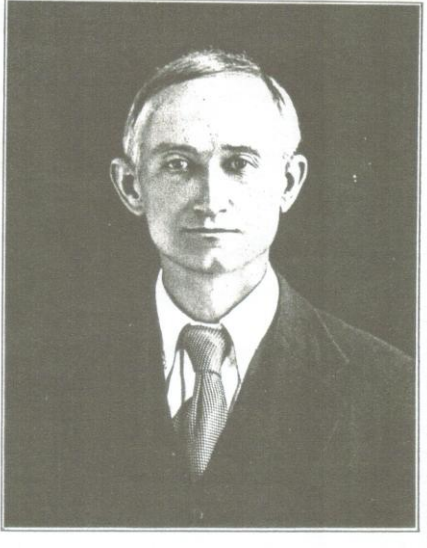


## What I Did On My Holidays by Lauris Ashton

*Museum volunteer Lauris Ashton spent much of her recent holiday in Australia researching her family history. Here she reveals what she learnt.*



My great uncle, Charles Carter, has been described as a philosopher, author, recluse, gold miner, dingo trapper, brumby runner<sup>1</sup> and one of the last great eccentrics of the Snowy Mountain region in Australia..

Until recently I knew little about him other than that he had lived “somewhere in the Snowy Mountains”, had written a book and had some odd ideas about a cure for cancer.

When I was in Australia recently I was introduced to Ken Nankervis who, in his youth, had known Charlie. He hinted at Charlie’s brushes with the law, his legendary feud, and his strange ‘cures’ and told me that Charlie had lived at Tin Mine Hut in what was now the Kosciusko National Park. I was so intrigued by Charlie’s story that I spent days in the national Library in Canberra searching old newspapers for information, and a friend in Canberra arranged for us to go out to Tin Mine Hut.

Charlie was born in Victoria in 1871 and left school when he was 13. In 1892, at the time of a severe State-wide depression, he left home to work at whatever he could find in the Australian outback. By 1898 he had gravitated to the Snowy Mountains on the Victoria NSW border, where he leased some land and kept cattle, trapped dingoes and rabbits and caught wild horses (brumbies).

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<sup>1</sup> Wild horse catcher

A simmering feud developed between Charlie and his neighbours, the Freebody brothers. They accused him of taking one of their horses and Charlie was ordered to give it up and pay the costs. Charlie then took them to court for using insulting language, but the case was dismissed. It was rumoured that Charlie had only refrained from shooting one of the brothers because there was a witness. In 1908 Charlie accused the Freebodys of stealing his stallion and two mares but ownership of the stallion could not be proved. Charlie lost his money and property by funding numerous appeals. In 1916 he was in trouble again for killing a cow, but was found not guilty.

Soon after he moved to Sydney where he wrote several pamphlets and a 400 page book entitled 'The Principle of Life, or the Reconciliation' expressing his ideas about politics, philosophy, socialism and his theory about the causes of cancer and his cure.

After 3 years in Sydney he disappeared to work on sheep and cattle stations in Queensland and NSW. In 1933 he was back in the Snowy Mountains working as a dingo trapper and prospecting for minerals. In 1938 he moved in to the Tin Mine Hut complex which a mining syndicate had abandoned the same year. Every few months he would saddle up his horse and ride into Jindabyne for supplies, sometimes paying with small nuggets of gold. The stories of his eccentricities multiplied. He died alone at Tin Mine Hut in 1952.

