

Information Sheet No. 26



Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

MARSDEN FAMILY – Pioneers of Wonthella

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|--------------|---|
| 1875, Apr 9 | - John Edwin Marsden born in Yorkshire, England. |
| 1899, Mar 29 | - John Edwin Marsden married Charlotte Slingo. |
| 1900, May 18 | - James Richard Marsden born in Cue, WA (married Laura Robinson 18 Mar 1922). |
| 1902, Apr 7 | - John Thomas Marsden born in Cue (married Clare Doolan 26 May 1924). |
| 1903, Aug 1 | - Alice Marsden born in Cue (married Lou Barker 23 Sep 1922). |
| 1910, Oct 10 | - Emma Edith Marsden born in Mt Sir Samuel, WA (married John Hayes 3 Sep 1932). |
| 1912 | - The Marsden family moved to Geraldton, WA. |
| 1913, Jan 8 | - William Edwin Marsden born in Geraldton (married Enid Compton 9 Sep 1935). |
| 1916, Jan 6 | - Joseph Marsden born in Geraldton (married Margaret Curtin 12 Feb 1938). |
| 1917, Aug 12 | - Charlotte Alma Marsden born in Geraldton (married Arthur Schneider 2 Apr 1938). |
| 1923, Aug 23 | - George Slingo Marsden born in Geraldton (married Joyce Lewis 18 Feb 1950). |
| 1943, Dec 17 | - John Edwin Marsden died in Geraldton. |
| 1947 | - Jack Marsden bought Queens Hotel. |
| 1957, Oct 2 | - Charlotte Marsden died in Geraldton. |
| 1978 | - Queens Hotel sold. |
| 1980 | - Alice Barker (née Marsden) awarded the British Empire Medal. |
| 1995 | - Marsden's trucking business sold to Gascoyne Traders. |

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John Edwin and Charlotte Marsden.
Photograph courtesy of Joe Marsden.

There have been Marsdens living in Wonthella since 1923. In that year John Edwin and Charlotte Marsden moved out from central Geraldton to take up an area of native bushland to build their house on the north-east corner of the present Howard and Seventh Streets. However, only bush tracks existed in 1923. The locality was known as East Geraldton in the Geraldton Road Board.

After their marriage in Melbourne John and Charlotte lived and worked on the Murchison goldfields. James, Jack and Alice were born in Cue and Emma in Mt Sir Samuel. At one stage John Marsden drove a coach for Cobb and Co from Leonora to Coolgardie. He also drove teams from Mt Sir Samuel to Wiluna. There were few comforts for the wife of a teamster and most of the time the family lived in tents.

In 1912 the Marsdens moved to Geraldton where John worked on the wharf whilst establishing a piggery. He also grew tomatoes and eventually took up a farming property at Moonyoonooka. Over the next 11 years William, Joseph, Charlotte and George were born in Geraldton.

Tragedy struck in May 1937 when the eldest son, James, was buried alive whilst helping his father re-timber a well at Moonyoonooka.

Members of the Marsden family settled in Wonthella and they owned the land bounded by the present Flores Road, Eighth Street, Central Road and Fifth Street. In 1931 Jack Marsden and Bill O'Malley constructed Fifth Street using horses and scoops. This gave the Wonthella residents a direct road into town.

The Marsdens were all honest, hard workers - as well-exemplified by Jack. After starting out washing bottles at the Globe Brewery he finished up buying the Queens Hotel in 1947! He also established Marsdens Pty Ltd, a trucking business engaged in cartage, road-building and earthmoving. His sons, Eric and Kevin, ran this business. After Jack's death in 1967 his daughter Rita and her husband, Stan Cross, ran "the Queens" until it was sold in 1978.

The Marsdens have all contributed to the progress of Geraldton. Kevin and Reg took the first truckload of Geraldton tomatoes across to Melbourne in 1949. Eric made his name in showjumping and became an Olympic selector. Alice Barker received a British Empire Medal in 1980. Joe's son, Dennis, is a current Greenough Shire Councillor, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Jack, and grandfather, John Edwin Marsden.



References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 112.

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

