



# Rananim

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## WHY LAWRENCE VISITED ROSE COTTAGE



Sketch of Rose Cottage 1973 by Leon Pericles

**WHEN** Lawrence was staying in Mollie Skinner's guesthouse at Darlington in Western Australia in 1922 he would wander down through the bush and meadows to Rose Cottage to chat with Mollie Skinner's mother, Jessie, a member of one of Perth's oldest families.

**Local historian LYN MYLES** has researched the history of Rose Cottage and its sister house, Brook Cottage, and corrects the misconceptions surrounding the two humble abodes.

The house D.H. Lawrence visited was Rose Cottage to see Mollie's Mother Jessie Skinner who was well connected with Perth Society -- her maiden name being Leake, one of the very early families to arrive in the Swan Colony. Since Mollie's son Jack disliked Lawrence, and from Mollie's autobiography, "The Fifth Sparrow" (p114), possibly didn't ever properly meet him, I doubt Lawrence ever set foot in Jack's Brook Cottage although both cottages were very close together on the same alignment which has been part of the confusion between the cottages.

The Daily News (Perth, WA : 1882 - 1950), Tuesday 9 May 1922, page 6

### Mainly About People. ("FRANZISKA")

Mr. D. H. Lawrence, the well-known English author, is with Mrs. Lawrence staying at Leithdale House, Darlington.

The existing cottage still standing in 2017 is Brook Cottage built c1914 by a carpenter Robert Dinning. After he returned from WW1 he sold the cottage to a lady who owned it briefly, then the 3 acre property (part of Lot 24 of the Darlington subdivision 1241) was sold to Jack Skinner. In Mollie's autobiography she mentions that the family were in Kalamunda where Jack had a Returned Soldier's Settlement Scheme property and when he bought the property in Darlington he moved his mother's cottage which was next to his farm in Kalamunda and placed it next door to his Brook cottage. His mother's house was called Rose Cottage and looked identical to Brook being of a similar era. The naming of Rose Cottage may have nothing to do with flowers as Jessie's middle name was "Rose".

This would have been 1921 around the same time Mollie moved to Leithdale from her convalescent home called "Shirley" in Kalamunda, due to the owner wanting to sell the property. By Feb 1922 there is a newspaper article that has a smoke evening at Kalamunda in honour of Jack and mentions it's because he's moved to Darlington.

In May 1922 when the Lawrences visited Darlington and stayed at Mollie Skinners recently acquired "Leithdale House", being run as a Boarding House by her and business partner Nellie Beakbane, Brook Cottage would have been occupied by Jack Skinner, while next door, Rose Cottage would have been his mother Jessie's house. Going down Brook Rd

Below is the description of the property in Mittie's will.

ASSETS.		£	s	d	£	s	d
All that piece of land being part of Swan Location 1241 and being part Lot 24 on plan 1841 Certificate of Title Volume 663 Folio 190 at Darlington - Area 3 acres 5 perches							
		150	-	-			
Improvements - Two small wooden cottages - 4 rooms each							
		550	-	-			
Wellington Town Lots 25, 26, 27 and 28 - 99 year ...							

It is unknown who occupied the cottages on the property after Mollie acquired them but from 1936 until the property was later subdivided into three smaller lots then sold, Mollie's sister Dora (Dolly) Law a widower from 1930 was living in Rose Cottage (E.R. gives this info) and bought the 3 acre property from Mollie. A regular visitor to Mollie who is still living and in her 80's said Mollie lived in the furthest house (Brook Cottage) from the 1940's and into the early 1950's.

1949 WA ELECTORAL ROLL

3435	Law, Dora Jessie, Brook road, Darlington, home duties F
3436	Law, Frank Maxwell, "Rose Cottage," Brook road, Darlington, clerk M

Brook & Rose Cottage Mollie Skinner 21.10.1952 West Australian

brook

The advert above shows the Law family tried to sell the property intact in 1952 but when that failed they subdivided the property into 3 blocks, two with a house and land and one block vacant.

Darlington Rates 1953-54 Dollie's son Frank Law is paying the Rates and there are 3 lots so it has been subdivided.

869	Law	Brook Rd	150	10	1	1	10	100
870					2			
871		Yelver Rd			2		1	2

1955-56 Darlington Rates showing Dollie / Frank Law sold all three properties

the first house was Rose and then the next house was Brook according to long-time Darlington residents from the 1950's who visited Mollie in Brook Rd.

Within 12 months of the Lawrence's visit to Darlington Jessie Skinner died at Rose Cottage whereupon Mollie moved into her mother's cottage to sort out the family affairs. From here Mollie went down to Karridale to open a Government Hospital to service the Group Settlement Scheme designed to open up the South West of the State for farming. Jack Skinner had gone to Southern Cross where in July 1925 he died from Pneumonia. Jack left his Darlington property to his unmarried sister Muriel or Mittie as she was called by the family. After Jack's death Mittie had gone to New South Wales where she died in October 1927. In her will she left the Darlington property to her sister Mary Louisa Skinner (Mollie). Mollie then owned the Darlington 3 acres and the two cottages as well as being part owner of Leithdale House.



*Brook Cottage in 1994 from Gail Gregson*



*Brook Cottage c1974 - Sylvia Ling*

By 1956 the Darlington Rates show all three properties sold and the two cottages separated with Brook Cottage on lot 2 sold to Ernest Henry Rawson, Rose Cottage on Lot 3 sold to John Leonard Day and Lot 1 just vacant land sold to Ronald Clifford Viney.

I think where misleading information has been perpetuated was by Mr Harry Rawson who bought the Brook Cottage property around the time Mollie died and made the leap that Mollie was living in her mother's house when in fact it was Jack's house. Mollie's sister Dollie's family lived in their mother's house until the property was subdivided and sold.

The Rose cottage property after it was sold to John and Hollie Day was rented and occupied by numerous tenants particularly students (amazingly a cousin of mine lived in it when she was doing her art course in the mid 1970's and had a sketch by Leon Pericles of the cottage). There was a fire according to one of the neighbours in Rose cottage and the occasional drug bust until the house was so derelict that it wasn't rentable, even to students. It was then issued with a work order by the shire and rather than fix the derelict building the owner Roger Day organised contractors to demolish the building. Nothing was retained by the Day family who still owned the property and only sold it about 8 years ago.

The cottage still standing today and also somewhat derelict is Jack and Mollie's Brook Cottage so its claim to fame is where Mollie wrote her Biography before she died. This is not the house that Lawrence visited to see Jessie Skinner, this no longer exists.

- Lyn Myles Sept 2017 (Archivist Darlington History Group)

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DHL SOCIETY MEMBER VISITS BROOK COTTAGE

FREE TEXT OF *DH LAWRENE'S 99 DAYS IN AUSTRALIA*

## *Rananim*

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# In Lawrence's Footsteps at Darlington

By

Sandra Darroch

BEFORE moving to Perth for a year in 1994, I know that Lawrence and Frieda had stayed at Mollie Skinner's guesthouse, Leithdale, at Darlington outside of Perth, and that Lawrence had subsequently rewritten Mollie's novel, *The Boy in the Bush*. I also knew that Mollie Skinner's returned WWI injured veteran brother, Jack, on whom she based the hero of *The Boy in the Bush*, moved to Darlington from his returned soldier settlement farm at Kalumunda in the Hills, when Mollie took up residence at Leithdale.

Jack's new patch was "an unstocked three acres by the brook" but he probably began to farm it soon after arriving. We know that he kept ducks, and he probably had a cow to supply himself and his mother with milk. Mollie says that he brought his mother's cottage (named Rose Cottage) over from the old site and rebuilt it next to an existing shack at Darlington which he lived in. This was Brook Cottage.

I also know from Lawrence's own letters to Mollie Skinner that he would wander down to Jack's little plot and would pay a visit to Mollie's mother, a once-grande-dame of Perth society, but now old and down on her luck. After her mother's death, Mollie suffered a nervous reaction, even though she said they'd never been "really close". As a result, Nellie Beakbane closed down Leithdale for a while and went to England while Mollie went and lived in her mother's little house - using it as a writer's retreat as Lawrence had urged her to do in "that little cottage on the creek slope".

When we moved to Perth in 1994, I decided to try and find out whether the two little cottages still stood. The close-knit societies of Perth and Darlington were to supply the answer. We had visited Perth's best antiquarian bookshop in

Rose Cottage no longer existed but Brook Cottage remained. We found the little cottage situated next to an old oak tree on a narrow strip of land running side-by-side with a wedge-shaped allotment down to the "brook", as both Lawrence and the locals called Nannya Creek.

The adjoining wedge-shaped block is now vacant, as the old cottage on it (Rose Cottage) had been condemned and demolished. Gail and David, who had lived in their house for 32 years, said that the remaining cottage used to be owned by an old man called Mr Rawson who told them that Mollie Skinner had lived there. We went down to look at the cottage more closely, walking through the soft mossy grass strewn with large gumnuts, past wattle brightly in bloom. The old oak

search of Lawrence material and had met its owners, Robert and Helen Muir (nee Durack), who told us that their friends, Gail and David Gregson, a well-known WA artist, lived at Darlington "next door to the little house Mollie Skinner lived in" (Rose Cottage)..

A trip up to Darlington the following Saturday was rewarding.



*Rob Darroch, President of the D.H. Lawrence Society of Australia, standing in front of the verandah of Leithdale in 1994*

tree still had some leaves because the winter had been so short and gentle.

Down from the cottage was the brook, which usually only runs in winter. Lawrence had visited in late autumn, by which time the brook itself would have probably dried up, although the sudden rain storm on the day of Lawrence's arrival in Fremantle might have provided some water. But Lawrence mentions a pond and the ducks. Jack Skinner had most likely dammed the creek to provide his cow and other animals with drinking water during summer. A little, and very old, wooden footbridge with no railing led over the creek to a large cleared paddock with the remains of a loose stone wall on two sides.

This paddock is joined to the wedge-shaped allotment on the other side of the creek and was the three acres which her brother took up, referred to by Mollie Skinner in *The Fifth Sparrow*. I know Lawrence would walk down from Leithdale to visit Mollie's mother: "The path down the hollow under the gum trees, to your mother's cottage; and those big ducks - Your mother didn't belong to our broken, fragmentary generation; with her oriental rugs in that little wooden bungalow, and her big, easy gesture of life. It was too small for her, really."

The most likely path Lawrence

would have taken  
would have been up  
the hill behind  
Leithdale and down a  
track to the dirt road,  
then along the right-  
of-way by the stone  
wall of the paddock,  
across the little  
wooden footbridge,  
and up the slope to  
Mollie's mother's  
cottage.

If any of the  
locals had observed  
the pale, red-bearded  
Englishman making  
his way through the  
grey bush towards  
Rose Cottage and  
Jack's little farm, on  
which there was a  
cow, the visit might  
well have gone into  
Darlington folklore.

But the fact  
that Mollie later took  
Lawrence's advice  
and used Rose  
cottage as a writer's  
retreat was indeed  
added to the legend.