

A PEARLER'S WIFE

Chapter extraction from
**A Pearling
Master's
Journey**

Verity Norman
Revised edition 2013



LIFE IN BROOME FOR A PEARLING FAMILY

In the years between 1925 and
1942 the pioneer women of the
Kimberley gave full expression
to the term *true grit*

Illustrated and referenced

*Original book short listed for
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THE STORY OF CATHERINE MARY NORMAN WIFE OF A MASTER PEARLER

A snapshot of life in this special place in Australia

*Wedding of Rene Nicholson and Ted Norman,
1925, Mrs J L Stewart matron of honour, Teddy
Parsons and Anne Paton. (Norman Archive)*

*Flying Officer Frank Edward Parsons 460 Squadron RAAF,
was killed in a raid over Kassel on 27th August 1942.*

*Anne [Symington] was to become a distinguished Principal of
St Mary's Anglican Girls' School, Perth, 1965–1982.*

THE PEARLING ACT, 1912.
FISHERIES DEPARTMENT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.
Register of Applications for Ship Licenses
Port of *Broome 1913*

Date	Applicant's Name	Description of Ship	Application Form No.	HOW DEALT WITH	
				If granted, License No. to be shown	If refused, state reason.
1912	P Percy	Jui	6/13	016	
		Jwan	7/13	017	
		Jin	"	018	
		Pelican	"	019	
		Curlew	"	020	
		Albatross	"	021	
		Daisy	"	022	
	Matiasia Percy	Prosty	8/13	023	
	8 Amy Rose Chapple	Neptunus	9/13	024	
		Reliant	"	025	
		Bella	"	026	

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	"	" Namkeen "	"	031	
11	Harold Wilson	Fine - abt. Nelson's Bay	14/13	032	
	Lizzie Withers	Luggar White Bay	15/13	033	
	"	Lighthouse	"	034	
12	Capt. Edward Withers	Marguerite (Dolly)	16/13	035	
	"	Doris	"	036	
	Edgar Deburgh Norman	Wabunor	17/13	037	
15	Streeton Mallett	Broome	18/13	038	

Lady pearlers register

Some women became pearlers in their own right and the accompanying table has been prepared from original handwritten registration records courtesy of Maurice Gower. All available detail is reproduced verbatim from the copy of the records in hand at the time, without alteration to the contemporary spelling or syntax. It is apparent that there were occasional errors in the original and contemporaneous handwritten record and in a few cases the surname, given name of the applicant or name of the boat had been misspelt. *In more recent years a new group of successful women pearlers have been involved with the production of the famous cultured South Sea Pearls, including the Paspaley, Kailis and Banfield families, Mary Dakas, Penny Arrow, and Beverley Kinney to name a few.*³¹

And it was not the case that these women who owned boats and ships, were clustered in Broome. They were in Geraldton, Onslow, Cossack, but not it appears Thursday Island. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that they were in other pearling centres, and a few were in state capitals. Who started this involvement of women in the wet fish and pearling industries at a time when women did not have the vote, and seldom made a will is not known for certain, but the aim of protection against widowhood appears reasonably clear. Or a brother enlists in 1914 and his sister takes over the licences. John's father, Ted Norman, appeared on the pearling register each year as the owner of *Robinor*, although he was on active service overseas (Egypt, Gallipoli, France and Belgium). His letters home to his father in Broome, and his mother in Sydney, mentioned his boat from time to time.

Lady pearlery 1913–1926

LADY PEARLERS	LUGGERS [registered to them]	DATE
Emily Gertrude Archer	<i>Eva</i> <i>Rosebud</i> <i>Peggy</i>	1918, 1919 1918-21 1918-26
<p>On 12 January 1918 Emily has all the boats (page 53) but the Register of 30 December 1918 (page 63) shows Archer EG with <i>Peggy</i> and <i>Rosebud</i>, and Archer I with <i>Eva</i>. Clark HM holds <i>Emlyn Castle</i>. The given, or Christian name, was usually included in the column for the applicant's name.</p>		
Isobel Muriel Archer	<i>Eva</i>	1918, 1919, 1920-1925
<p><i>Eva</i> was registered to Emily Archer 12 January 1918 and to EH Hunter 4 March 1918, to Isobel Archer 14 December 1918 and again to EH Hunter 30 December 1918. Emily Archer's boats were owned by her husband 1913.</p>		
Mrs M Bardwell	<i>Raymond</i>	1926
Gladys Pauline May Blackman	<i>Blanche</i> (23 May)	1913
<p>Ida Lloyd Blackman shown as owning Lugger <i>Blanche</i> 23 May 1913 (Register of 1913, page 9) transferred to Star Pearling Company on 12 January 1914. William Brooks Johnson – this boat was transferred repeatedly between the pearlery, Otto Blackman, Star Pearling Company, EH Hunter, Robert White (14 February 1916), then back to EH Hunter the next day.</p>		
Therese Bourgoin	<i>Neptune</i> <i>Doris Goode</i> <i>Elizabeth</i>	1925 1923-1926 1926
Alice Mary Capes [Alice Margaret Blanche Capes]	<i>Exchange</i> <i>Trixen</i> <i>Ettica</i>	1914-1920, 1924-1925 1916-1923 1920, 1925-26
Hanna Elsie Capes	<i>Exchange</i>	1916
Isabella M Campbell (widow)	<i>Kavite</i>	See page 279
<p>Isabella M Campbell of Brisbane, a widow, is recorded as the owner of 32 boats including <i>Kavite</i> (No 17/1917 O/No 131665 18.19 tons). The earlier owners were James Clark, Robert Philp and Percival Outridge.</p>		
Amy Rose Chapple	<i>Retreat</i> <i>Bella</i> <i>Neptune</i>	1913-1914, 1916-1919 1913 1913-1914, 1917-1919
Hannah Matilda Clark also spelt Clarke (as of 31st January 1922)	<i>Emlyn Castle</i> <i>Tilly</i> <i>Vision</i> <i>Netar</i>	1913-1914, 1918-1919 1913-1924-1926 1922-1926 16/1904

LADY PEARLERS	LUGGERS [registered to them]	DATE
Eileen Maud Clark	<i>Eileen</i> <i>Jessie</i> <i>Jean</i>	Rod Dickson
Una May Clarke Hall	<i>Zephyr</i> * <i>Neptune</i> <i>Experience</i> <i>Eric</i> <i>Dove</i>	1920-1921, 1924 1924 1924 1922-1924 1924, 1925
<p>*Husband, Walter, owned it 1919-20, 1922-23, back to wife 1924. Isobella Kennedy 1925.</p>		
Florence Cross (widow)	<i>Cecil</i>	1922 (?)
Ethel Henerita Cross		Refer Annie Kezia White
<p>Ethel and Herbert Cross were also given as co-owners of <i>Queen</i>, <i>Flores</i>, <i>Lexy</i>, <i>Fanny</i>, and <i>Blanche</i>.</p>		
Kate Coleman	<i>Roebuck</i>	1913-1915, 1917
<p>and sold to Sydney John Pryor 16 January 1917 and kept until 1918, 1920, 1922-1925 (there were gaps with no owner recorded and may have worked elsewhere or been beached).</p>		
Mary Dakas	<i>Swallow</i> <i>Marigo</i> <i>Jedda</i> <i>Kestrel</i> <i>Bonthora</i>	
Bessie Ann Dyson	<i>Joe Chamberlain</i> <i>Aurora</i>	
<p>David Leslie Dyson, her husband's, boat from 1920-1923, then sold to Ansell Gregory. <i>Joe Chamberlain</i> owned by Dysons in 1919-1920, 1922-1923 (was previously George Norman's boat).</p> <p>The Dyson family were prominent Broome merchants and storekeepers, and Bessie Dyson took over <i>Norma</i> (51/1903) from George Norman (brother of Hugh and Tom). She also owned <i>Joe Chamberlain</i> (7/1903).</p>		
Alice Mary Edgar pastoralist Thangoo Station	<i>Leyris</i> <i>Teddy Volnoy</i> [<i>Volney</i> 8/1910] <i>Australind</i> <i>Rosef</i> <i>Zephyr</i>	<i>Agatha</i> <i>Minilya</i> <i>La Perouse</i> <i>Experience</i> (Rod Dickson Vol.6, 1914-1931)
Pearl Goldie	<i>Sarah Williams</i>	not known