CHARLES

J. COLLER



CHARLIE COLLER

CONTRIBUTORS

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Based on research by the © Coller Family

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HISTORY

Name: Charles: Married: Mabel: Known for: Charles John Coller Born 1859, Died 1940 (81) Mabel Butler, 1897 Born 1875, Died 1943 (68) Early settler of the area and son of John Coller

Charles Coller was the eldest son of John Coller, early settler of Eildon. After the death of his father, Charlie stayed and ran the farm with his mother (Annie). He lived his life in the Eildon District and became a well known identity as well as a sportsman.



Early life

Charles (Charlie) John Coller was born at Merton, Victoria, the fifth child to parents John Coller and Annie (née) Smith on 22 June 1859. They lived at Merton for four years after his birth, before moving to Campbellfield and later Northcote. They then moved to Eildon when Charles was seven years of age. When his father (John Coller) died unexpectedly on 6 July 1877 at just 49 years of age, Charles, being the oldest son, took over the running of the farm and providing for the family. He was just 18 years old.

HISTORY

Charlie worked hard for years providing for their large family, but still found time to join the Alexandra Mounted Rifles. He was a mail contractor from 1889-93 and a post master at Eildon (then on the north side of the Goulburn) for three years from 1890-93.

Charles was a fine athlete, and was especially an excellent high jumper and a fast runner. He competed at sports around the District with moderate success, but because of his dedication to running the farm, he never had much chance to broaden his sporting interests, or even to meet eligible women for that matter. In fact it was Alf, his younger brother, who unwittingly brought his girlfriend (Mabel Butler) to the farm where Charlie first met her, not realising she would soon be his fiancée.

Married life

Mabel later left Alf, and Charlie and Mabel became engaged, then married in 1897. Mabel was just 22 years old, having been born in 1875. Charles was a much more mature 40 years of age. Mabel was a strong willed, forthright person, who looked to the future and wanted to acquire more land for the family to expand. She was an astute business woman.

They first lived at Woodlands for awhile, but Mabel struggled to get on with the other girls, so Charles, with the help of Mabel's father Pierce Butler, bought the Elliot property (later called Lyndhurst) for them. It was a 70 acre property with a dirt floored house. When he took Mabel to see the house, she broke down and said her mother's maids had better living quarters at their Lyndhurst Hotel in Brunswick. After Charles installed a floor, as well as other comforts, they settled in to their married life there.



Charles' family were not happy with him moving away, and chained a plough of his to a

HISTORY

fence and would not let him take it. After consulting with a solicitor, who told him to hook onto the plough and take it away, he did so; wrecking the fence.

When Charles and Mabel moved into the Elliot property, Charles had very little to his name. His total possessions amounted to just a few cows, even though he had worked for so many years on the family farm. Any money he did get, went into helping support the family. In their first year at the Elliot property, there was a severe drought and he lost most of his cows and his crop. If it wasn't for his in-laws helping out, they would not have survived.

However, after experiencing some bad years, with hard work, foresight and good management, he and Mabel gradually got ahead. With the help of their family they were eventually able to acquire more land, expanding their property. They went on to have seven children: Amy, Ormond, Brent, Mavis, Charlie, Yutha, and Eloura (Ellie) who died when she was just five years old.

Brent

Mabel and Charles turned *Lyndhurst* over to Brent Coller after he got married. He married Harriet Philippa Johns and then pulled down part of the old house as part of a renovation. During the renovation by Roy Cummings and a McLeod, Brent and his new bride Philippa lived at Tom John's place at Rubicon, later building a bungalow to live in. After the renovations were complete they moved back in at *Lyndhurst* and Brent milked cows and had sheep there. During this time they also acquired more land, but this ceased in 1950 when the new dam was to be built.



Brent and Philippa then purchased a farm called *Summerview* in Alexandra and they lived there until they later purchased a farm abutting Alexandra township. Their son Rex later took over *Summerview and* Brent and Philippa lived there until Brent died in 1971. Phil moved to a flat in Alexandra, then to Kellock Retirement Village, where she died in 1993. He and Philippa had five children, three that lived, Norma, Shirley and Rex.

HISTORY

Ormond

Ormond Coller was involved in a shooting accident with his brother Brent when about 12. He suffered for many years needing medical attention, but overcame this difficulty and lived a normal life working on the farm with his father.

Ormond was left part of *Woodlands* when his Aunty Annie died. He married Daisy Wilkinson and they had two children, Pam and Noel. They lived at *Woodlands* farming for some years before going off to Melbourne to live and work. Daisy's brother Les, worked with him for awhile and Ormy had a milk round on the other side of the Goulburn. In Melbourne they had a cake shop and lived in Clifton Hill. They left the shop when the war broke out



and Ormy worked at an ordinance factory. They moved to Mont Albert where Orm worked at Brehauts, where he met Archie Thom, who worked there too. They then moved to Croydon in 1958 and Orm worked at Renilighter Doors until he retired and then went to Tullamoor Retirement Village in 1984, where he died in 1986. Daisy his wife, also died there in 2004 aged 100.

Amy Coller

As a young girl Amy Coller went to Adelaide to live with her Aunty, she was nine and came back to Eildon when 13 years old. She played the piano and she studied law, before going to work for GD Leckie Solicitors in Alexandra. She went from there to the Melbourne City Council Offices and worked as a clerk. She came back to work in the Guesthouse, but had disagreements with her sisters.

She met Wilhelm Becker who was staying at the Guesthouse, she married him and they went to Gippsland to a farm they purchased. Bill Becker became ill and died there, Amy being pregnant at the time and lost a daughter at birth. They had a son Peter earlier, and he came to live at the Guesthouse while Amy went back to work in Melbourne. She lived in Sandringham and Peter went back to live with her. She suffered from arthritis and was bedridden for years before she died in 1981.

HISTORY

Mavis

Mavis Coller worked at home for some years after leaving school. When her parents bought the Guesthouse, Mavis took on running this with two helpers, Agnes O'Brien and Mary Kilpatrick in 1924. Mavis wanted to go to work in Melbourne, then Charles and Mabel came to live in the Guesthouse. Mavis went to Melbourne to work in 1933 as a dietician and cook for the YMCA for awhile, then at the Creswell Sanatorium nursing for a few years.



When her father Charles became very sick, she came home to help run the Guesthouse, eventually owning it. She married William Austin and ran the Guesthouse with him until 1950 when the Dam Wall was enlarged. Mavis, when around 22 swam the lake at Eildon. Mavis and William bought a farm at Grannys Lane out of Alexandra and had a daughter, Janis. They lived there for years before retiring and going back to Eildon to live.

Mavis died in Darlingford Nursing Home aged 99 years and ten months. Bill died in Kellock Village at Alexandra, aged 103 years and six months.

Charles Jnr

Refer to the eBook history of Charles Royland Coller for more.

Yutha

Yutha Coller stayed home and worked with her mother Mabel and sisters on the farm and then in the Guesthouse with Mavis. She married James (Jim) Broderick and lived in the cottage along from *Woodlands* before moving into *Woodlands* and farming with her husband after Mabel died. They had three children, Pat, Gay and Terry. When Eildon Dam was enlarged in 1950 Jim worked on the construction of the Eildon Dam, and his

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family moved into the new township of Eildon. Jim died in 1967, aged 63 years. Yutha continued to live at Eildon until she entered Kellock Lodge at Alexandra, where she passed away aged 100 years.

Eloura (Ellie)

Eloura (Ellie) Coller was born with throat trouble, and was not able to talk properly. She was a child of nature. She was full of tricks and would often disappear. She would call the dogs 'eega' (which was probably 'hear dog') and go for walks with them and they would follow her anywhere. She could walk underneath horses and around the paddocks with them holding their tails. She was found once asleep with her arms around a horse's leg and it was standing there quite unperturbed. She became very sick and was taken to Dr. Gocher in Alexandra and her mother had said she was treated for Diphtheria instead of Tonsillitis from which she died. She was only five years old in 1920. Mabel Coller was behind getting another doctor in Alexandra; this was Dr. Wilken.

2-up

During the building of the first Dam Wall the workers used to have a 2-up school up in 'Gun Alley' on Charles and Mabel's land. They had dug out a flat area into the hillside. Charles used to watch some games and when the dam was completed he found double headed pennies under a hut he pulled down. There are many tails relating to the 2-up games, one concerning the 'cockatoo' and police. The 'cockatoo' was the lookout, but sometimes the police



would trick the 'cockatoo' and catch the 2-up players. Men would be running everywhere and the police would pocket the 'pool' and sometimes this would amount to hundreds of pounds. Young Charlie Coller used to sneak up the hill and watch proceedings and how some of the Alexandra gamblers, if they had won money, would travel home over the hills so they would not get robbed.

HISTORY

Learning to get along

When Annie Coller (John and Annie's daughter) owned *Woodlands*, she had an arrangement with her brother Charles regarding the usage of some of her paddocks. Charles and his boys, Ormy and Charlie, grew crops on this property and the oats used to grow to over six feet high, and produced tremendous amounts of sheaves.

Many years after Charles left the family farm, and after some of his brothers and sisters had not spoken to him for some considerable time, his sister Annie came to him and Mabel and apologised for their behaviour. After this apology, Charles' children got to know their Aunty Annie and they all really liked her.

Life at Eildon

Two men who became lost followed the fence line down Charles' boundary and came to *Lyndhurst* around midnight and Mavis was still reading by a bed light which they had seen from a distance. They shouted not to turn the light out. The Collers helped these men and one of them was a crown solicitor Harry Minogue, the other Noel, a son of T.M. Bourke, a well known real estate company. They were to help the Collers in a court case later on.

Mabel was an astute business woman who looked to the future and acquired more land for the family to expand whenever there was a chance. Charles and Mabel had seven children: Amy Nina, Ormond Charles Butler, Brent Percival John, Mavis Maude, Charles John Royland, Yutha Kathleen and Eloura Agnes Coller.

Charles was a quiet kind man and a very capable and clever farmer who could apply himself to anything. Once when the girls brought the lunch out to the paddock they had forgotten the cups and a knife to cut the bread. He quickly found some knotty wood and cut some cups and used his axe to cut the bread.

Mabel did her schooling in a convent and when the children were young Mabel would kneel on a chair at the table and read stories to them; she could change her voice for each person in the story.

At *Lyndhurst* they got a young orphan boy named Percy Sweenie to work with them. In those days you could get boys from orphanages to work for their keep and maybe a little

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extra money. When he arrived he was about 11 years old and only a jockey size lad who Charles said was too small to do the jobs he wanted him to do.

Next morning Charles and Mabel were going to Alexandra in the spring cart, and without being told, Percy had got the horses and coupled them up ready to go. Charles kept him on and he worked there for many years, then joined up when war came. When he came back he worked on the Eildon Wall until it was finished, then became a jockey and had some good wins, but riding in the Adelaide Cup he was leading down the straight and just fell off the horse. They found that the gassing he had had at the war had suddenly affected his body and he lost control. He came back often to see everyone at Eildon.

Charles and Mabel expanded when opportunity arose and by adding the names of their children to allotments they were able to gather a much larger area. They owned from the Goulburn River to the Lakeside at Eildon. During the building of the first dam Charles and Mabel allowed people to build a house on their land and then collected rent from them. At one stage they had 160 huts and tents on their land and they collected one shilling and six pence per site. They lived at *Lyndhurst* for many years.

Eildon House

Eildon House was a sweet shop, billiard room and hall that they acquired for 400 pounds from the O'Briens. It had been first built by Captain Keenan but was burnt down and O'Briens rebuilt it on Coller's land and turned it into a Guesthouse. This was downstream from the first wall and just downstream from the original powerhouse.



At one stage Charles and Mabel went and lived in the cottage along the riverside while the girls took over the Guesthouse. This cottage was downstream of *Woodlands* and had been built by Harry Beaver on Coller land. Harry later married Ruby Allen and they lived in the cottage until they sold it to Jack Burness, who lived there until his death.

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Charles and Mabel bought it and lived there when the girls were running the Guesthouse, but went back to the Guesthouse when Mavis wanted to go to Melbourne and work. They lived out their life at the Guesthouse. While in the cottage Charles had a very good garden and also at the Guesthouse when he went back and supplied a lot of vegies for the kitchen, while Mabel ran the Guesthouse.

Yutha and Jim Broderick lived in the cottage after they married. Carl Hynes rented *Woodlands* and milked cows there until he went to war. After Mabel Coller died, Yutha and Jim moved into *Woodlands*.

After the war Carl Hynes married Mabel Burness and rented the cottage off Brodericks and lived there until the new Eildon Dam was built in 1950. They then shifted to the newly constructed township of Eildon.

There used to be a mine down the hillside from the Diorite Mine that was worked in Charles John Coller's younger days and was close to the gully where the workers tipped all the dirt straight into the river and left this large dangerous hole, which Carl later lost his dog down.

The Coller family carted wood and sleepers to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SSRWSC) during the building of the first Dam Wall 1914-26 and the timber was laid along the Delatite River almost to where Herbert Coller lived. These sleepers were then used for the rail lines to transfer wood and sand. The sand was collected in large buckets which three horses then pulled to the bridge. They then pulled it over the



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bridge and deposited it into huge heaps of sand on the other side. The Coller family rented nine horses from the SRWSC, which they used in three lots of three.

Tim Devlin and Frank O'Brien drove the horses, Brent and Charlie Coller both cut and carted timber to the SRWSC, during the wall slip. Young Charlie Coller used to have to go out on weekends and feed their horses in a paddock near the Delatite River.

The workers on the wall had very little to do on weekends and they used to shoot a lot. Charlie used to see these men shooting at a tree and behind the tree a colleague who had drawn the shortest straw, was hiding and dare not move.

At that time, Taylors Lane ran right out to the Delatite from near the *Lyndhurst* property and past the Coller's hut.

At an earlier time, Charles and Mabel gave permission to a clothes' hawker named McVeigh to build a shop with clothes one side and groceries the other. A woman friend named Longton ran the shop while McVeigh still hawked his clothes. The shop and the



Guesthouse were built during the construction of the first wall. McVeigh sold this to Mabel who rented it to Archie Fraser and he called it the *Uneeda Cash Store*. After Fraser left it was vacant until Charlie Junior and his wife Lorna lived there.

Charles was a very good poet and wrote a lot of poems, some of which the family still have today. Charles had a butcher shop near the Diorite Mine. He used to kill the

animals at *Lyndhurst* then take the meat to the shop and sell the meat to the workers and others living in the area.

Mabel bought many of the houses which had been built on their land, as they became available. Before the first lake filled she bought a number of houses and huts from the

HISTORY

Darlingford township and relocated them to her land. They collected six shillings per week from renting these relocated structures, and collected one shilling and sixpence from houses that were built on their land.

Brent was only 17 years old when, with some help from his parents, he bought six drays from Bert Moschetti. At that time Bert held the contract for supplying timber to the SRWSC, but sold the drays to Brent who was to then handle the transportation of the timber. Bert retained the actual contract for supplying the timber as the contract was not transferable.

Brent paid some of the money to Moschetti and was paying off the rest. But unfortunately there was no written agreement for this transaction and after some time, Moschetti decided to try and get his drays back. He did this by saying he had not received any money for them from Brent. The Collers subsequently took Bert to court, and as Moschetti had to go to the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission Office to collect the money, periodically Brent would be there to collect the money off him that he was owed for the transportation of the timber, as well as pay him an instalment for the carts.

Bert's attempt at deception came undone when the Paymaster stated in court that he had seen Brent Coller pay him an amount of money for the drays. Also Frank O'Brien, who worked for the Collers and later entered the Police Force, had seen Charles pay the first instalment. The Collers won the court case and the judge, who incensed by Bert Moschetti's blatant attempt at theft, ordered him to pay all costs before calling him a downright thief.

Charles and Mabel had five drays and had a contract to cart wood to the State Rivers at the building of the first wall. Digger Hughes was the driver of these and Brent's drays; he drove four and Charlie drove two drays.

When Annie Elizabeth was at *Woodlands* and was milking cows, a young boy named Fred Cunningham was working for them. Every morning they would call



HISTORY

Fred to get up and get the milking cows. A pet cockatoo (Cocky) soon learned to call Fred each morning as soon as it was light.

Later Annie had a couple boarding with her and the cocky was still calling Fred to milk the cows long after Fred had gone. The man got sick of Cocky calling out each morning and poisoned him; Annie was very upset and told them to leave.

When Annie Coller senior died she had four unmarried daughters, so she left *Woodlands* to the single girls as long as they lived and remained single. Alice and Edith both later married, so Annie and Lilly were left *Woodlands*.



Lilly, who lived at Point Hill, died in 1922 and her assets were transferred to brothers and sisters. When Annie died in 1923, she left *Woodlands* to Ormond Coller.

There was a dispute over the distribution of assets in the will, with the farm eventually being split into two by the court. Annie's share went to Ormond, and Charles and Mabel bought the other half and paid 226 pound to Annie's brothers and sisters.

HISTORY

After Annie Elizabeth went to Alexandra Hospital, Brent and Mavis lived at *Woodlands*, caretaking until the court case. Brent was carting wood at the time and was getting up before 5 o'clock every morning. After they left, it was vandalised and it took a lot of cleaning up. Bedsteads were even thrown down the well!

While Mavis and Yutha were running the Guesthouse, Charles and Mabel went there for two years before they went to the cottage. While there, Mabel brewed some Hop Beer, which was very popular with the men and sold like hot cakes. *Lyndhurst* was empty for sometime before Brent and Charlie moved in. The Kirkhams lived in part of the house and Mrs Kirkham cooked their meals.

Death of Charlie

Charles John Coller died at Eildon in 1940, aged 81, from cancer. His wife Mabel Nina Coller died three years later at the Alexandra District Hospital, also from cancer. She died just before the war finished in 1943, and had said the previous day how she would dearly love to know how the war would end. She was 68 years of age. They were both buried in the same grave at the Alexandra Cemetery.



TIMELINE

BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS

| BASIC TIMELINE | |
|----------------|---|
| 1859 | Charles (Charlie) John Coller was born at Merton. |
| Christmas 1865 | Charles was presented a small book titled <i>Little Jane of the Boat Accident</i> , by the Northcote All Saints School, as a reward for proficiency. He was aged seven years. |
| 1875 | Mabel Coller was born. |
| 28 August 1877 | Charles applied for 72 acres near Woodlands. |
| 6 July 1877 | John Coller died aged 49. His tombstone incorrectly gives the date of his death as 6 June 1876. |
| 1897 | Charles and Mabel married. |
| 8 July 1904 | Charles applied for 247 acres near Woodlands. |
| 1940 | Charlie Coller died aged 81 years. |
| 1943 | Mabel Coller died aged 68 years. |
| 1995 | Ross Coller commenced work on the family history of John Coller, along with family members Norma Newman, Noel Coller and Andrew Coller. |

GALLERY

RELATED IMAGERY

GALLERY

Presented to Charles form Coller 9 yes ols as a breward for proficiency ~ reading hodates All Saints' School northcote. Christmas 1865 56 gers ag 25

Note inside a book presented to Charles John Coller when he was seven years old. The book was called: *Little Jane or the Boat Accident*.

Presented to Charles John Coller (7 years old) as a reward for proficiency in reading.

All Saints School Northcote Christmas 1865

GALLERY



1897 wedding photograph of Charles and Mabel taken after the ceremony, held in St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne.

GALLERY



Early family photograph of Charles, Mabel and children



Early family photograph of Charles, and his mother Annie

GALLERY



Woodlands at Eildon in its earlier days where Charlie grew up

GALLERY



Woodlands at Eildon in the early 1900s

GALLERY



Woodlands in the 1920s

GALLERY



Woodlands in the 1920s

GALLERY



Harvesting oats at Woodlands in the 1920s

GALLERY



Harvesting oats at Woodlands in the 1920s

GALLERY



Harvesting oats at Woodlands in the 1920s



Coller horse and dray teams in the 1920s

GALLERY



Charlie Coller, one of our noble defenders, of the Alexandra Mounted Rifles



Charlie and son Orm harvesting oats at *Woodlands* in the 1920s. The oats were grown to feed livestock.

GALLERY



Charles in a Woodlands' oat crop in the 1920s

GALLERY





The property *Lyndhurst* was built by Elliot and later Charlie brought this for himself and Mabel. It was renamed *Fairview* by Brent after he was given it as a marriage gift. He rebuilt part of it after some of it was pulled down.

GALLERY

"LAKE HOUSE" EILDON WEIR

Accommodation for Visitors.

Beautiful Mountain and Lake Scenery.

Fruit and Farm Produce. Recreation Hall. Wireless and Sonora. Tennis Court. Shooting and Fishing. Bathing in Lake and River.

TARIFF: 10/6 per day; £2/15/- per week MISS M. FRASER, Proprietress

Lake House Guesthouse advertisement at Eildon Weir in 1921. At this time it was being run by Miss Mabel Fraser. In 1945 Mabel married Eildon local Arthur Forrester. Later the Coller family purchased the property and continued to run it as a Guesthouse.

Courtesy Maurie & Marida Pawsey 2017
GALLERY



Eildon State School. Concert and Dance

In Coller's Hall

Saturday, December 14, 1940

(Top) The 1929 Eildon Ball which was held at the Coller Hall, at the Eildon Weir Guesthouse.

(Left) An advertisement from the 1940 Eildon State School Concert and Dance program.

GALLERY



Coller Lake House Guesthouse at Eildon Weir circa 1930

GALLERY



Charles at Woodlands in his late seventies

GALLERY



The Woodlands Cottage circa 1940



Construction of the Sugarloaf Dam Wall circa 1925

GALLERY



Sugarloaf Dam Wall spillway circa 1925

GALLERY



Sugarloaf Dam Wall spillway circa 1930

GALLERY





The Coller property (on the left side of the river) with Sugarloaf Weir in the background in the 1940s.

GALLERY







Charles John Coller and Mabel Nina (nėe) Butler. The family history of Mabel has been linked with the Countess of Mercia Lady Godiva.

GALLERY





Alexandra Cemetery plot of Charles and Mabel

NEWSPAPERS

RELATED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

NEWSPAPER

THE Partnership heretofore carried on by Charles John Coller, Herbert George Coller, Arthur William Coller, and Alfred Henry Coller, as farmers and graziers, at Eildon, under the style of Coller Brothers, has this day been dissolved by mutual consent, so far as the said Charles John Coller is concerned. The business will in future be carried on by the said flerbert George Coller, Arthur William Coller, and Alfred Henry Coller in partnership as "Coller Bros.'," and they will receive all monies due to, and pay all debts due by, the said fartnership.

Dated this fifteenth day ol October, 1900.

> Alexandra & Yea Standard Friday 26 October 1900 Courtesy National Library Australia

Coller Brothers partnership of four brothers was dissolved and carried on without Charles

Alexandra Standard Friday 26 October 1900

NEWSPAPER

THE LICENSING ACTS. Notice of Application For a Billiard Table License.

Premises at Eildon Weir-Upper Goulburn Licensing District.

I, BRENT PERCY COLLER, of Eildon Weir, Billiard Saloon Lessee, do hereby give notice that I desire to obtain and will at the sitting of the Licensing Court for the above Licensing District to be holden at Melbourne on the 19th day of August, 1929, APPLY for a Certificate authorizing the issue of a Billiard Table Licence for premises situate at Eildon Weir in the said Licensing District for which a License was formerly held by Charles John Coller.

Dated the 24th day of July, 1929. Applicant- B. P. COLLER. Witness-Ella C. Potter. GEORGE D. LECKIE, Alexandra, Solicitor for Applicant.

> Alexandra & Yea Standard Friday 2 August 1929 Courtesy National Library Australia

Application for a Billiard Table Licence

Alexandra Standard Friday 4 September 1925

Application for a Billiard Table Licence

Alexandra Standard Friday 2 August 1929

Notice of Application for Billiard Table Licence.

JOHN COLLER, I, CHARLES of Eildon Weir, Billiard Saloon Proprietor, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that I desire to obtain and will at the Sitting of the Licensing Court for the Licensing District of Alexandra to be holden at Melbourne on the 21st day of September, 1925, APPLY for a Certificate authorising the issue of a Billiard Table Licence for one Billiard Table Licence for premises situate Eildon Weir.

Dated this lat day of September, 1925. C. J. COLLEB.

> Alexandra & Yea Standard Friday 4 September 1925 Courtesy National Library Australia

Coller Family