

# Information Sheet No. 8



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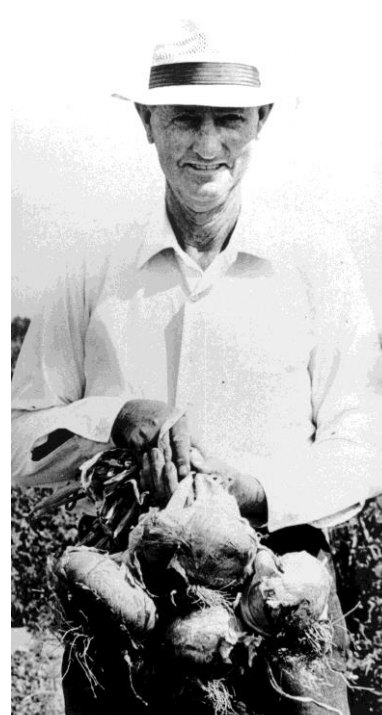
Geraldton Regional Library

## GEORGE KEYWORTH ALLEN – Tomato Growing Industry

- 1903, Apr 4** - Born in Sheffield, England.
- 1911** - Migrated to Western Australia.
- 1927** - Began breeding the “Geraldton Smooth Skin”.
- 1977, Dec** - Died in Geraldton, WA.

Born in Sheffield, England, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1903, George Keyworth Allen, with his parents, four sisters and a brother, arrived in Western Australia in 1911. His first job was working on a farm at Narra Tarra.

During the early 1920s George recognised the potential of tomatoes as a cash crop. Geraldton’s climate made it possible to grow tomatoes out of season, which made them very marketable in Perth. At this time a few Japanese had vegetable gardens at Glenfield, just north of Geraldton, and the only varieties of tomatoes being grown were the crinkly types. George began experimenting with imported varieties of tomatoes and in 1927 settled on a smooth skin variety suitable for the Geraldton area. However, the fruit of this tomato was very small and George spent some time cross-breeding with a larger tomato until eventually he produced a variety which came to be known as the ‘Geraldton smooth skin’.



George Allen  
Photo donated by Ken Allen, P 2.

In 1930, George married Audrey Secker of Geraldton and they had four children (including twins), Ken, Graeme, Barry and Rosalind. Widowed early in 1939, George married again in

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1940 to Nell Johnston of Harvey and another child was born, Janice.

During the 1950s tomato growing made a vital contribution to the economic health of Geraldton. At the peak of his production, George was producing 36,000 cases of tomatoes a year from his market garden at Wonthella. The whole business was done manually and he employed over twenty men. George was a life member of the Geraldton Tomato Growers' Association and his encouragement and assistance (with share-farming arrangements) led many others into the tomato growing business, particularly migrants.

Allendale School is built on land donated for the purpose by George Allen and named in his honour. He also donated land for the Wonthella Progress Hall. The later sale of the hall provided funds towards the Wonthella Bowling Club.

Moving eventually into farming sheep, cattle and melons, George was a successful farmer and involved in several industry organisations; Director of Geraldton Tomato Products, Director of the Globe Brewery (Geraldton), President of the Wonthella Progress Association and a trustee and committeeman of the Geraldton Tomato Growers' Association. He died in Geraldton in December 1977, aged seventy-four.

### *References*

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 1.*

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

