

John Monash, his wife, and lover

Starting on my sleuthing, I soon found that I was a blood relative to John Monash's wife, Hannah Victoria Moss (1869-1920): she is a second cousin three times removed. Hannah died of cancer soon after the first world war, in which her husband had distinguished himself. They had one child, a daughter, Bertha (1893-1979).

As I do, I was looking at the death notices, which can be useful at fleshing out the wider family. After the family's death notices, I saw this:

MONASH, JOHN. (Inserted in ever-loving and sacred devotion, Lizette M. Bentwitch.)

And then I saw that in 1932, on the anniversary of his death, there was a similar notice in *The Argus*:

MONASH, John.—Though one year has passed away, thy unfading and devoted memory is ever present in my thoughts. (Lizette M. Bentwitch.)

in 1933, this:

MONASH.—John, who passed beyond this earth on October 8, 1931, but never beyond the unfading memory and ever present and past thoughts of Lizette M. Bentwitch, Ladies Carlton Club, London.

And so for the next three years.

Who Lizette M. Bentwitch?

I have never read a biography of the great man, but a Google search reveals her as "Monash's clandestine partner." They had met in London during the war, although Lizzie had also been born in Melbourne (in 1874), perhaps introduced by mutual friends, Hannah was in Melbourne and not well; John dissuaded her from coming to London during the war.

After Hannah's death the couple might have expected to marry, but his daughter Bertha had apparently got wind of the affair, and apparently put her foot down. They never did marry.

The Bentwitch family were Zionists in England and Palestine. A cousin of Lizzie's is the Israeli author, Ari Shavit.

Lizzie is also distantly related to us: she was the sister-in-law of the aunt of the wife of my second cousin three times removed.

Monash's only child, Bertha (1893–1979), married Gershon Berendt Bennett (1892–1955) in 1921. They had four children: John Monash Bennett (1922–1929), David Monash Bennett (1924–1984), Elizabeth Betty Monash Bennett (1926–2006), and John Colin Monash Bennett (1929–). David had at least one son, Elizabeth at least two

sons and a daughter (their father was Alan John Durre, 1921–1958), and John Colin at least two sons. These six children are our fifth cousins. (One, Kit John Durre, 1958–1990, is dead.)

Lizzie (1874-1954) was born and died in Melbourne. She never married. She bequeathed the Lizette Bentwich scholarship to enable alumni from the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music to study overseas. Peter Sculthorpe is one beneficiary.