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## Edward Russell Lejeune

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Born March 1886 Manchester, Lancashire, England  
Died 29<sup>th</sup> May 1931, Boodanoo Station, Mount Magnet, Western Australia

**References:**

*Thank You For Having Me, C.A. Lejeune*

*Murchison Memories, David Russell Lejeune*

*Drawn to Mt Magnet, Lorna Day and Karen Morrissey*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murchison\\_Murders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murchison_Murders)

<https://www.facebook.com/StateLibraryWA/posts/the-perfect-murder-of-louis->

# Edward Russell Lejeune

Known as Russell

## Early Life



*Jane Louisa McLaren (Lejeune) and Adam Eduard Lejeune*

## Birth

1886 - Edward Russell Lejeune was born in March 1886 in Manchester, Lancashire, to Jane Louisa Maclaren, age 29, and Adam Eduard (Edward) Lejeune, age 41.

When he was born his sisters were the following ages: Franziska Marion (Cissy) was seven, Marion was six, Juliet was five, Helene was four and his older brother Gustav Alexander (Alick) was two years old.

## Birth of Brother

1888 - His brother Francis (Arnold) was born on 2 April 1888 in Withington, Lancashire, when Edward Russell was 2 years old.



## Residence

In 1891 when Russell was five the family was still living in Withington, Lancashire at 'Lyndhurst', number 10 Wilmslow Rd. His sister C.A. Lejeune later described it as a tall, yellow brick house in Manchester halfway between Withington and Fallowfield.

## Lady Barn House School

In 1890/1891 Russell and his younger brother Francis (Arnold) attended the Lady Barn House kindergarten. In above photo Russell is pictured above far left and Arnold is front far right. As far as we know all of the Lejeune children attended Lady Barn House for their primary education. It was founded by Caroline Herford's father (a friend of Jane Louisa's), "an immensely energetic Victorian with liberal and advanced views on education." (C.A. Lejeune).

## Birth of Sister

1897 - His sister Caroline Alice was born on 27 March 1897 in Withington, Lancashire, when Edward Russell was 11 years old.



*The Lejeune family and friend, Manchester, England circa 1894*

*Back row: Marion, Adam (Edward) Lejeune, Helene, Isobel Hunt*

*Centre: (below Marion) Alick*

*Front Row: Francis (Arnold), Franziska, Jane Louisa, Edward (Russell) and Juliet.*

*This photo predates the birth of Caroline.*

C.A Lejeune in her autobiography **Thank You For having Me** writes "Mother was a firm believer in regular holidays away from home. From early days I can remember, dimly, a great family exodus in August...Easter holidays were mostly spent at Silverdale, a tiny village close to Morecambe Bay...Summer holidays were more promiscuous. We never went twice to the same place in August, Mother believing in the virtue of a change of scene. I can remember staying near a lighthouse on the Isle of Wight ...and in particular a month at Brough in Westmorland, in a farmhouse just a stone's throw from the ruins of Brough Castle.

## Death of Father Adam Eduard

1899 - Russell was 13 when his father Adam Eduard (Edward) passed away on 28 October 1899 in Neumunster-asile Zürich, Switzerland, at the age of 54.

## Boarding School

1901 – At 15 Russell attended boarding school in St Wilfred's Parish, Haywards Heath, Sussex. Brunswick (young x school). In Russell's family photo album that he brought with him to Australia, along with family members, there are photos of Russell's school headmaster Mr Thring, his gym and drill sergeant, and football and cricket teams.

## Life in Australia

1906 – In January 1906 Russell Lejeune departed from Liverpool, England on board the Africa to arrive in Albany, Western Australia. He was 19 soon to be 20. In the records he is aged 20 and his profession is listed as an engineer.



1906 – On arrival he made his way north to Tibbradden Station near Geraldton to work as a jackeroo for John Sydney Davis. Tibbradden was later to come under the ownership of J.B. Percy.

It was at Tibbradden that Russell first met Rachel Leta Josceline Percy. Rachel was visiting her grandparents J.S. Davis and Sarah Davis (Heal) from Melbourne.

They fell in love and so the story goes her mother Elizabeth at some stage during the stay reprimanded her severely for sitting on Russell's lap. Rachel, so innocent, thought this could cause her to have a baby. There is a record of the Percy family returning by boat to Melbourne from Fremantle on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1908. Rachel was 16 at the time.

Russell worked at Tibbradden until he took up the lease of Boodanoo, near Mt Magnet in the Murchison River region with his silent partner Vernon Sewell. Vernon was a near neighbour on Sandsprings near Tibbradden. (Vernon's son Eric would later marry Russell's daughter Ayris.)

1910 – Russell moved to a camp on the north end of Boodanoo in about 1910. The cottage built by Russell at the north end, later become a home for Nellie Smith (the cook).

At this time Russell and Rachel become engaged and it would be five years before they could marry. Russell embarked on establishing a sheep station and building a house for his new wife to come to. (See David Lejeune's Murchison Memories for more detail).

Russell also employed Jimmy James to supported him in the development of the property. David Lejeune writes "Russell lived pretty roughly, and my mother told me that he suffered food poisoning.



(There was no refrigeration and probably no Coolgardie safe). The only transport was a motorcycle. By 1912 the drought was breaking and by 1913 wool process were up. Russell then engaged a builder to construct a house, with four bedrooms, separate kitchen, dining rooms for family and male workers and verandahs all around the building. By 1914 the paddocks were fenced and the "shearers excellent. 5/-per 1,000." (From Russell's diary)

*Camel team carting wool, Boodanoo early days*



## World War 1 (1914)

C.A's autobiography states that "Russell tried to join up in Australia but was rejected by the medical board. (Varicose veins, the family heritage, exacerbated by much hard riding.)" Russell's son David found this improbable, thinking it unlikely that he would walk off the property. He thinks it more likely that he was man powered. Also of consideration was his German heritage and long engagement to Rachel, who at this time was far away in Melbourne.

## Marriage

1915 – Russell travelled from the Port of Fremantle to join Rachel in Victoria, arriving on the Katoomba on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March.

They were married on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September in South Yarra, Melbourne. Russell was 29 and Rachel was 23. It was a double wedding with Rachel's sister Lilla marrying Mr Percival George Wykeham Bayly on the same day.



## Life at Boodanoo

*Shearing shed, North Boodanoo about 1928*

Back at Boodanoo, Rachel vigorously got to work making furniture because cash to purchase household items was short. She converted imported soft wood petrol cases, two by four-gallon tins in each, and packing cases into wardrobes and tables. These were attractively decorated with chintzes and paint.

**Children** Russell and Leta had four children in 10 years.

1916 – daughter Josceline Beatrice was born 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916

1919 – daughter Ayris Francesca was born 14<sup>th</sup> January 1919

1920 – daughter Patricia Mary was born 10<sup>th</sup> June 1920

1926 – son David Russell was born on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1926 in Perth Western Australia.

1924 – in 1924 Russell and Rachel made the long trip back to visit family in the UK. They were away for almost five months. Seven-year-old Josceline accompanied her parents and Ayris and Patricia remained with extended family.

C.A. Lejeune writes (P.103) “One of my happiest remembrances of Mother (Jane Louisa) is the day when we drove her to Southhampton to meet the boat that was bringing my brother Russell back from Australia for his first visit in nearly twenty years. It was sometime in late spring, in the year of the Wembley Exhibition. We picked Mother up at Chelsea soon after daybreak on a fine, misty morning. Nothing was on the roads at that early hour except a number of scurrying rabbits and a few wild ponies in the new forest. I dozed all the way down, but Mother (who almost certainly hadn’t slept a wink the night before, for Russell was her favourite child) was wide awake in the back seat, and ready to eat a hearty breakfast at Southampton.”



*David (under 5) with puppy,  
Rachel and Russell*

1929 – a three-bedroom house and shearing shed were built at the south end, 58 kms away, and Jimmy James and his wife were installed as overseers. In a circuitous manner a telephone line connected the two ends, using the top wire of four wire fences. It was reasonable when dry, but rain shorted it down the wet posts making it useless. There was a well, windmill and overhead tank to maintain reliable water. This was used to maintain a garden that included most of the vegetables the family needed and an orange and other shady trees. About 1,800 metres from the house was a mill that watered several paddocks. Lucerne was grown for feed for the horses and cows.

1930 – In 1930 Boodanoo station was linked to the murder of Louis Carron, who was employed as inspector of the Rabbit Proof Fence between the south coast and Broome. Evidence of Carron’s remains were found at a campsite on Boodanoo South. Russell had apparently mentioned to others that he had seen something suspicious near the boundary of the property and he was expected to be an important Crown witness in the trial of Snowy Rowles. For more on the story read.

See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murchison\\_Murders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murchison_Murders)

<https://www.facebook.com/StateLibraryWA/posts/the-perfect-murder-of-louis-carron-1930-this-article-prepared-by-the-state-libra/2974273392600300/>

1931 – Russell died on 29 May 1931 at the age of 45. He was accidentally killed by a kangaroo shooter’s ricocheting bullet. This was during the Depression and two brothers from a poor farming family had been granted permission to shoot, provided they hand over any blue skins to make a rug. The family (minus Josceline and Ayris) were checking the water at two mills. Patricia, David and Russell gathered round one of the brothers who was skinning a roo. Rachel remained in the car. There were several shots and Russell fell on this back with a bullet wound through the head. The shooter was some distance away. Russell death occurred three days before David’s fifth birthday. He was buried in Mt Magnet.

After Russell’s death Rachel took a more active role in the running of Boodanoo. The up until then silent partner “Uncle” Vernon Sewell made regular visits to assist with the running of the business.