

## “Grandma’s bracelet” by Kerrie Blyth

Being the “bower bird” of my family has many advantages because amongst all the papers, letters, post cards, photos and various unknown objects that no-one else wanted, I have inherited a gold bracelet. I thought it belonged to my maternal grandmother Ada Bessie Ewart (nee Cooper), but an interesting tale has come to light that shows where it was made, who by and who the first owner was. With the help of librarian Peter Richardson, who traced a newspaper article showing how the bracelet came into the Cooper family, and Devonport jeweler Margaret Fay who examined the bracelet and provided a history and valuation showing details such as where it was made, I have merged all the details to leave a story amongst my family research for future generations and owners of the bracelet.

Joseph and Maria Cooper were married in Aston Juxta in Warwickshire in 1855 and the following year, together with their first child William, they emigrated to Victoria where they had four more sons (Joe, Harry, Tom & Edwin) and four daughters (Ada, Emma, Alce and Eva). They relocated to Hobart and owned a number of properties in Giblin St, Newtown. The Cooper family were involved in horse racing as were others in my family tree, the Cooley family of Moonah. My great grandfather Harry Cooper drove an omnibus with six horses, his brother Joe was *Clerk of the Course* at Elwick Racecourse and sister Ada (*pictured at right*) enjoyed riding and owning horses.



The 9 carat yellow and rose gold bracelet was made in Australia by Aronson & Co in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and has three doublets and four seed pearls set into the top of it. It is quite intriguing as it has an oval link safety chain with a cast 9 carat pig charm attached to it. The bracelet is sturdy and having the safety chain attached gives me an added feeling of security when I wear it.



The clues I had to work with were the engraved numbers “29.9.99” on the inside and the letters “Maori Chief” engraved on the outside of the bracelet.

The newspaper article from *The Mercury* 30<sup>th</sup> September 1899 tells us that the bracelet was won in a jumping contest at the Oatlands Show by Joe Cooper.

He was riding his sister Ada's horse called "Maori Chief". The bracelet was valued at that time at 5 pound 5 shillings. Its antique valuation in 2006 was \$1500.00.

Ada Cooper gave the bracelet to her niece Ada Bessie Cooper (1892-1975). It was then passed to her daughter Margaret Ewart (1924-1987) and it is now in my possession. I treasure it greatly and wear it on special occasions.

### ***Mercury Newspaper Saturday Morning 30<sup>th</sup> September 1899***

#### *Oddfellows Celebration at Oatlands*

##### Procession and Sports

In spite of dull threatening weather which culminated in rain, Oatlands donned its holiday attire yesterday forenoon in celebrating the ninth annual reunion of the M.U.L.O.O.F. Friendly Society in the district. A two days fair in the township had set things moving, yet the appetites were not wholly appeased in view of the sports in prospective. At about midday a large crowd of onlookers assembled in front of the Town Hall where the procession was announced to start from.

The Sports held on the Midland Jockey Club's racecourse. Large numbers of residents of the district had poured in from various quarters, and when the sports began at half-past 1 there was a large attendance on the ground. A change was made in the description of sport provided this year, horse-racing in the main, taking the place of foot and bicycle racing. A five shilling totalisator worked by a staff from the city, did fair business during the afternoon. The Hon Secretaries Messrs C.L. Rooney and J. McDonald were active in their respective duties.

Results are as follows:

##### HANDICAP AMATUER STEEPLECHASE

First prize 7 pound, second prize 3 pound. About 2 miles

Mr T.A. Burrill's *Platypus* (C Crossin) 1

**Mr H Cooper's *Maori Chief* (J Cooper) 2**

Other starters; Zanoni, Glenderry, After Dark, Fearless.

##### SECOND JUMPING CONTEST

**First prize, lady's bracelet, value 5 pound 5 shillings**

**Miss Cooper's *Maori Chief* (Mr J Cooper) 1**

Miss Riggall's *Taff* 2

Seven hunters competed, Maori Chief and Taff doing by far the best work. In the final round the Hobart horse made the fewer mistakes.

Other sports followed and the proceedings wound up with a concert and ball, held in the township in the evening.