if she had her life over again?

— "I would never go through that again.

"But I think a big family is much happier than a small one."**10**

In late November 1951, Ernest Martin was very ill in a private hospital at Woy Woy, suffering from dropsy. The Health Minister, Sir Earle Page, arranged for a rare drug, natrinil, to be flown urgently from America to save the life of the father of 15 children. Immediately the parcel was cleared at the airport, one of Mr. Martin's sons drove with it to Woy Woy. After being administered the drug, Mr. Martin’s health improved.

Unfortunately, Mr. Martin died on 19th December 1951. His last address was 11 Collareen-street, Ettalong Beach, formerly of Murray Farm-road, Beecroft.

The funeral left the Seventh Day Adventist church, Thornleigh, for the Field of Mars Seventh Day Adventist Cemetery.**11**

His wife, Catherine Martin, died in 1965, in the district of Balmain.**12**

**Bibliography**

1 NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages

2 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 26 Sep 1896

3 Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 20 Jan 1900

4 NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages

5 Sun (Sydney, NSW), Thu 2 Sep 1915; Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 4 Sep 1915; Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW), Thu 14 Oct 1915

6 Sydney Morning Herald, Mon 1 Oct 1928

7 The Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 3 Jan 1930; Western Star & Roma Advertiser (Toowoomba, Qld.), Sat 11 Jan 1930

8 Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 4 Dec 1936

9 Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, Fri 14 Feb 1947; story in Beecroft Probus by Ray Rogerson

10 Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW), Sun 22 Oct 1950

11 Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser, Wed 28 Nov 1951; Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, Sat 8 Dec 1951; Sun (Sydney, NSW), Mon 10 Dec 1951; Newcastle Sun, Fri 14 Dec 1951; Sydney Morning Herald, Thu 20 Dec 1951; Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 21 Dec 1951

12 NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages