James and Henry Gordon as well as seven shillings to Mr. Fairs."

The will was executed by the testator by making his mark, as did the one witness (there should have been two, but who would question the dying man's wishes?), so that Williams can be classed as illiterate. It is not dated, nor is the paper watermarked with a date; yet from the farming association with Gordon it is a fair inference that the period was perhaps 1865-70. Further, since Gordon's farm was on American Creek, it could well be that the land Williams worked— but obviously did not own— was as a sharefarmer in a fold in the foothills of Mount Kembla. The crop could have been anything at all, though probably potatoes or grain; and the rent could have been for a season or for a year. Finally it is likely that there could have been a partial intestacy; the old battler could have received rations and accommodation from Gordon or someone else, although if from Gordon it was doubtless extremely Spartan, because that family lived in truly dire poverty, however genteel. Thus it is more probable that the old battler had a rough hut near the land he worked, with the result that in addition to a few garments he would have owned a blanket or so, and a few pots, pans and kitchen implements. If so, he died intestate as to these.

But what seems clear is that Williams was feeling his grip on life weakening; some kind person— himself no marvel of literacy— wrote out the will, whereby William James eventually got the two-bullock plough and harrow, charged with his share of the debts. The value of the crop Gordon was to receive, depending on the luck of the season, might not have been enough to cover his share of the debts, although in a fertile region like Illawarra there should have been a profit. So that was that: exit James Williams, his property methodically disposed of, while the landowner was to get his rent, the doctor his fee, and Mr. Fairs his seven shillings. And if any personal effects did not even rate a mention, the partial intestacy may not have mattered a twopenny damn; the clothing and pots and pans must have been deemed valueless. The worldly goods and responsibilities of James Williams, in all their simplicity, were thus all accounted for.

R.I.P.

E.B.

THE LATE E. B. BRADFORD

That charming but now neglected Czech writer, Karel Capek, once wrote a novel, "An Ordinary Life", in which he told the story of a modest public servant whose life was in every way ordinary, in the sense of being uneventful; but then Capek began to probe further and further into his "hero's" past, thus revealing a life of hidden depths, with strangely complex sub-strata. The point he made was a good one; how little, indeed, do we really know people we thought we knew well?

The same could be said of Bert Bradford. Members of older standing in our Society will remember him and his wife as regular attenders at meetings until his retirement took them from Port Kembla to Jamberoo. Even then, he proved himself an indefatigable worker with the late Ross Stewart, as indeed he had been before his retirement, in collecting fine material for our Museum in the Jamberoo and Kiama areas, while the present writer acted as labourer and lorry-driver. His interest in our work continued to the last, because by his will he directed his executor (the present writer) to go over all his personal belongings and effects
to extract whatever would be suitable for the Museum. As it so happened, we did not acquire a great deal, because we run a folk museum; but if we had kept a fine arts collection we could have gained richly, though to do so would have been unfair to his other beneficiaries. However, Bert’s papers revealed insights into those unsuspected layers of being which recall Capek’s novel. There is nothing wrong in telling the story because, apart from the fact that everything was to his credit, there are no near next-of-kin to feel any embarrassment, or anything but pride. On the contrary, his thoughtfulness for our Society calls for a proper tribute.

Evelyn Bertram Bradford was a son of William Bradford, a native of Cork, Ireland, who married first at Brisbane in 1874 and had six children, one of whom did not survive. Then in 1886 he married again, and had one child who survived, and four others who did not, before Bert was born at Rockhampton on 5 June 1901. The reason for the wide spacings in births may have been the travels of the father, a harbour master and customs officer at various Queensland ports, including as far north as Port Douglas.

Two of Bert’s brothers, much older than he, were men of some fame. One was a member of a well-known Central Queensland commercial firm until he lost his life in the wreck of the ship “Llewellyn” in 1919. The other brother, John, had earned prominence in 1874-6 by laying a telegraph line from Cooktown to the Palmer Goldfield, a distance of 126 miles over difficult terrain. Yet that was nothing compared to his defining the telegraph route from Cooktown through the length of Cape York Peninsula to Thursday Island. That was an epic of endurance which earned a chapter in Logan Jack’s “Northmost Australia”. It makes excellent reading.

Yet such exploits did not distract young Bert from what, as it now transpires, was a latent urge to the ministry of religion. In Rockhampton he had come under the strong high church influence of the Anglican faith. Then, living in Brisbane, he was extremely active in parish affairs, particularly amongst the young. On the strength of this, attempts were made to get him admitted to a theological college, but there was a major difficulty; though well educated, and nothing if not intelligent, the young man had not reached the required matriculation standard. A way round was attempted in April 1919 when the Rector of Wyalong, N.S.W., sought a lay reader for his parish. Bert’s own Rector wrote warmly in support; praising his parochial work, he added: “He could make good money in more than one secular profession, but he prefers to be poor and have a chance of the priesthood, than to be rich in the outer world”. On 5 June 1919 — his 18th birthday— the Bishop of Bathurst duly licensed him as a lay reader. Unfortunately, however, the matriculation problem was never overcome; Bert’s quiet ambition in life was never to be fulfilled.

Meanwhile, he worked in and around the locality his striving for holy orders had led him to. References show that he was an extremely good motor mechanic and jack-of-all-trades in those years of developing technology; he was proficient in installing electrical generators —there being few town supplies at the time— and in gas and oil engines, not to mention operating the projection equipment in his employer’s picture show business. This side of Bert, however, hardly surprises those of us who saw him at work for our Museum; He could turn his hand to anything.
Later he left a foreman's job to set up in business on his own account in Dubbo. There eventually he engaged to marry Annie Blanche Soane, the daughter of a prominent family of early local settlers. She was a person of quiet charm and distinction. But what may well have particularly attracted Bert was that she had shouldered a heavy family responsibility; it was what one concerned aunt called "a noble work, too much for any girl". Self-sacrifice of that degree would have appealed strongly to Bert. They married in 1937 at St. Andrew's cathedral in Sydney. There were no issue of a marriage which was close, loving, and placid.

The couple settled at Port Kembla, where Bert worked as a fitter at the Steelworks. Family distinctions seemed to count for nothing with him; he purported to be only a plain working man, and indeed he kept up his trade union membership until his death, long after his retirement in 1967. Entirely without pretence, he was the same to all people. His appearance was rather startling because of disfigurement from the removal of a facial cancer many years ago. But the directness of his habitually pleasant manner soon overcame any such initial reaction. Living plainly, he saved money, without becoming more than comfortably circumstanced in a modest way; yet he kept practically nothing for himself, any assets being held in the name of his wife. Of such was his simplicity of life.

Their declining years were a model of tenderness. The health of Mrs Bradford—"Brad" to her friends—gradually failed, and Bert nursed her through her growing weakness to the end; he attended to her every need—and they were great—until she died on 16 September 1985. Then his turn came; weakening, he was found to have cancer again. Operations seemed to successful—what else would one expect from so positive and strong a spirit?—and he was discharged from hospital. But it was too much; a few days later he was readmitted, and on 7 January 1987 he died, as quietly as he had lived. And if the peace of his passing was in any way disturbed, it could only have been because of a vague regret that he had not become a minister of religion. Who knows now?—but let us hope that that passing was in every way undisturbed. It deserved to be so.

Edgar Beale

PARROT PIE

My mother must have known at least twenty ways to cook rabbit for meals all of which in their turn were most appetising. Parrots used to take a great deal of fruit in the orchard. As a consequence very often quite a lot of parrots were shot in the fruit season. After an unusually large number had been shot father decided that we should pluck them and have mother cook a parrot pie with crust and all. It was delightful as I reckon only my mother could cook it. From then on we had at least one parrot pie in the fruit season. Another delight was the ground quail. Small birds indeed, but what a baked pie! In season wild ducks were very plentiful so roast duck was often enjoyed but we always reckoned there was not the flavour and enjoyment of our farm ducks especially the big Muscovy.

S. J. Tazewell