

Hello, my name is Keren Wise.

My father, David Henry Solomon was the youngest child of Harry Octavius Solomon, who, as his middle name suggests, was the eighth son of Henry and Adeline Solomon.

Until today, I would not have thought that you could find a prouder descendant of Mordecai Solomon than my Dad and it was his interest in his family history that led him to research and trace his heritage. Hence, in a convoluted way, that is the reason for me finding my way here to join in this celebration.

Here is a photo of my parents from the Wentworth Courier in 1994 and it reads:

“Miriam and David Solomon, who are descended from Mordecai Solomon, at the Jewish Museum for Australia Day celebrations.”



Dad died 21 years ago and I have uploaded an obituary on Ancestry.com that my brother, Rabbi Mark Solomon, of London, wrote. That explains how connected he was with the Great Synagogue, where I spent much of my childhood and youth. I'm no longer a practising Jew (...I'd even confess to being an ardent athiest...) and moved to Hobart 28 years ago.

I have quite a number of first cousins on my father's side. However, none of them are coming to these events.

When Dad was young he was great friends with his first cousin Lloyd Victor Solomon. Lloyd was the son of Victor Septimus Solomon. You can therefore guess that Victor was the seventh son of Henry Solomon. Dad and Lloyd were not only first cousins on their fathers' sides, but also on their mothers'. This is because Victor married Lillie Victorsen

and Harry married Lillie's sister, Elsie. Dad and Lloyd remained friends throughout their lives and kept in touch by mail or phone after Lloyd moved to Melbourne.

Lloyd married Dorothy Eddie and today we have with us their two eldest children who are sitting at my table. Beth is here with her husband Maurice, and Nick Solomon is here with his wife Liz and their children Charlotte and Joshua.

Lloyd and Dorothy were as interested in their genealogy as my father and it is thanks to their research that the location in Dapto that we will visit tomorrow is known.

The process of tracking down the family history led Dad and I to take several trips over to the North Shore when I was young, to visit an elderly cousin Ilma Ballantyne-Russell who had researched much of the family history. Ilma and her sister Myra were the daughters of Henry's son George who married Ruth Myers, a daughter of Henry Myers. Ilma had one son, Ian, who I've never met. Myra married but had no children. The process of getting the information from Ilma wasn't always easy, as I personally recall and can tell from the tone in a letter Dad wrote to Lloyd Solomon in 1978. We should be grateful to Ilma, though, because the only photo we have of Mordecai Solomon was given to Dad by Ilma.

It was on one of these trips to visit Ilma that we learned of the existence of the 'Solomon Family Bible' which at that time was in the possession of Keith Solomon (or Alfred Keith) son of Alfred Henry, son of Alfred Mordecai, who was the eldest child of Henry and Adeline. My father used to talk of "Old" Uncle Alf but he unfortunately never managed to track Keith down or even get a glimpse of 'the Bible'. I know he would have loved to have got his hands on it as Ilma thought it most likely had the family tree in the front of it.

Dad also kept in touch with another cousin Les Solomon (son of Ernest) who married Dad's maternal first-cousin cousin Aylsa Levy, daughter of another of the Victorsen sisters, Rose. Les and Aylsa lived in Katoomba and I remember visiting them when I was young. Their son married but died in his twenties of leukemia and had no children. Les and Aylsa's daughter Robin married and I have seen one of her sons, Brett, on facebook, though I've not actually been in touch with him apart from letting him know about the Mordecai Bicentenary.

Of interest is that a fourth Victorsen sister, Florence, married Isaac Lipstine, son of Ellen Solomon and, although they lived in Townsville, I can tell that they were still close to my Dad's part of the Solomon family. I have a family portrait of them with a nice message on the back, presumably to Florence's sister, my grandmother.

Other children of Henry and Adeline were Elizabeth, who never married; Lewis and Reginald who both died around 1 year old; Sydney, or as Dad called him, Uncle Sid, who I understand was quite a character, married twice but had no children; and Frances, known as Fanny. Fanny had a daughter from her first marriage, Doreen, who was adopted by Fanny's second husband and they moved to the US. Doreen never married or had children and when she passed away in 1986 she left most of her estate to charity and some friends, but remembered her Solomon links back in New South Wales and an interesting genealogical search was undertaken which resulted in a small bequest to each of the descendants of Henry Solomon.

I'm afraid that I don't have much other oral history of my great grandfather Henry Solomon as he died 25 years before my father was born. But thanks to the research by John, Adrian and Geoff, there is quite a bit of information about Henry and Adeline's life, business, philanthropic activity and where they lived on the family website.