

The Manning Brothers who never made it to the battlefields

by Wendy Simes

In June 1917 Ethel Constance Manning put the following in Memorandum in the Moruya Examiner.

MANNING. – In loving memory of my dear husband, Will, and my dear dadda, who died of heat on his way to the front, June 2nd, 1915, aged 25 years and 7 months.

Two Years have passed our hearts still sore,
As time goes on I miss you more,
Your loving smile, your welcome face,
There is no one can fill your place.
No one knows how much I miss you
Some may think the wound is healed,
For they cannot feel the sorrow in my aching heart concealed,
No matter how I pray, dear Will, no matter how I call,
There is no one to answer now but your photo on the wall.

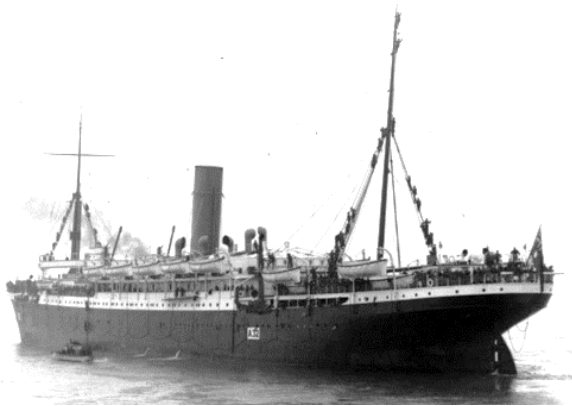
Inserted by his loving wife and little son William.

William Manning, although he was born in Gulgong in 1890, was a member of the Manning family of Nerrigundah. Ethel his wife born in December 1896 was also of Nerrigundah, her parents being William Wellington Moteby and Ester Wright. William was the eldest child of John William Manning and Christina Elizabeth Burns. His two brothers and a sister were registered in the Wellington District, but by 1899 when 4th son Clifford was born, the family had returned to Nerrigundah, John and Christina remaining there until their deaths in 1938 and 1949 respectively. William's grandfather, also named William John Manning was a hotel keeper at Nerrigundah, unfortunately he died in 1864 when his son John was a small child. William's grandmother remarried and remained in Nerrigundah.

At the time he enlisted on the 11th February 1915 William gave his status as single and his next of kin his father John Manning of Nerrigundah. This detail was later adjusted to married, next of kin Mrs Ethel Manning, 116 Fitzroy St Moore Park, Sydney. Presumably this was where she was staying while William was doing his training as when William Junior was born she was back home at Nerrigundah.

There is a letter from Ethel in her husband's war service file in August 1915 where she says I have just come down from Bodalla.

On the 2nd of August 1915 Ethel was granted a pension of £52 per annum. There is also a record of payment of £1 per fortnight to child William James of Nerrigundah from 25th December 1915 to be paid to his mother Ethel.



When he enlisted William appears to have been a healthy 25 year old. He was 5'10" tall and weighed 163 lbs. He embarked on the H.M.A.T. Themistocles on the 15th May 1915 and by the 2nd June he was dead. He was admitted to the ship's hospital "suffering from unticaria (*hives*) and died suddenly with a high temperature, the cause of death being given as heat apoplexy."

Ethel remarried in 1919 to Donald Rose in Moruya. She died in 1966.

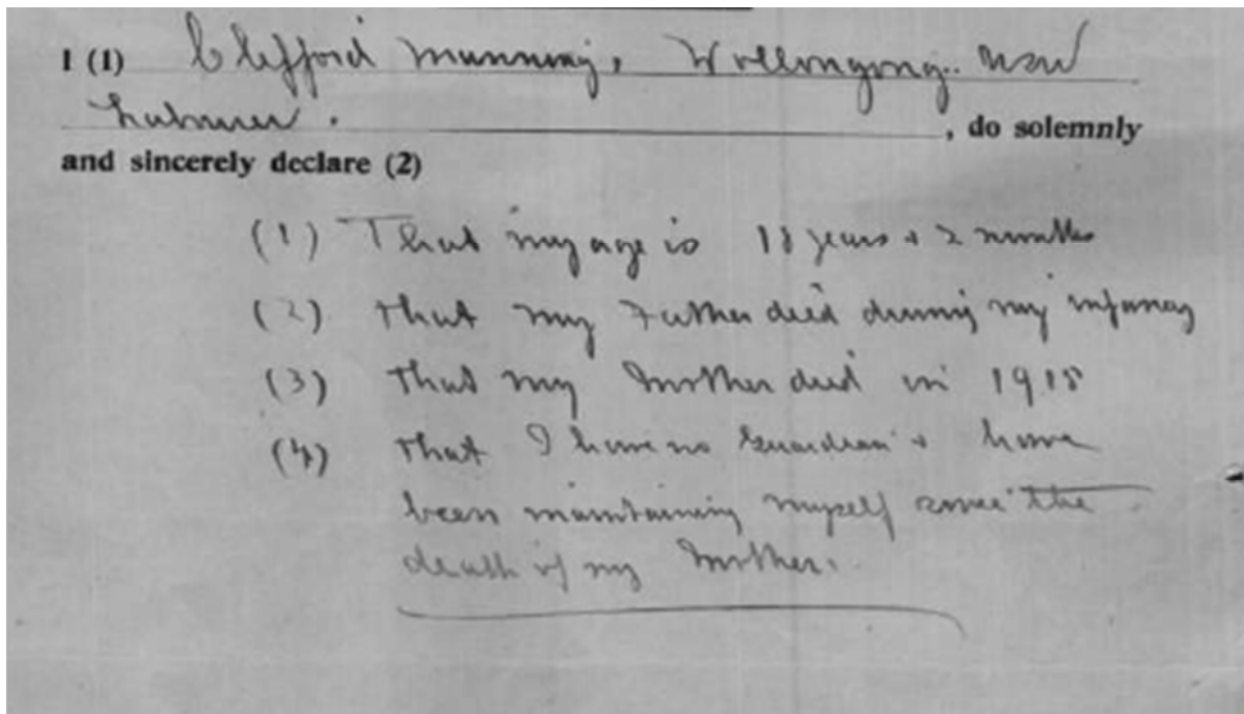
H.M.A.T. A32 THEMISTOCLES

11,231 gross tons. Lb: 152.6 x 19 metres. Twin screw, quadruple expansion engine making 15 knots. Passenger/cargo (refrigerated) steamship built and completed January 1911 by Harland & Wolff, Belfast for G Thompson & Co Ltd, London (Aberdeen Line). Leased by the Commonwealth until 20 October 1917. Later sold to the Shaw, Saville & Albion Line for routes to Australia. She could carry 250 third class passengers, and

100 in first class. The trip to Melbourne took 40 days. Served during WW2 in trans Atlantic convoys. Between the wars and after WW2 she returned to the Australian route. She was scrapped on 24 Aug 1947. ¹

Clifford Aloysius Manning

Another interesting war service record of this family is that of William’s brother Clifford Aloysius Manning. Clifford has two files in the War Service Records. The first is under the name of Clifford Manning and in this application on the 21st of August 1917, which was made at Wollongong he signs the Statutory Declaration below, declaring his parents deceased and himself without a guardian.



He also claimed to have been born at Wellington, His height is given as 5’9” and his hair auburn. In his time in the Army he managed to have three AWL charges and one of failing to make his bed, prior to the 15th January 1918 when he was charged with making a false declaration that his parents were dead. He presumably then went back home as when he enlists again on the 2nd of September 1918 he enlists from Bodalla. Dr Quilter of Moruya does the medical check and his parents sign the consent form. The war of course finished before he was able continue his short military career.



Clifford married in 1920 to Eva Thomas, he died in 1960 at age 61. His death notice lists 1 son and 4 daughters. His wife Eva died in 1954.

¹ <https://www.flotilla-australia.com/hmat2.htm>