

# Finding her roots

## Know Your Neighbour

Tatura resident Diana Archer recently returned from the United States after a three-week trip to meet relatives she did not know existed until last year. Diana has been researching her family history and the trip to America was the culmination of two years of detective work.

We Australians have always been fascinated by our family histories and the more colourful the characters, the prouder we seem to be, happily recounting the misadventures of relatives who turned out to be disgraced convicts, failed gold miners or hopeless gamblers.

Now, with the arrival of the Internet and instantaneous access to historical archives from around the world, this fascination is fast becoming one of the most popular recreational pastimes in the country.

If you have ever considered finding out more about where you came from, then read Diana's story and be inspired.

### Family ties

Like so many Tatura residents, Diana's roots stretch back to the shores of Italy. Her grandfather, Rocco Palmieri, immigrated to Australia with one of his brothers, Amato, in 1925. He returned home to Italy for brief periods but eventually settled in Silvan, Victoria with his wife and children in 1937.

It was commonly accepted in the family that Rocco had another brother who settled in the United States,

but little else was known about this absent sibling — and it was his existence which initially sparked Diana's interest.

"I was always curious, but when I was old enough to ask questions, the surviving family members knew very little about my grandfather's family," she said.

In September 2008 Diana's cousin Mary and her husband visited Santa Eufemia a Maella, the family's hometown in Italy. While on holiday, Mary spoke with a distant relative, an astute lady in her 90s, who was able to provide the names of Mary's great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents, as well as the name of their grandfather's elusive brother who had immigrated to the US. His name was Camillo Palmieri.

"When Mary returned to Australia and passed on this precious information, little did she realise that she had created a monster — a huge quest to find our family in the States," Diana said.

An Internet search for the name Camillo Palmieri revealed that a granddaughter of Amato named Angela also had an interest in genealogy and had posted several notices on relevant sites looking for Camillo and his descendants.

Diana contacted Angela and gathered more valuable clues about the American branch of the family, including the unexpected existence of two more Palmieri siblings, an unmarried sister who had died

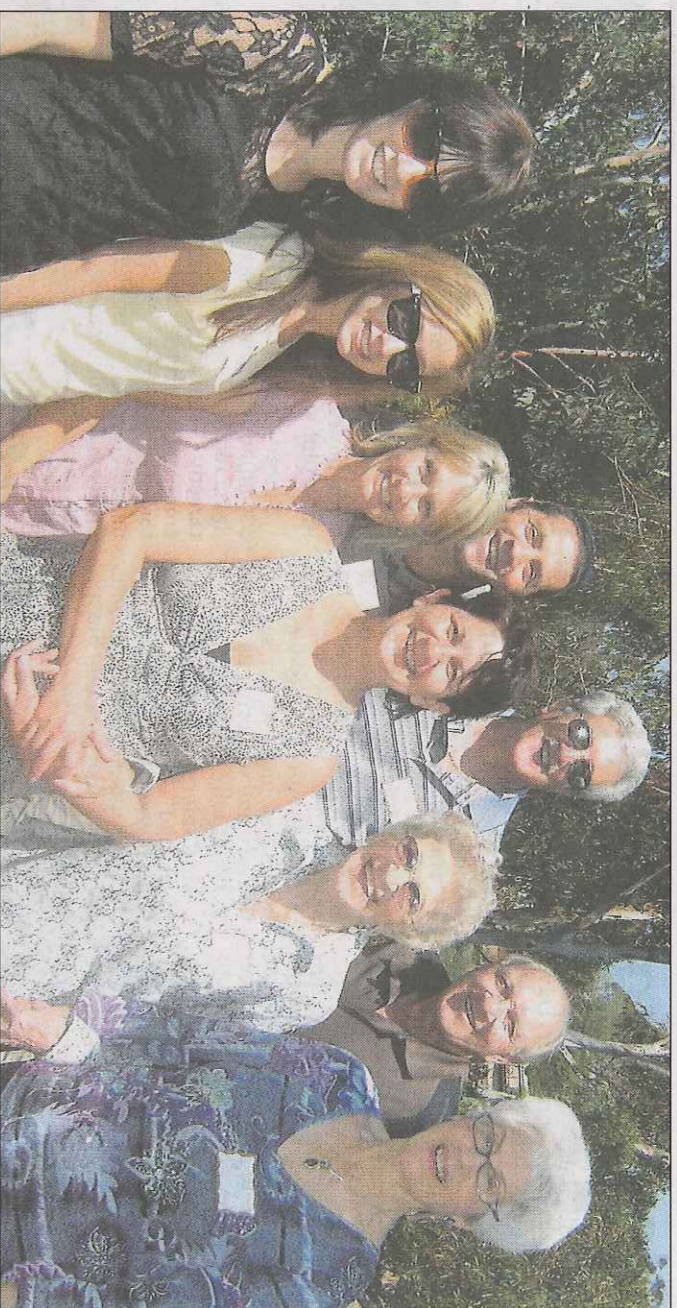
in Italy and another sister who also immigrated to the US.

"Angela was able to supply photographs of our missing uncle and other family members which was very exciting, and she encouraged me to email a gentleman called Mark D'Vecchio. His father also came from Santa Eufemia a Maella and he had developed a website dedicated to the town," Diana said.

In due course Diana sent a message to Mark, who was, in fact, another distant relative — Diana's great-grandmother and Mark's great-grandfather were brother and sister.

"They always say there's six degrees of separation, but the Internet has closed the gap to three degrees!" Diana said.

Mark meticulously researched all the information that Diana was able to give him, going back over census data, Ellis Island immigration records, passenger lists, voter registration details and the Mormon Church's Latter Day Saints' archives to piece together the family's remarkable story.



Diana Archer (centre) with family members in San Diego.

It was painstaking work, particularly as some of Diana's original information turned out to be wrong, but Mark's perseverance was rewarded when he discovered that their great aunt had died in Utah in 1917.

Armed with this information, Diana set about calling every Palmieri in Utah and, incredibly, struck gold on her second call.

"I couldn't believe it when the second person I tried was Jim Palmieri, the grandson of our great aunt. It was an amazing feeling, knowing that all those pieces had fitted together and I had found one of my cousins."

Jim was able to fill in a great deal of missing information about the family and Diana was fascinated, not least by the story of Essie.

When their great aunt died, she and her husband had five young children, the youngest of whom was only six months old. Unable to care for her properly, her father gave her up for adoption — but many years later she had tracked down her birth family. Now aged 93

years, Essie was still in touch with the extended Palmieri clan.

Another remarkable find was a letter written by Amato to his sister's family in 1962, the family had kept the letter.

Diana then moved on to the descendants of her great uncle, Camillo. This proved more difficult because, for reasons that have caused much debate among the family, he changed his name to Rocco Palmer. He had also divorced his wife and become estranged from his daughter, although he was reunited with her nearly four decades later.

From census data, Mark established that the daughter's name was Ruth and, with the assistance of another researcher, he traced the death certificates of Ruth's mother and step-father. Ruth was listed as the next of kin, so all that was left was for Diana to telephone and introduce herself.

Ruth was 90 years old. "Again, it was very nerve-racking but really exciting," Diana said.

In May this year a group of 10 Australian Palmieris

## Tat Tattles

### Church services

■ Anglican Parish of All Saints: family Holy Communion 9.30 am.

■ Generations: Sunday, 10 am and 5.30 pm.

■ Sacred Heart: Sunday 10 am.

■ Presbyterian: Rushworth, 9 am; Tatura, 11 am.

■ Uniting: Murchison, 9.15 am; Toolamba, 11 am.

■ Shalom Worship Centre: First Sunday of each month, 10.30 am at Senior Citizens Centre.

Sunday home meetings, Rainbow Sounds, Ruby C. Phone Felicity on 5855 2425; mid-week discipleship, KYB, Phone Helen on 5823 1473; Men's Breakfast on Saturday, July 10 at 8 am at Wayne's, 42 Martin St. Phone Bob on 5823 1473.

### Senior citizens

This week's winners were: (competition) Et Tennant, (bowls) Sheila McCann, Stan Lower and Joy Rose; (cards) Lorna Finn and Edie Russell; (games) Wilma Liersch; (pool) Jaan Pearson.

Our computers are connected and working. Thanks to Aaron and Xavier Dowell for their brilliant and quick assembly.

Many seniors are on vacation up north, enjoying time out, while some here are under the weather. We hope all will be back soon.

### Intensive Youth

The group will have a break during school holidays, but will meet again on Friday, July 16, from 7 pm to 9.30 pm at Generations Church in

Dhurringile Rd. Cost is \$2.50. For more information, phone Mike Reid on 0442 449 002 or email [mikes@generations.org.au](mailto:mikes@generations.org.au)

### Tatura Cricket Club

Annual general meeting will be held this evening at 7.30 pm at the clubrooms at Howley Oval, Albert St. All welcome to attend.

### Vacation care

Program hours are from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday. Finishing time for the last Friday is 5.30 pm. The program is located at Tatura Primary School in Albert St and costs \$36 per day. Kelly Sports is a registered child care provider so parents are eligible to receive a child care benefit to subsidise the daily fee. The program will run until Friday, July 9. For bookings or more information, phone Kelly on 5823 1966.

### Community House

The Community House will be closed for the school holidays until July 11. Term programs can be found online at [www.tat.com.com.au](http://www.tat.com.com.au) or can be picked up from Tatura Library or Community House. Next term, Tax Help is coming to Tatura Community House.

If the words "tax return" bring you out in a cold sweat, then help is at hand. Tax Help is a network of community volunteers that provides a free and confidential service to assist people with their tax returns at the end of the financial year. These volunteers are people from within

the community, not Australian Tax Office staff, but they do receive training and support from the ATO.

Since tax can be complex, the volunteers are only able to help with fairly straightforward cases. Tax Help is specifically for people on low incomes — including, but not restricted to, seniors, students, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, people with a disability, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

Tax Help is available by appointment and is subject to there being sufficient demand from July through to October. Phone Tatura Community House to make your booking on 5824 1315.

### GROW group

For those experiencing mental health issues, mutual support group GROW teaches practical strategies for everyday living and improved wellbeing to encourage a sense of acceptance and belonging.

No intake procedure, all welcome. Held at Tatura Community House on Mondays from 7 pm to 9 pm, followed by refreshments. Enter via Kerferd St. For more information, contact 1800 558 268 or email [julie@grow.net.au](mailto:julie@grow.net.au)

### Blue Light Disco

Blue Light Youth Club's annual general meeting will be held on July 15 at 7.30 pm at Victory Hall. Unless there is a significant show of support from the local community, this will be the club's final meeting.

### Dhurringile Primary

The school will hold a Christmas in July fundraiser on Friday, July 16 at 6.30 pm at Dhurringile Community Hall.

A two-course spit roast meal will be available, with tickets priced at \$15 for adults, \$10 for secondary students and \$5 for primary school-aged children. Bookings are essential and tickets must be purchased before July 12.

For more information, phone 5826 6222.

### Aussie Hoops

Learn to play basketball: begins July 19 at 4.15 pm to 5 pm at Tatura basketball stadium. For girls and boys aged six to 10 years. Cost is \$60 which includes a backpack, basketball and T-shirt. Current players pay just \$35.

For more information, phone Brian on 0458 241 270.

### Tatura Hospital and Parkville Aged Care

The annual general meeting of the Ladies Auxiliary will be held at St Mary's Hall on Thursday, July 22 at 2 pm. Guest speaker Julie Cobble-dick will talk about the Shepparton Congolese community. All are welcome.

For more information, phone D. Smith on 5855 2380.

### Harston Tennis Club

If there are any women in the Harston area who would like to play competition or social tennis, please phone Wendy Hicks on 5854 8396 or Wendy Wilson on 5854 8280.



### Level 2 First Aid

August 10, 17 & 24, 6.00-9.00pm  
\$180

### Beyond Basics Computer (Intermediate Level)

Tuesdays July 13 to August 31, 9.30am-Noon

### Beginners Computer Classes

Wednesdays July 28 to August 15, 6.30pm-9.00pm

### Bookings for Plates & Yoga being taken now

Tutor Sue O'Meara

7 Week block beginning July 20 to September 7  
BYO mat

Tatura Community House and VicRoads photo point will reopen 9.00am July 12

Contact TRISH for further information on any of the above courses and events on 5824 1315

Something to tell? Use the Classifieds.



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\$1.20 (GST inc)

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## Digging up the past

Tatura RSL president and Legacy member Robert Mathieson has welcomed the publication of a new book by Tatura resident and amateur historian Damien Finlayson which tells the amazing story of the Australian tunnelling companies in World War I.

"Many people will have heard about the tunnellers from an Australian movie called *Beneath Hill 60* that was released earlier this year," Mr Mathieson said. "It told the story of soldiers from the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company who dug under Hill 60 near Ypres to sabotage the German trenches during the First World War.

"The movie was very successful, but only told part of the story, whereas Damien's book covers the complete history of all three tunnelling companies between 1914 and 1919. With 50% of the author's royalties being donated to Legacy, I feel this is a project well worth supporting."

Mr Finlayson spent 10 years researching the topic, is now widely regarded as a leader in this field of military history and was involved as a technical consultant during the making of the film.

He was originally inspired to write *Crumps and Camouflets* after discovering a relative had died while serving as a junior officer with the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company.

Trying to learn more about his wartime experi-

ences, Mr Finlayson quickly realised no one had written on the subject before, despite it being a remarkable and courageous story.

"Within the vast array of Great War literature, there is scant reference to the Australian tunnelling companies," he said.

"I wrote this book to redress that, by telling the story of the men who, like their brother soldiers, fought a daily duel with the enemy over the wire, and the enemy within — the gnawing, paralysing fear of a sudden and violent death underground, below no man's land."

More than 4500 Australians served on the Western Front in three tunnelling companies and a unique support unit known as Alphabet Company. 330 of those men never came home.

The units took part in the battles of Fromelles, Arras, Messines, Passchendaele, Cambrai, the defence of Amiens, Lys and the famous last 100 days.

The extraordinary underground war they fought culminated in the simultaneous blowing up of 19 huge mines beneath the Messines Ridge on June 7, 1917.

*Crumps and Camouflets* is currently available for order online from Big Sky Publishing and will be on general release from October.



Local amateur historian Damien Finlayson (right) presents a copy of his book to Tatura RSL president Rob Mathieson.

## It's all right here

Members of the environmental action group Transition Tatura have joined calls from primary producers and traders to support local markets in a bid to make the community more sustainable.

As the climate changes and oil supplies are depleted, many people argue the environmental and financial costs of transporting food will eventually become unaffordable and consumers should change their shopping habits before it is too late.

Transition Tatura spokesperson Ross Musolino said there were many benefits to buying locally produced goods.

"Local farmers' markets are the way of the future. Currently we are supplied with tomatoes from China, oranges from the USA and apple juice from Europe, to name just a few," he said.

"To ship all this around the world is ludicrous, especially when it can be grown here in our own backyard."

"When we buy our food from large supermarkets chains, profits go to some transnational conglomerate that only cares about its share price, whereas buying local produce returns money to the local economy."

"In many cultures, markets are not simply a place to do the weekly shopping but also a place to network and socialise. Transition Tatura is always very welcoming of any initiative that can help us to reconnect with our local community and reduce our carbon footprint," he said.

Tatura residents Michael and Maria Sepe agreed, and said they would love to see a monthly farmer's market operating in the town's newly redeveloped plaza.

"We have set up a family business trading in locally sourced fruit and vegetables, with the aim of supplying customers with fresh produce at low prices by reducing our transport costs and cutting wastage," Mr Sepe said.

"The development of Stuart Mock Place has created an ideal venue for a regular market and we would definitely support it."

Since starting the business three months ago, the Sepe family has already taken part in several farmers' markets at Emerald Bank in Shepparton.

"There seems to be widespread support from both stallholders and the general public for these kinds of events and I believe organisers at Emerald Bank are hoping to hold them more regularly in the future," Mr Sepe said.



Joseph and Sophie Sepe help with the family's fruit and vegetable stall at a recent farmers' market.