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Signed A. J. Morison

Date 27th September 1989

Interviewer GRAEME GRACE

The engineering firm, Morison and Bearby Ltd, which operated from 1874-1963 was for most of its life a respected and invaluable part of Newcastle's industrial might. The company's reputation for high quality work and ability to complete difficult, complex commissions was due in no small part to the vision, determination and diligence of its founder, Robert Morison and to the later efforts of his son, David Niven Morison. These two men, one after the other, guided the company for 66 years as the business grew from a small, five man operation to finally cover 4 acres and employ over 300 people. Their benevolent involvement in a multitude of community enterprises, as well as running the "Soho" foundry, was a heavy workload, but one which they obviously relished. The high moral ideals and insatiable industriousness of the Morisons can be traced back to the origins of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain.

In Britain the Non-Conformist churches (such as the Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Wesleyans) through their own academies and churches, sent out into the world men with independent, questioning minds. Their education had a strong bias towards the practical and equipped with innovative skills the graduates moved into trade and industry from where they were to change the entire world. The virtues of hard work, charity and self and communal betterment, instilled in them from youth, were to influence every town and city where these people settled. Many of the great and often forgotten members of these Non-Conformist churches, who became inventors, innovators, engineers and entrepreneurs (in fact, the backbone of the Industrial Revolution) were generally from the middle classes of the north of England and lowland Scotland. Men such as James Watt and Thomas Newcomen were straight out of this mould. So too, were the Morisons. The industrial revolution from the Congregationalist and the Foundry of Morison and Bearby's "Soho Foundry" at Carrington would have been a useful addition.

by Graeme Grace

The engineering firm, Morison and Bearby Ltd, which operated from 1874 - 1963 was for most of its life a respected and invaluable part of Newcastle's industrial might. The company's reputation for high quality work and ability to complete difficult, complex commissions was due in no small part to the vision, determination and diligence of its founder, Robert Morison and to the later efforts of his son, David Niven Morison. These two men, one after the other, guided the company for 66 years as the business grew from a small, five man operation to finally cover 4 acres and employ over 300 people. Their benevolent involvement in a multitude of community enterprises, as well as running the "Soho" foundry, was a heavy workload, but one which they obviously relished. The high moral ideals and insatiable industriousness of the Morisons can be traced back to the origins of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain.

In Britain the Non-Conformist churches (such as the Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Wesleyans) through their own academies and churches, sent out into the world men with independent, questioning minds. Their education had a strong bias towards the practical and equipped with innovative skills the graduates moved into trade and industry from where they were to change the entire world. The virtues of hard work, charity and self and communal betterment, instilled in them from youth, were to influence every town and city where these people settled. The members of these Non-Conformist churches, who became inventors, innovators, engineers and entrepreneurs (in fact, the backbone of the Industrial Revolution) were generally from the middle classes of the north of England and lowland Scotland. Men such as James Watt and Thomas Newcomen were straight out of this mould. So too, were the Morisons. The members of these Non-Conformist churches, who became inventors, innovators, engineers and entrepreneurs (in fact, the backbone of the Industrial Revolution) were generally from the middle classes of the north of England and lowland Scotland. Men such as James Watt and Thomas Newcomen were straight out of this mould. So too, were the Morisons. The members of these Non-Conformist churches, who became inventors, innovators, engineers and entrepreneurs (in fact, the backbone of the Industrial Revolution) were generally from the middle classes of the north of England and lowland Scotland. Men such as James Watt and Thomas Newcomen were straight out of this mould. So too, were the Morisons.

Robert Morison's father, a Scottish engineer, and a Presbyterian, brought his family to Australia in 1852, and helped start an engineering firm in Sydney where young Robert worked for a while. Robert, himself an engineer, was imbued with entrepreneurial spirit and worked in a few places while looking for somewhere to start his own business. He found what he was looking for, in Newcastle.

His father's firm had often had jobs in the Hunter area and when he himself moved to the district with the railways in 1873 he could see an opportunity. The Hunter River's steam-ship building industry was in its infancy and in need of locally available specialist skills. Also, Newcastle's coal was attracting ships from all over the world, many of them requiring running repairs. An engineering works, if properly sited could take advantage of the growing maritime and coal industries.

A partnership was formed with his brother James and an old friend and workmate, Edwin Bearby. All three of them had worked at Mort's Dock in Sydney, then Australia's premier foundry. Their combined expertise meant that they could offer a comprehensive service and undertake all types of engineering; a solid foundation for success. They decided to buy out the small Howden's Foundry on Bullock Island (now Carrington).

The Carrington of the 1870s was far different from the established suburb of today. It was originally an island of mud flats and mangroves which by the 1870s was just beginning to take on its present shape via the fortuitous ballast dumping from visiting ships, mainly colliers. There was no bridge, nor were there many people living on the island. Thus, supplies had to be punted across the harbour and employees and even some of their customers must have had to board a ferry to reach the works. Add to these problems the incessant mosquitos from the mangrove stands and the formation of Morison and Bearby's "Soho Foundry" at Carrington would seem an unwise decision.



But the choice was a sound one, Carrington was beginning to boom. Within two years the works had outgrown Howden's yard. They moved a short distance to a larger site at Carrington where they could expand. Almost immediately Carrington's first public house, "The Flag of All Nations", opened next door, no doubt in part, to take advantage of the thirst of Morison and Bearby's 40 employees, much to the chagrin of the non-drinking Robert Morison. Shortly after, two new coal mines were started locally and with the advent of the rail line and the newly commissioned hydraulic power house, Carrington became a major export centre.

This was before the time of mass production and bulk handling so the streets were alive with workers. Aside from the "Soho" employees, there were stevedores, coalminers and sailors on leave. Carrington's plethora of large, grand hotels today stand as mute testimony to this exciting, cosmopolitan boomtime when change was daily in the air.

The harbour was still full of sails but there were increasingly more funnels to be seen as the steam boats gained ascendancy. As steam powered, steel hulled ships became more common, Morison and Bearby's workload increased and their workmanship became known all over the world.

Although Morison and Bearby Ltd gained a reputation in marine engineering the company never turned away engineering business of any kind. The coal mines were frequent customers, as were local and state governments. They also turned out some of the iron lace which decorate local terrace houses and in 1878 they cast the original fog-bell which was placed at the end of Nobby's breakwater.

1. A pithead manufactured by Morison and Bearby's for the Burwood colliery is on permanent display at the Newcastle Regional Museum.

2. The bell is now in the possession of the Newcastle Maritime Museum.

Their workforce varied considerably according to the amount of work available and although the partners often had to dismiss employees they never reduced the wages of those in work. The volatile nature of the coal industry and the general depression of the 1890s saw Morison and Bearby experience the fluctuations of boom and bust. But, by the early 1900s the company was on a firm financial footing and Robert Morison and family moved to the salubrious suburb of Mayfield. Edwin Bearby (whom, it is thought, may have provided the major share of the starting capital) was already established in a large house in Hannel St, Wickham.

The three partners had not just spent their lives building a successful business but had also expended time and effort to the public benefit. In 1882 Bearby was involved in an unsuccessful attempt at extinguishing a fire on board the barque "Maneghan" which was docked at Carrington. Not surprisingly, three years later he was instrumental in creating the first Carrington fire brigade. James Morison was a member of the Carrington Municipal Council from its inception until his death in 1901. But it was Robert Morison who took on the largest workload. Not content with just being the general manager of a large engineering firm, he sought to spread his knowledge and ideals. He helped form the first engineering institute in Newcastle, and taught there. He was vice president of the School of Arts and was deeply involved in the YMCA. He was the superintendent of the Wesleyan Sabbath School in Tyrrell St, Newcastle and also lay preacher and trustee for several local Methodist churches, some of which he helped erect. For a while he also represented Lloyds of London as engineer-surveyor for the port of Newcastle.

Robert Morison died in 1914, and with the death of Edwin Bearby in 1916 Robert's son, David Niven Morison became general manager. Like his father, David was a man of determination and high principles who was committed to the welfare of the people of Newcastle. He emulated most of his father's efforts in civic affairs and added some few him-

self. He was on the board of Newcastle Hospital and helped inaugurate an ambulance service for the district. He was also an executive of the Chamber of Manufactures, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and for most of his life lectured in engineering at Newcastle Technical College.

During his time at the helm, Morison and Bearby's works included the Newcastle wheat silos, the Civic Theatre, the manufacture of locomotives and rolling stock and cranes, grabs and conveyor gantries for the port of Newcastle. The firm engaged in all manner of engineering work from constructing steel bridges weighing several tons to repairing small power tools. The story is told of a customer, who, was unhappy with the range of second-hand compressors on sale at the works, told David Morison that he wanted one similar to the firm's own compressor. Morison duly disconnected the compressor and sold it to him then and there.

Because of the sheer variety of jobs carried out at the works, the Morison and Bearby's employees were among the most accomplished tradesmen in Australia and although their equipment was no better than anywhere else they could perform wonders. For example, for many years they were the only foundry in Australia capable of making a high quality aluminium/bronze alloy.

David Niven Morison, or "D.N." as his employees knew him disapproved of his workers smoking or drinking but there was little he could do about it. Apprentices, though, being indentured to the company fell under his direct control and were not permitted to smoke on the plant. This, of course, led to a certain amount of surreptitious lighting up in the toilets. The "All Nations Hotel" succumbed to the expansion of the works, becoming the new offices. Not long after however, the "Seven Seas Hotel" opened its doors across the road from the new office.

At times, David Morison had to fight tenaciously to keep the family company going. During the great depression he took to the road to drum up business, gaining contracts for various public works from

local governments and orders from cane farmers for his patented "Wizard" Sugar filter.

In 1936 he contributed to the erection of a new Methodist church in Mayfield, replacing a smaller church, which ironically, his father had helped to build<sup>3</sup>. It was here that David Morison spent his Sundays, his 'day off'. Again, like his father, he could not abide idling and so busied himself being a lay preacher, Sunday School Superintendent, choirist as well as sitting on the committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

With the death of David Morison in 1942 the company's future was unsure. The ownership passed out of the hands of the founders' families in the 1950s and the firm was subsequently swallowed up by the expanding Brambles group of companies who shut the plant in 1963.

Although much of Morison and Bearby's products have been superseded there are still examples in active service. Each Sunday the bell of the Mayfield Uniting Church bears witness, in B flat, to the high quality and endurance of Morison and Bearby's craftsmanship.

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	28.2.1888	7.11.1895
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	20.6.1952	12.1.1962

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Interviews

A.J. "Nancy" Morison, daughter of D.N. Morison  
Albert Steel, former employee of Morison and Bearby  
W. "Bill" Pandy, former employee of Morison and Bearby  
Arthur Burgess, trustee, Mayfield Uniting Church

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Photographic Collection in Local History Room,  
Newcastle Public Library.

Summary of Morison Interview

A.J. "Nancy" Morison (b 1907) is the daughter of D.N. Morison (1870-1942) and the grand-daughter of Robert Morison (1840-1914). Robert founded the firm of Morison and Bearby Ltd and successfully ran it until his death when Miss Morison's father took over. Although her sisters worked at the foundry, in clerical positions, she never did and this fact precluded any intimate knowledge of the firm's daily life. However, her closeness to two of the most influential men in Newcastle allowed an insight into their private lives and thoughts.

One fact which emerged was the precarious nature of company finances before about 1905. The variety of home addresses of the Morison family listed in old registers was explained. When the company was running well they lived in good circumstances and vice versa. By the early 1900s, with Robert Morison drawing the princely sum of £7 per week, they could afford to move permanently to upper class Mayfield. Her grandfather lived in a house in Kerr St (still existing) and her parents moved into a large home in Pitt St, (now a boarding house) where she grew up.

Nancy Morison recalled the horse and trap used by her father to get to work and the somewhat more grand contraption, complete with groom, used by Mr Cousen of the B.H.P. She remembered too, the homes built by the Arnott family, to whom the Morisons were related. One of her strongest recollections was being driven in a motor car for the first time in 1911, when the family went to watch the delivery of a large boiler by bullock train, to Wallarah Colliery.

Miss Morison stressed the difference between her father's public image (stern autocrat figure) and the loving, smiling man she knew. Although she believed that he had sufficient time to devote to his family, she agreed that he led a very busy life. She related how he would rush home, bolt his dinner, and rush out to teach at tech or attend meetings. Young Nancy, sitting at the table with him, became

accustomed to gulping down her food. Years later, when she left home for teachers' college she was surprised to find that she always finished her meals before everyone else, which became a source of comment.

It was obvious that the premature death of her only brother was tragic, not just in itself but also for the continuation of Morison men at the helm of the family company. Her father must have been very worried, with due cause, that the business would not have any member of the Morison or Bearby families in charge. After the early demise of two other likely candidates, Arthur and Wallis Bearby, Miss Morison herself was invited into the firm by her father. She declined, believing herself not fitted to the task, especially as she had not the practical education needed, adding perhaps wistfully, that during her youth, girls had not been encouraged to "look around and fiddle with machinery".

She discussed the hard times that the company and her family went through, such as when her father was paying his employees more than he could afford to take home himself. Strong feelings were evident when she spoke of 'company outsiders' such as D.L. McClarty, J.S. Jones, and Mr. Wheeler of Brambles. But of course these men, none of whom were 'family', could not be expected to have the same feeling as the Morisons had for their business.



Interview with A.J. "Nancy" Morison, I believe . . .

25th October 1989

Nancy Morison (N.M.) David and Jessie, yes Interviewer: Graeme Grace

G.G: They came out here in 1852 from what I've found out, now what can you tell me of them?

N.M: Great-grandfather was born in . . . Patricroft, which is a suburb of Manchester and his parents came from Glasgow, I think.

G.G: So they were both Scottish, his parents?

N.M: Yes, they came to Glasgow, I think from Glasgow they moved down to Patricroft where he was an engineer and my grandfather was born there and then they moved down to London and from what I've read there was a big strike in London in 1852 and my grandfather decided to come out. . .

G.G: As a consequence of the strike?

N.M: . . . as a consequence of the strike. I have a letter, I don't know where it is now, but I had it printed income of our journals, and a man who was on the boat, and he was older than my grandfather, and after he wrote to him, I think fifty years afterwards, he wrote and mentioned this and how things had changed, how the . . . James and David and Robert and then Jessie, the sister.

G.G: This is Mr. Leing isn't it?

N.M: Yes, . . .

G.G: From what I read . . . was he part of the partnership that Mr. Morison went into when he first came to Sydney?

N.M: Look, I wouldn't know, I wouldn't know about that, that time I . . . don't know. I haven't read what he said but what he came up, whether he was . . .

G.G: I'm still on about your great grandfather and from what I've read  
Græme Grace (G.G): Your Great Grandparents, David and Janet Morison,  
they were Presbyterians, in fact he was an elder of the church  
I believe . . .

and their son Robert was your grandfather, he even helped out in  
Nancy Morison (N.M) David and Janet, yes . . . a Wesleyan Methodist.

G.G: They came out here in 1852 from what I've found out, now what can  
N.M: you tell me of them?

N.M: Great-grandfather was born in . . . Patricroft, which is a suburb  
of Manchester and his parents came from Glasgow, I think.

G.G: So they were both Scottish, his parents?

N.M: Yes, they came to Glasgow, I think from Glasgow they moved down  
to Patricroft where he was an engineer and my grandfather was

G.G: born there and then they moved down to London and from what I've  
read there was a big strike in London in 1852 and my grandfather  
decided to come out. . .

N.M: Well, he became a Presbyterian . . . not a minister but a . . .

G.G: As a consequence of the strike?

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N.M: he wrote and mentioned this and how things had changed, how in . . .  
James and David and Robert and then Jennie, the sister.

G.G: This is Mr. Laing isn't it?

G.G: Well, it was Robert and James and Edwin Bearby who started the

N.M: Yes  
business up. Do you know how much of a financial risk it was for  
them?

G.G: From what I read . . . was he part of the partnership that Mr

N.M: Morison went into when he first came to Sydney? I don't know.

N.M: They were both working at Mott's Dock and so they decided, I think  
Look, I wouldn't know, I wouldn't know about that, that time I  
to come up here . . . so, grandfather had been working up here.  
don't know.

I haven't been able to find out why he came up, whether he was

G.G: I'm still on about your great grandfather and from what I've read they were Presbyterians, in fact he was an elder of the church and their son Robert was your grandfather, he even helped out in the church. Then he became, he changed to a Wesleyan Methodist. Do you know why that was?

N.M: I don't know, I knew they attended the York St. The Methodist church, the big Methodist Church originally was in York St, and then it, for some reason . . . I read someone's written a history of the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney and Ebenezer Vickery

G.G: gave them all the money and then they moved down into . . . it's between . . . well, it's now all being destroyed and they're

N.M: building a new building there, between Pitt and Castlereagh.

G.G: I believe his brother James also must have changed to Wesleyan Methodist

N.M: Well, he became a Presbyterian . . . not a minister but a . . . , I don't know what they call them now, we used to call them something else . . . No! it wasn't James, it was George I think . . .

G.G: became . . . , when they first started expanded very quickly and it was very successful. Now, as far as Robert seems to have been the guiding light for the partnership. D'you think he saw a niche in

N.M: There was George and James and David and my father. George and James and David and Robert and then Jeanie, the sister.

N.M: Well, I think he'd been up here, you know, working up here and I

G.G: Well, it was Robert and James and Edwin Bearby who started the business up. Do you know how much of a financial risk it was for them? And, of course, when you think . . . well, the early days.

N.M: No, well it was my grandfather, yes . . . Robert I don't know.

G.G: They were both working at Mont's Dock and so they decided, I think to come up here . . . no, grandfather had been working up here. I haven't been able to find out why he came up, whether he was

N.M: They were both working at Mont's Dock and so they decided, I think to come up here . . . no, grandfather had been working up here.

G.G: I haven't been able to find out why he came up, whether he was

sent up by Mont's Dock or what, but that's where he met my grand-mother. He was working here and he met her and then they were married. I think they were married in Balmain, they were living in Balmain anyhow and then they came up. My father was born in Balmain in 1870 and it always marked me that he wasn't born in Newcastle, and then they came . . . 1874 I think it was when

G.G: The tunnels under the harbour?  
 N.M: the firm was founded . . . and James seems to be in and out of the business. I don't know . . . sometimes you'll see R. and J. Morison and Bearby and sometimes it's just Morison and Bearby.

G.G: Would it have been ill health?  
 N.M: men were so close to the surface that the men could hear when the ships came back.

N.M: I couldn't say.  
 G.G: With the one at Danger Park, if that was the mine head, was that  
 G.G: No records left? was preserved while there were houses built around it?

N.M: Oh! That was un . . . that was a terrible thing. I rang, when it was taken over by Brambles, I rang Mr. Wheeler and asked him about it and he said he'd arranged for me to go and then I found they just threw everything out, just threw it out.

G.G: The business, when they first started expanded very quickly and it

G.G: was very successful. Now, as you say, Robert seems to have been the guiding light for the partnership. D'you think he saw a niche in the market or was he just lucky or was it a combination of both?  
 N.M: Yes and they quickly had to fill it up. But there were . . . well, the mines were closed, close in. I remember father could coal home

N.M: Well, I think he'd been up here, you know, working up here and I suppose he saw it. Y'see they were originally just shipping and mining. It was only later that they went into other things as well. And, of course, when you think . . . well, the early days, there were still a lot of sailing ships in the 1870s, and the mining . . .  
 G.G: Ha. I've never been to Rhondda, always

G.G: Yes, I found out there were coal mines on Carrington, right next to it  
 G.G: Always wanted to go?



N.M: Have you read . . . There was a teacher here. . . Tonks . . . I think there's a book he's talked about the mines . . . What does he call it? I've forgotten the name of it, but there's all . . . those that are really under the harbour, all round in that area.

G.G: The tunnels under the harbour?

N.M: Yes, there was one at Mayfield; Dangar Park, there was an entry there. That was Ferndale Colliery. Of course, the one at Stockton went under the harbour, too. They reckon, the story was that the men were so close to the surface that the men could hear when the ships came back.

G.G: With the one at Dangar Park, if that was the mine head, was that why Dangar Park was preserved while there were houses built around it?

N.M: Oh, there . . . in my childhood there was a hole there, then when the Queen was coming here, I can't remember which visit, suddenly

N.M: . . . they always brought her to the showground and then she came across to the BHP always and a hole suddenly developed in the park.

G.G: It just sank, did it?

N.M: Yes and they quickly had to fill it up. But there were . . . well, the mines were closed, close in. I remember father would come home and he would say: "Oh, I'm going so-and-so" and often mother would go with him or some of the family. When we were young we'd go out to . . . I remember going out to Seaham, that was a colliery out near West Wallsend. Seaham No.1, Seaham No 2, I don't remember which one. Then mother would come home from school and "gone to Rhonda" would be <sup>it</sup>wrote. I've never been to Rhonnda, always wanted . . .

G.G: Another thing I came across, Edwin Bearby's address was listed as

G.G: Always wanted to go? Obviously it's still the same house, but

what's happened to these suburbs?

N.M: And then I remember going up when it must have been soon after,

N.M: the first time in a motor car, one that was going to Wallarah Colliery and it was being taken down by bullocks, bullock wagon, you know. There was a picture in the Newcastle Herald and I reckon that that was the one that was going to Wallarah Colliery and someone said "Ah no, it was going to Goninens" but I must of . . . all, I was born in 1907, so I must've been four or so, four or five and we went nearly to Swansea to see this thing which was drawn by bullocks . . . pulled along you see and then Wallarah Colliery was the other side of Swansea. and then the second time in a motor car was going up to Bellbird. It was a boiler for the mine at Wallarah that was going, and we went to see that and Bellbird . . . father had business at the Bellbird . . .

G.G: I'm a child of the motor age and so I can't really imagine a heavy engineering relying on horse transport, but obviously you

N.M: Well, see, my grandfather, he . . . I think Mr Bearby and my grandfather worked together. When Mr Bearby died, I have no recollection

N.M: Well, I wouldn't know. I just know that in my childhood we had a horse and trap. My father went to work in a horse and trap and the house down here on the corner where Mr Cousten lived and he had something to do with the steelworks when it was built, and he used to sit up, he had a groom!, set up like this, and there was a whip there and very smart and like this . . . My father was more . . . he sometimes had a boy who came and helped harness the horse but he usually did it himself and he wasn't all dressed up and that, but that was the steelworks 1915-14. I read somewhere . . . see the things had to be taken across to the . . . if it was a ship they'd have to be taken by horse transport. . . before the railways. . . I think it was Arthur's son but I wouldn't be certain about that. Well, he was a very bright boy and he was the . . .

G.G: Another thing I came across, Edwin Bearby's address was listed as you know, because my father's only son died when he was ten, Hannell St, Smedmore. Obviously it's still the same house, but

what's happened to these suburbs?

N.M: Oh well, Smedmore was what's Maryville now, somewhere there, but I understand their house was on to Throsby Creek. There were houses all along that side. Now there are no houses there. But there were houses all along that side of Hannell St. You know, where . . . and Hannell lived, the original Hannell, who was the first mayor

G.G: of Newcastle. That's called Hannell St After them. I think his house was on the other side, the land side. But the Bearby's . . . I just don't know where it was, but it was somewhere along there. Actually, my mother first met the Bearbys before she met my father, She was teaching at Minmi at the time. I've always felt that the Bearbys

N.M: No, well . . . had more money to put into it, whether they did or not I don't know . . . into the business.

G.G: And yet, they generally did not run the business, did they?

N.M: Well, see, my grandfather, he . . . I think Mr Bearby and my grandfather worked together. When Mr Bearby died, I have no recollection of when he died, but my grandfather was quite ill, quite often, because I've got letters, he was down in Sydney and I've got letters my grandma wrote from there but when my grandfather died my father was the manager and then when he died, Ted Bearby was the manager. Now there were, father was an only son, but here were several Bearby sons and one was Arthur. I've got a letter here from Arthur. He evidently went overseas and the letter is written to my father from Ireland, but he was killed. I have a recollection

G.G: that he fell off a tram, but I don't know whether that's correct. People get things wrong . . . but anyhow, he died. But I think it was he, there was a son who was a very bright lad, one of the

N.M: Yes, well I came across this book here and it's got "Partnership Account Book, E. Morrison and E.W. Bearby" from January 1903 and you know, because my father's only son died when he was ten, they evidently took £14 a fortnight each of them, it was their

he had pernicious anaemia. So, it was Wallace Bearby was looked on as the coming one, and he was overseas and then, must have been just before the war, in the 1920s or early 30s, he was in Africa and he was killed in a motor accident and there was sort of no-one else. Ted Bearby was a very fine man, but he was a very retiring sort of person.

G.G: When Robert Morison died it was in 1914, it's just a guess.

G.G: I've also been tracing the firm's domestic history, where they've been residing. I found that your father lived with his father at 25 Charles St. Newcastle West, which I suppose is now Cook's Hill.

G.G: That was in 1901, but after that they moved to Mayfield

N.M: No, well . . . My sunts used to say that they moved round according to the state of the business, and they lived in different parts of

N.M: Cook's Hill and they lived partly up on The Hill but I understand the last house . . . oh, and they did live in the old Presbyterian Manse. You know where St. Andrew's Presbyterian church is, in town? and there was a manse beside it, I think its gone now, yes, it is gone, but the railway, you know the railway, you wouldn't remember . . . railway used to come from one of the mines out Merewether, a line used to come through there. But at one time evidently the minister didn't live there, and at one time they lived there. But the last place they lived in was a place called "Holyrood". I don't know whether it's still there in Brown St, Newcastle, because

G.G: That's in Church St? my father's second eldest sister was married from there. If you're

N.M: going up Brown St, it's on the left hand side, about halfway up.

G.G: Well in the news report of 1903, of the fire, it reports that Robert Morison rushed from his home in Brown St. So that must

N.M: have been the time they lived there.

N.M: Yes, well I came across this book here and its got "Partnership Account Book, R. Morison and E.W. Bearby" from January 1903 and they evidently took £14 a fortnight each of them, it was their



wages and it just goes through, and then at the other end. James died, I can't think when James died, and his widow was evidently given so much. She was given £6 a fortnight. Interest paid to her and then "May 16, 1912, paid the estate of the late James Morison £1,500 as full and final payment".

G.G: When Robert Morison died it was in 1914. It's just a guesthouse.

N.M: 1914, yes and my brother died, that was the tragedy. See, grandfather died early in the year and then my brother died in October.  
 N.M: Yes. He was married. His thirty third birthday he was

G.G: And that is still recorded in the Morison window at the Mayfield Uniting Church. Well he is listed in the paper as living at "Thornville" in Kerr St. Is that home still there?

G.G: I've also noticed in the old ads. there were two phone numbers:

N.M: Yes, it's still there. It's slightly altered. Now that, I don't know whether the Arnott's built it. But the Arnotts . . . my grandmother  
 N.M: Well, she was "Thornville", my grandfather was a Webb and two of her sisters married Arnotts and one of them

G.G: lived in that place and then they moved out to the lake. I must have been 11 or 12 when my grandfather first came out, and I have no idea when he came, he lived in a house here called "Merrilsh".  
 N.M: Yes, and Morison and Besby's was 99. It was one of the early ones and then later it was 999.

Only just four or five years ago those flats down at the end there, they were, the houses were pulled down and those housing commission flats were built there.  
 G.G: Yes, and Katherine Jane Morison.

G.G: That's in Church St?  
 N.M: Yes, my father's oldest sister and she taught music, she taught it at home. She never married. And my father's youngest sister was . . .

G.G: I do remember those. Beautiful old Federation. They've still got the marble steps there from them. Dora Ellis. She married Richard

N.M: Yes, well, that's where they lived. And when the Arnott's left "Thornville" my grandma and grandfather went over there and that's where he died. But it had more land. There's a lane at the back, but the land went down to a lane, I think it's Charles St. at the bottom and then when she finally sold it to Lysaghts. Lysaghts

G.G: bought the house and they built the houses down below and she and her youngest daughter built the houses just above.

N.M: Not that I know of, no.

G.G: So, your grandfather was living in Kerr St . . . and where were you living at the time?  
G.G: Did they actually have a say in the running of the company or were they just there nominally, just to make up the numbers?

N.M: Well there's a house in Pitt St and now it's just a guesthouse.  
N.M: I imagine they were just there nominally, because I don't think

G.G: Is this where your father lived most of his life?

N.M: Yes . . . He was married . . . His thirty third birthday he was married and he lived there till he died. He was seventy two when he died.

N.M: Well, I shouldn't think so.

G.G: I've also noticed in the old ads. there were two phone numbers: Waratah 172 and Waratah 18.  
G.G: As a child were you encouraged to learn the family trade in any way?

N.M: Well, 18 was "Thornville", my grandfather . . .

N.M: Well, there was my brother, and then myself and then two other

G.G: And 172 was your own phone number?  
G.G: He was born after my brother died. They were hoping, of course, it would be another son but

N.M: Yes, and Morison and Bearby's was 99. It was one of the early nines and then later it was 999.  
N.M: Well my sister next to me, my mother was a teacher, and I didn't

G.G: The board of directors in 1914. They include three women, Emily Morison and Emily Dawn Ellis and Katherine Jane Morison.

N.M: That was Grandma, Emily Morison. Katherine Jane was my father's

G.G: eldest sister and she taught music, she taught it at home. She never married. And my father's youngest sister was . . . she wasn't . . . she was Dora, she wasn't Dawn. I don't know how, I remember seeing. She was Emily Dora Ellis. She married Richard

N.M: Yes, I think so. I think it was very sad. Well, he did work with Ellis who was a marine engineer and she lived . . . my grandmother built . . . Auntie Kit and Grandma lived in the first house above "Thornville" and the Ellises lived in the house above that. You'll probably get a lot about the Ellises in engineering.  
N.M: that that's what I'd need. I used to think that boys got interest

- G.G: Were there any more women on the board, down through the years?  
 but you see girls weren't encouraged in those days to go and look
- N.M: Not that I know of, no. machinery. My brother had all sorts of  
 little steam engines and he had a meccano set and all sorts of  
 things.
- G.G: Did they actually have a say in the running of the company or were  
 they just there nominally, just to make up the numbers?
- G.G: This was encouragement from your father, obviously. I came up with  
 N.M: I imagine they were just there nominally, because I don't think  
 the interesting fact that out of the 88 years that the company ran  
 they ever attended any meetings, or anything. . . .
- G.G: Did they have much of a knowledge of engineering or business  
 practice?
- N.M: Well, I shouldn't think so.  
 comprehensive by any means. So, did he have any time to give to the
- G.G: As a child were you encouraged to learn the family trade in any  
 way?
- N.M: Oh yes, he did. When I first went away to Sydney . . .
- N.M: Well, there was my brother, and then myself and then two other  
 sisters. My youngest sister, she was born after my brother died.  
 They were hoping, of course, it would be another son but unfortunately  
 unfortunately it was, or fortunately, it was another daughter.  
 Well my sister next to me, my mother was a teacher, and I didn't  
 want to be, I had no knowledge of the business. We used to go  
 over there at holiday time, or weekends and my father allowed us  
 to play on the typewriters.
- G.G: I think you've already answered my next question. I was going to  
 ask you whether your father was disappointed at not being able to  
 leave the company in the hands of a male heir.  
 in at the weekend, you know, and we'd all make rude remarks about  
 him off. But Sundays, the weekends, things were . . . His mother
- N.M: Yes, I think so. I think it was very sad. Well, he did ask me at  
 one time, you know, to join the company, to leave teaching. I felt  
 I didn't know enough. I wasn't so very good at maths, I matriculated  
 but I felt that a knowledge of physics and chemistry and maths,  
 that that's what I'd need. I used to think that boys got interested

N.M: in things because they were allowed . . . they went and saw things but you see girls weren't encouraged in those days to go and look and fiddle around with machinery. My brother had all sorts of little steam engines and he had a meccano set and all sorts of things.

G.G: In the photos I've seen, he looks a very stern fellow.

G.G: This was encouragement from your father, obviously. I came up with

N.M: That's unfortunate they're stern. But he wasn't, he was smiling the interesting fact that out of the 88 years that the company ran and I've got a book here, one book that he wrote called "The Humour of Christ". It's full of his sermons. It's only very short. Somehow it was almost a dynasty. I've also compiled a list of the things your father was involved in, it's quite amazing; business affairs, education, public affairs and church matters and that's not comprehensive by any means. So, did he have any time to give to the

G.G: family? back to secular matters, how did he treat his workers?

N.M: Oh yes, he did. When I first went away to Sydney . . . noticed that I ate very quickly. I was finished before anyone else and I realized my father taught at tech. and mother said she used to keep us up because he left early in the morning and then he'd come home at night before, (and of course tech was in town then) before he went back into town, go in the tram and we had to see him and have our tea with him and then he'd be off so and then I realized, and later when he'd resigned from the tech, he had lots of meetings and that was just the same, he'd be home and he'd be off. But Sundays, the weekends, things were . . . His mother

G.G: What was his feeling about trade unionism?  
learnt to carve a thing properly and the dinner was always brought

N.M: in at the weekend, you know, and we'd all make rude remarks about . . . and he'd say "your digestion won't be very good if you make unpleasant remarks".

G.G: He was obviously deeply involved in the Methodist faith. Did you have a strict Wesleyan upbringing? at certain times. Did this aspect your father or was it expected by both the workers and him



N.M: Well I don't know whether some people would call it strict but I think it was very . . . his sisters were full of fun and I think he

N.M: I suppose they would understand that. See, this was after the war was full of fun and I don't think it was as strict as lots of people here, in the 20s. People talk about the depression as starting in 30 or 29 but it started much sooner in Newcastle and that's why he

G.G: In the photos I've seen, he looks a very stern fellow.

N.M: That's unfortunate they're stern. But he wasn't, he was smiling and I've got a book here, one book that he wrote called "The Humour of Christ". It's full of his sermons. It's only very short. Someone could go more deeply into the matter . . . But his sermons were not very bright . . . he didn't have a bright manner when he was preaching . . .

G.G: Obviously, the company went through a lot of rough times including the great depression. Was there any time when he thought he would

N.M: Well, one of them said to me, it was later on, in the depression.

The depression in engineering started here soon after the Great

N.M: There was a time when the bank took over and out in Queensland that was very sad and a sad time for him. Mr. McClarty was later head of the dockyard but he did what he could for . . . It was the contract with the Mt. Isa mines for sintering machines. I don't know whether they use the sort of thing now but they'd say that he treated them always when they were travelling, he was a friend, you know. It was only when you got on the job he was the boss. And they really respected him for that way.

G.G: What was his feeling about trade unionism?

G.G: I've seen a couple of pictures of company picnics which seem to

N.M: Oh, I can remember him talking about some of the men who were trade union men, names that would come up, but I wouldn't like

N.M: Yes. to say, I wouldn't know.

G.G: The ones I've seen are always of Lake Macquarie. Obviously a lot of men must have been laid off at certain times. Did this

N.M: The pictures you've seen are probably the ones at Speers Point. upset your father or was it expected by both the workers and him

G.G: that they couldn't all have full employment?

N.M: I suppose they would understand that. See, this was after the war here, in the 20s. People talk about the depression as starting in

G.G: and all the staff single with the blue collar workers? 30 or 29 but it started much sooner in Newcastle and that's why he

N.M: had to go out and get new things. Then they went into bridge building and they did a lot of work for the water board, valves and

things. Well that was looked on as bread and butter, coming on all the time but then there were the big things. But he used to say,

G.G: the last record of the Bearby family I can find is in the early 30s when Mr. Bearby, who I presume is Edward, succeeded your father in running the company and yet looking in the 'phone book now there's no Bearbys whatsoever. What's happened to them? payment for jobs done would be months or years behind.

N.M: Well, my father's generation, of course, they've all died and there G.G: Obviously, the company went through a lot of rough times, including the great depression. Was there any time when he thought he would actually have to shut it down? Oh, there were three sisters, two of them married. One of them

married and lived in Hamilton and one of them married Mr. McNamara

N.M: There was a time when the bank took over and put in a manager, that was very sad and a sad time for him. Mr McClarty, was later head of the dockyard, but he did what he could for. . . . I think it was

the contract with the Mt. Isa mines, for sintering machines, I don't know whether they use that sort of thing now but there's a patent for a sintering machine. But they got that contract and

because of that they got out of the hands of the bank and so Mr. McClarty had to go and according to reports he didn't want to go. As a family we had no time for him. . . . but I really don't

G.G: I've seen a couple of pictures of company picnics which seem to have been held in the 1930s. Were these an annual event?

G.G: Edward took over the running of the company and how long did he N.M: Yes. run that for?

G.G: The ones I've seen are always at Lake Macquarie.

N.M: I suppose it was until he died. Well then a Mr. Jones, Tom Jones

N.M: The pictures you've seen are probably the ones at Speers Point.

G.G: Did you ever attend any of those?

N.M: Yes, I think I went to some.

G.G: And did the staff mingle with the blue collar workers?

N.M: Oh, yes. Well a lot of them were related, you know. The girls in

G.G: the office, their fathers or brothers worked . . . board at that

G.G: The last record of the Bearby family I can find is in the early

N.M: 50s when Mr E. Bearby, who I presume is Edward, succeeded your

N.M: father in running the company and yet looking in the 'phone book

N.M: now there's no Bearbys whatsoever. What's happened to them?

N.M: Well, my father's generation, of course, they've all died and there

N.M: were . . . and Ted, he didn't marry. He lived with his two sisters.

N.M: Oh, there were three sisters, two of them married. One of them

G.G: married and lived in Hamilton and one of them married Mr. McNamara

N.M: who had a shoe shop in Newcastle and the McNamaras had two children

N.M: a son and a daughter. Now, the son is Frank McNamara, the artist;

G.G: you'll see him mentioned. He lives in Sydney, he's still alive.

N.M: His paintings are known, I've got a book of his paintings here.

N.M: And the daughter married Lloyd Latham and Lloyd Latham was a

N.M: policeman and he then gave up his police . . . and he worked, he

N.M: was in the office at the works. There was another one, a daughter

N.M: of one of the familys, the Bearbys, and she married someone named

N.M: Morris and she took the name Bearby-Morris but I really don't

N.M: know what happened to her, I just haven't been in touch of recent

N.M: years. I can't think of his name. He was from Queensland, a very

N.M: good engineer and the bells of Christchurch of Lawrence. You know

G.G: Edward took over the running of the company and how long did he

G.G: Christchurch of Lawrence, in Sydney? A very high Anglican church.

G.G: run that for?

N.M: I suppose it was until he died. Well then a Mr. Jones, Tom Jones,

N.M: he became the manager and then, this is . . . don't . . . oh, I'd

- better not say it. as they'd been rung for some time and I wish I could think of his name. So he went down there to put the bells back in. That's all I can tell you, that's all I know
- G.G: Tell me after.
- N.M: Anyhow they got Mr Wheeler of the firm of solicitors on the, . . .
- G.G: Getting back to the bell at your local church, I've been told that Harris-Wheeler . . . and he became Chairman of the Board. when your father wanted that bell cast, he wanted it cast in B flat
- G.G: Was there any member of the Morisons still on the board at that time? on the pub piano. Was this just a colourful story or was there any truth in it?
- N.M: I can't remember, but Mr Wheeler was also interested in Brambles and finally he got Brambles and that's how it fell into the hands of Brambles and they just sort of sold it all off, bits and pieces.
- G.G: There was expansion to Adamstown and Queensland as well . . . the Seven Seas would have been the local pub for the workers at the foundry.
- N.M: Well that was, I think, in Tom Jones's time.
- G.G: These were fairly successful, were they?
- N.M: Oh well, he didn't believe in drink at all, he was a teetotaler
- N.M: Yes, but I couldn't tell you anything about that people did. But there's a story, he and a Mr. Miller and my uncle, Dick Ellis, I've got here a 'photo of a Morison and Bearby bell. It states he was husband of . . . they went to some engineers, or I can't remember saying . . . going to some meeting. I don't know whether engineers or what it was, in town; all men. Most of the others were under the table. They were laughing about this. . .
- G.G: which was donated by the family. Do you know anywhere else where these . . .?
- N.M: Well then things were tough in the depression because he was paying some of his staff, were getting more than he was. He cut Mr. . . I can't think of his name. He was from Queensland, a very good engineer and the bells of Christchurch of Lawrence. You know Christchurch of Lawrence, in Sydney? A very high Anglican church. It's near the railway, it's in lower George St and it's a very, very high church and . . . what I mean . . . in their theology. Anyhow, their bells needed doing up or something to do with the



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bells. I don't think they'd been rung for some time and I wish I could think of his name. So he went down there to put the bells back in. That's all I can tell you, that's all I know

G.G: Getting back to the bell at your local church, I've been told that when your father wanted that bell cast, he wanted it cast in B flat and he sent his foreman next door to the Seven Seas Hotel to find B flat on the pub piano. Was this just a colourful story or was there any truth in it?

N.M: No, no they went in. That was the story, they went in and sort of struck the note on the piano to see if it was the right one.

G.G: What did your father think of his workers drinking? Obviously the Seven Seas would have been the local pub for the workers at the foundry.

N.M: Oh well, he didn't believe in drink at all, he was a teetotaler but I suppose he just took it for granted other people did. But there's a story, he and a Mr. Miller and my uncle, Dick Ellis, he was husband of . . . they went to some engineers, or I can remember saying . . . going to some meeting. I don't know whether engineers or what it was, in town; all men. Most of the others were under the table. They were laughing about this. . .

G.G: Times must have been very tough in those early days.

N.M: Well then things were tough in the depression because he was paying some of his staff, were getting more than he was. He cut down on his salary.

G.G: O.K, thank you.