

LIFE and LETTERS

Lonely Graves Near Williams

By H.W.B.

BECAUSE of some timely and exhaustive researches made about five years ago by Mr. F. I. Bray, a member of the council of the W.A. Historical Society and an active worker on the memorials committee, a recent inquiry by Mr. V. H. Norkus concerning some lonely graves in the Williams district can be satisfactorily answered.

A grave near the 81-mile peg on the Albany-road, referred to by Mr. Norkus, is that of Pat Hart, a sandalwood carter who died alongside his team in 1872 and was buried nearby at the 81½-mile peg. The explanation of the newly painted woodwork is probably that the Main Roads Department, which has always been sympathetic in the preservation of roadside graves, noticed that the little enclosure needed attention. Sandalwooding was one of the earliest industries of the Great Southern area and the forbears of many settlers in those districts made a good living at it. The trimmed sandalwood was carted on drays and waggons to Fremantle and was exported to China for burning as incense in temples.

The other grave referred to by Mr. Norkus is doubtless that of Mrs. Henry Grainger and her daughter. Off the Narro-

gin-Williams road, near the Kondening Pool and about five miles from Williams, it stands on a tiny reserve created by the Lands Department in 1937, and recalls a story of romance and tragedy recounted by Mr. Joseph Grainger, a well-known pioneer of the Narrogin-Williams district.

Mr. Grainger's father was an old soldier of the 23rd Welch Fusiliers who served in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny campaign. After the mutiny he came to Western Australia in 1858 or 1859 on the recommendation of his brother, and took up land about four miles south-east of Williams, not far from where the grave now stands.

With only a dog for company, he started to clear the land by hand-grubbing, but soon grew tired of living alone and went to Fremantle to meet a ship bringing to the colony a complement of immigrant girls. He chose a lass named Mary Ann Longbottom and in three days they were married. Three children were born as the years passed and the clearing slowly increased. Then one day came tragedy.

A Living Torch.

One of the children, a girl, was sent on a cold day with a message to the camp of her father's brother. She stayed at one of the fires to warm herself, her clothes caught alight, and she was so badly burnt that she died in under three

and she was so badly burnt that she died in under three days. As there was no cemetery in the district her father buried her under a redgum tree near the Kondening Pool.

Time went on and the mother grew ill. She was taken on a cart to the nearest doctor, at Beaufort, who said that there was no hope for her. She then asked her husband to take her back to the homestead and bury her with her daughter and expressed a wish that the small coffin of the little girl should be taken up and placed on her own. This the husband did and in 1869 he built a rough stone wall about the double grave. The wall still stands and is included with the grave in a special reserve which honours the memory of a stout-hearted pioneering family.

Doubtless this is the second grave to which Mr. Norkus refers, but if not so, he may have in mind the resting place of a native named Baldhead. He died in 1875 from an over-indulgence in wine and was buried about six miles from Williams along the road then known as Fleay's road. Baldhead helped a man named Touzer, who was in the employ of Captain Fawcett, to deliver a load of wine to William Cornwall. The task was completed and a load of empty casks was back-loaded to Fawcett's homestead. The so-called empty casks contained a fair quantity of wine and Baldhead drank so much of it that he died at once, presumably of alcoholic poisoning.