

## HISTORY OF THE DARLINGTON TEAROOM, STORE AND POST OFFICE

20 Brook Rd,

### Miss Letitia McIntosh runs the Post office 1921-1929

The Tearoom in Darlington was built by Frank Leonard Walters who purchased Swan Loc 1242 lot 6 from the Darlington Reserve sale of land first auctioned in Dec 1912. He built a 3 room wooden cottage on the acre as an investment and advertised to sell the property in 1917 although by this time he had subdivided the block. In 1920 he sold the part of Lot 6 with the 3 room cottage on approximately half an acre to Letitia Isabella McIntosh. The Postal Department employed Miss McIntosh as the Postmistress in July 1921 on the proviso she would include accommodation on the premises. To comply with this condition, in 1922 Miss McIntosh applied to do an extension to the cottage so it would accommodate the Tearoom, Store and Post Office.



1922 additions to the Post Office, Store and Tearooms

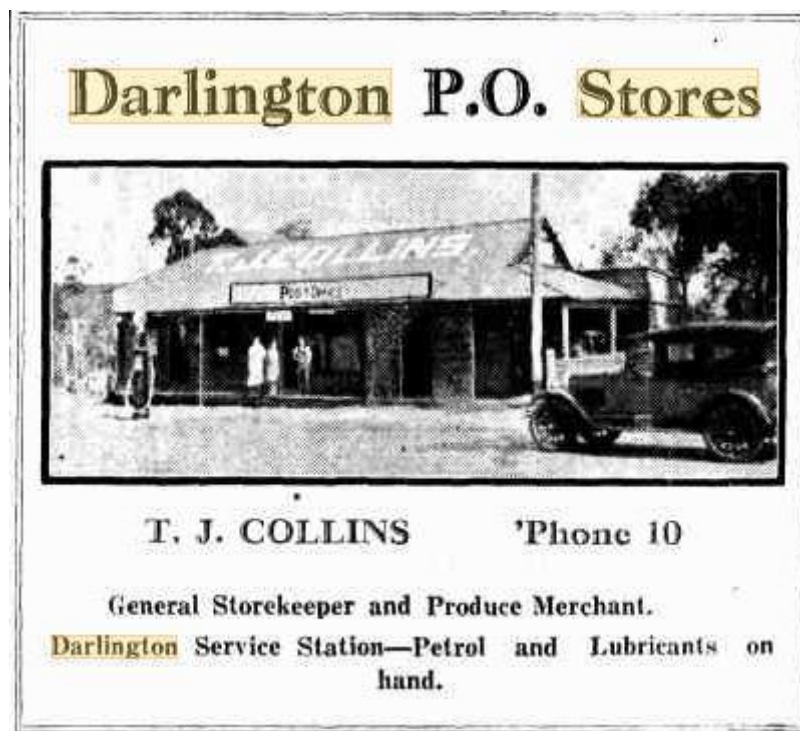
In 1920 Walters sold the vacant other half of lot 6 to Walter Robert Knight who applied to the Greenmount Road board in Jan 1921 to build a cottage on it (now 90 Glen Rd). He appeared in the PD at Darlington in 1924 where he was listed as a Builder and Contractor. This was also the year he was declared bankrupt.

Also in 1924 Miss McIntosh was trying to sell her property due to bankruptcy. The Trustee leased the premises to Eliza Elsie Morgan, a local, who then ran the Tearoom and Store but also indicated she would like to run the PO. However the residents sent a letter in favour of Miss McIntosh as she had already done the job satisfactorily for 3 years and Mrs Morgan had no experience in running a PO.

Consequently Miss McIntosh occupied and later purchased Mr Knight's cottage next door to the Tearoom and managed it as a Post Office from 1924-1929 when she resigned. Letitia and her sister Helen Maud left Darlington in 1932

### **The Post Offices many changes from 1929-1935**

Mrs Morgan does not appear to run the Tearoom for very long and in 1926 William Francis Chalwell and Agnes Cuff (William is Agnes's brother in law) took over the lease to run the business. In 1927 this partnership was declared bankrupt and by 1929 Alexander Jamieson had purchased the property and signed up to run the PO but was quickly replaced by Leslie Alfred Strang (1930) then Trayton James Collins in 1931. Collins advertised the premises as a General and Produce Store, as well as a Service Station supplying petrol and lubricants. Day trippers to the hills were increasing and many were driving there in the ever increasingly popular motor car and motorcycle. There were various motor clubs operating in the 1920's and 30's, holding weekend "runs" that took the participants through the hills stopping at suitable tearooms.



Advert in the Western Mail October 1931

### **Cecil Leedman Era - Separating the Tearooms and Post office**

In 1935 Cecil and Blanche Leedman took over the Tearoom, Store and Post Office having come down from Shackleton where they had been Storekeepers. The couple jointly operated the Store and PO until around 1938 when they purpose built a new PO that could operate separately from the Store but occupying the same property. Shortly after the Leedmans decided to lease the store and in 1940 Allan and Anna Walker ran the business until 1946. As well Allan operated a Paisley bus service. From 1946-51 Ernest William Crawford appears to have leased and operated the store. Long- time resident Roger Lyons now over 80 remembers while he attended

the local Primary School during the war years, Oslo lunches, were served once a week at the tearooms. In 1950, the two business buildings and property were formally separated by the Leedmans. The Post Office became block number 20, was 723 sqm with the address 18 Brook Rd. The tearoom was block number 21 and slightly larger at 850 sqm with the address 20 Brook Rd.



Postcard of the building owned by Leedman in 1937

Having separated the two businesses the Leedmans appear to have retained the Store but sold the now separate Post office to Beatrice Maud Benn in 1951 who operated it until 1953. Beatrice's husband Ralph leased the Tearoom and Store from the Leedmans at this time. The Leedmans would have been acquainted with them as they came from the same small town of Shackleton. Around this time the Leedmans moved to Nedlands and Cecil does not give any occupation and had perhaps retired. In 1953 Beatrice sold the Post office to George and Annie Vose.

### **The Tearooms has new owners and useage**

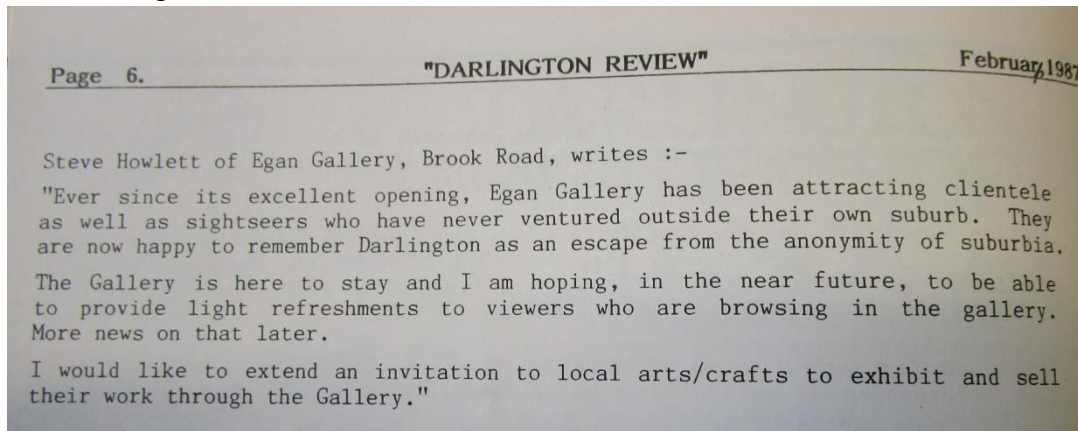
The Benn's managed the store which sold confectionary, general stores and green groceries until 1956 when the Leedmans sold the Tearooms to Alan James Deason, his wife Billie and Annie Maria Murray. It would appear that the property was an investment for the Deasons who ran a green grocers in Morowa and were never at Darlington. The Tearoom was run by John (Billie's brother) and Annie Maria Murray who operated the store until 1984.

Towards the latter part of the 1970's the property was used by Potter Liz Packwood to exhibit and sell her pottery



## The Egan Gallery

In 1984 the new owner was Alan Howlett who died in 1985 so the property at Probate went to Maura Howlett in 1990. Maura (known as Stevie) operated the building as "Egan Gallery" and offered the odd cups of tea but it was not used as a Tearoom during her tenure.



In 1994 Stevie sold the gallery to Jordan & Joanne Bell who did major renovations to upgrade the building to a Gallery and Tearoom. In charge of the Design and Engineering was local David Lavell and his partner David Gater did the building works. As well the Lavells assisted their friends Jordan and Jo by helping to paint much of the inside of the building. Jo found many wonderful Darlington early photos from the State Library that she had enlarged and framed to go into the Gallery.

There was a short lease to Denise Dunn before the property was sold in 1998 to John and Lorraine Stoneham who continued the Art Gallery and Tearoom business.



Building during the Stoneham era, photo courtesy of Arlene Collings 2008

In 2008 John and Lorraine Stoneham put the property on the market. They tried to sell it as café/gallery but after a lengthy period of time decided to convert the building into a 5x2 house to improve its saleability.

### **Darlington Gallery**

Early in 2009 Bruce and Cathryn Cann had inspected the property with their daughter and son-in-law before going overseas.

They arrived home just in time for the Arts Festival, which is when they noticed that the Tearooms was 'under offer'. On the Monday after the Festival they discovered by chance that the sale had fallen through; and on the Friday their own offer was accepted. In January 2010 the rear portion of the building was leased out as a 4x1 house to Rob and Mary Mynott. Bruce and Cathryn worked on the front portion of the property to re-establish it as a gallery under the name Darlington Gallery. This included installing track lighting, picture hanging rails and returning the front bedroom into a gallery area. On the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2010 Cathryn and Bruce opened Darlington Gallery for the first time on the weekend of the Darlington Arts Festival. It featured a range of art from 30 local artists including some of Cathryn and Bruce's own pottery. On the 20<sup>th</sup> November the same year the Darlington Gallery was formally opened by the Shire President, Hellen Dullard, at a function in the gallery courtyard. The function was attended by special guests, artists and local residents.



Left is Bruce Cann and Helen Dullard at the opening of the Gallery 2010 courtesy B. Cann

April 2012 saw the gallery being used for the wedding reception of Cathryn and Bruce's daughter, Hannah, to Michael Smith (The tenant kindly offered to move out for the weekend so that caterers could use the kitchen.) As well as permanent mixed displays, from 2011 to 2014 Darlington Gallery held monthly exhibitions showcasing



local artists including Elizabeth Dumont, Rodney Blumenfeld, Kieran Ingram, Megan Fraser and many others.

Another regular event was the annual shopping evening hosted by Darlington Gallery and the Darlington Post Office and including a street market, nibbles and refreshments.



2014 Darlington Gallery

In October 2014 the lease on the rear house expired and the tenant chose not to renew. All of the new tenant applications show a preference in leasing the whole property including operating the gallery. This coincided nicely with Cathryn and Bruce's decision to take a much-needed break and they decide it was time to hand the gallery management over to one of the applicants. October 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 was the last day of trade for the Darlington Gallery.

### **Nest Gallery and Studio**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October the whole property was leased to Maya and Phil. Maya Bouchard is a young artist/art teacher and a former resident of Darlington. They spent the best part of a year giving the gallery a new look and developing art class workshop areas. They opened to the public in late 2015 under the name of NEST Art Gallery. In 2017 Maya removed a non-structural internal wall to increase the size of the front gallery area. In 2020 The Nest Gallery is currently operating.



20 Brook Rd Darlington Nest Gallery and Studio 2020