

# Quinbean

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*The Journal of  
Queanbeyan and District Historical Museum Society*

Q&DHM Archive  
10 Farrer Place  
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620



# QUEANBEYAN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL MUSEUM SOCIETY

QDHMS is a local history society aiming at preserving the history of the city and its wider district and sharing this, with the strong support of the Queanbeyan City Council, through the context of the Museum of Queanbeyan.

Find us on the net at [www.queanbeyanmuseum.org.au](http://www.queanbeyanmuseum.org.au)

Contact us: email [qbnmuseum@yahoo.com.au](mailto:qbnmuseum@yahoo.com.au)

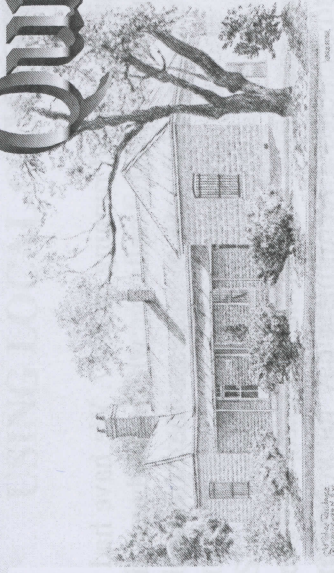
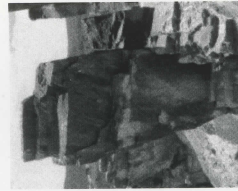
## THE MUSEUM OF QUEANBEYAN

The Museum is open from 1pm to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays or by arrangement. It is found at 10 Farrer Place Queanbeyan, next to the Police Complex and opposite the State Office Building.

### Cover Story

Rock Formation at White rocks on the Queanbeyan River,

Photographer Rosemary Curry



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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As usual the society has hit the ground running in 2017. We have had a members' get-together on the Hospital Auxiliary, which produced an information stand displayed at a local café to increase the Museum's coverage.

Three schools and a tour group from Cooma have visited and been most impressed. We have conducted a recruitment day for volunteers and have gained some enthusiastic new members. We have had a stall at the Carnevale Multicultural Festival and held two working bees to keep the museum ship-shape.

Most significantly, our participation in the Heritage Festival has meant that the society was able to involve several local groups and individuals and offer a varied program at the Museum around the theme of Expressing and Preserving Your Story; including a Scrapbooking Workshop, an Oral History Workshop, the QPRC Heritage Awards, a Researching Histories Workshop, a session on Caring for Collections, and one on the role of Words and Verse in presenting history. This was a successful day with good attendances. Thank you to all the presenters and our members who set up and made the day run so smoothly.

Our presence on Facebook and the internet has continued to grow and has resulted in at least one magnificent new acquisition of photographs from a local family, now living in Newcastle but able to keep in touch through the web.

Thank you again all the volunteers who contribute to all aspects of keeping the Museum running.

**John McGlynn**

## USING LOCAL ORNAMENTAL STONE

It was 40 or 50 years after English occupation that Australia began to look at providing its own attractive and ornamental building stone. Prior to that, most stone for ornamental purposes was obtained from abroad. Ships carrying heavy rocks such as ecclesiastical marble altars, were often required to ditch them overboard in stormy seas. St Joseph's marble altar (Central West NSW) and others, remain to this day, beneath the waves.

In 1909, relating to attractive building stone, the Government stated, "in the building of Australia's future capital, Canberra, we shall strive to emulate the Roman Emperor Augustus who is recorded to have said, "that he found Rome brick, and left it marble."

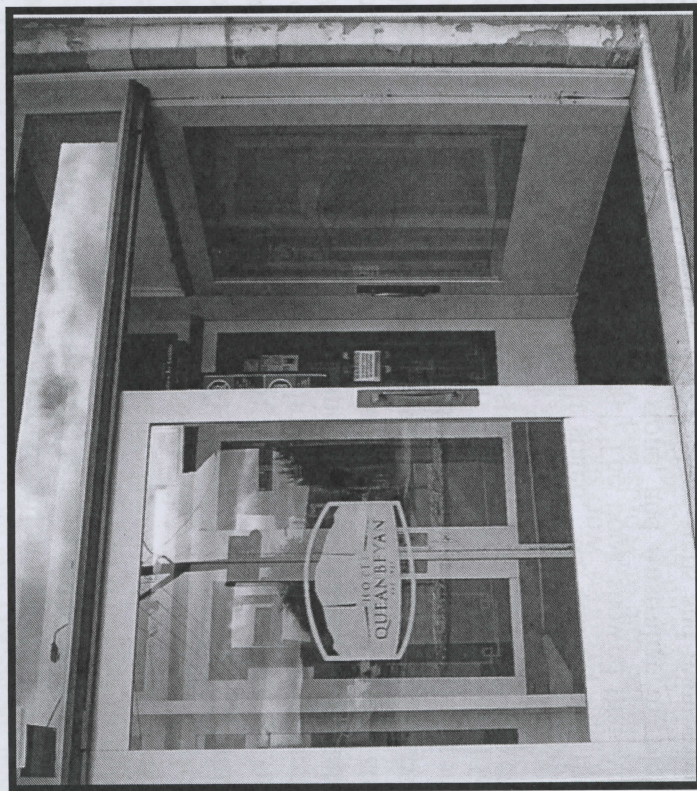
In 1915, to encourage use of local stone in the colony, the Government of NSW Technical Museum of Sydney published "Building and Ornamental Stones of Australia" It stated, "we can replace the bark gunya with stone and marble cities." The book showed that Australia could produce its own ornamental stone, and Australian marble began to be brought into use; marble tables, door steps and mantelpieces, as we see in Queanbeyan.

Michelago's multicoloured marble is commended, as are Queanbeyan's "high bluffs of marble flanking the Queanbeyan River about three miles out of town.. Queanbeyan's finely laminated marble varies in colour from white, blue, pale pink, brownish and light green.."

The sample I have before me as I write, is white with brown laminations. Examples of the local marble can be seen in doorsteps at the 'Top Pub Hotel.' Queanbeyan's quartzite is also noted as being an abundant stone in this neighbourhood, and I have seen quartzite fireplaces in some older Queanbeyan homes.



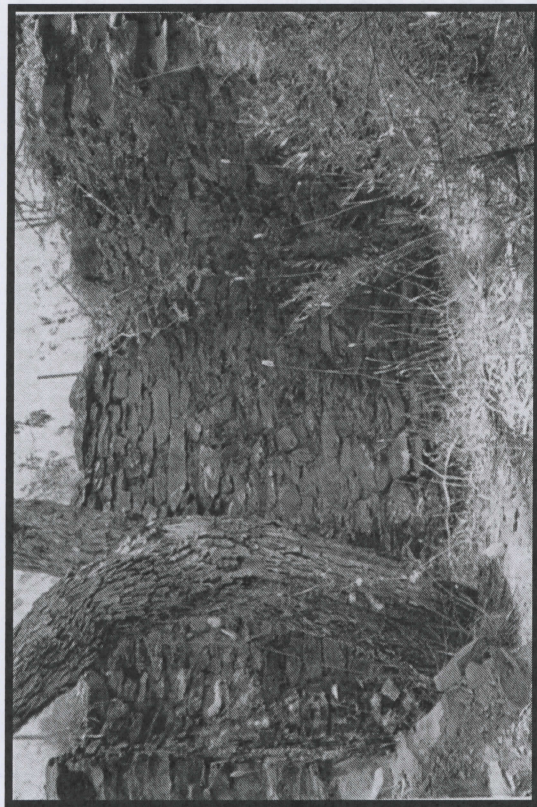
The white varieties have been used in commercial buildings and ecclesiastical edifices in the town.



Limestone at White Rocks, which is white and thinly bedded, was suggested as being useful for crushing, road metal and aggregate.

An old track, almost at river level, can be seen today leading to an early quarry, with nearby the remains of an old kiln, possibly a lime kiln.

The Government book showed that Queanbeyan was well represented in considering the use of its local rock, and the author concluded "there is no reason we should not evolve a style of architectural decoration purely Australian."



Rosemary Curry

#### References:

Building & Ornamental Stones of Australia Published 1915

Authority of the Government of NSW Technological Museum Sydney Curator R. T. Baker  
Department of National Development Bureau of Mineral Resources Geology & Geophysics 1950 Parish of Queanbeyan,

W C Smith Photographs: Rebecca Curry

#### Letter to the Editor:

In response to the excellent story of pioneer family head Lillian Whitby and her move to Queanbeyan in 1940 I was curious as to the location of her cake shop in Cooma Street, Queanbeyan so I asked her son Harold, now 91, who told me it was located where the Eden Monaro Cancer Council building now stands on the corner of Cooma Street and Glebe Avenue and next door to Lindbeck's butchery. I thought it could have been at No 12 Cooma Street on the opposite side of the road, but he said, the Melanis family ran an ice cream and lolly shop from that location as well as it being their residence!

Patrick Jeffrey, March 7, 2017



## MARGARET CURRAN: SCRUBBING AGAINST THE GRAIN

The remnants of an expensive 1881 Celtic cross commemorating Margaret Curran in the shady flat of the Riverside Cemetery would suggest that she was the matriarch of a well-to-do local family and that she had enjoyed a prosperous life in the Queanbeyan district. Nothing could be further from the truth. The monument is certainly testament to the esteem and love in which she was held by those she left behind, but Margaret and her family spent most of their years in Queanbeyan near destitution and her children frequented the court reports of the early 1860s. Margaret Curran was a deserted wife who faced her poverty and dire circumstances so effectively that by the time she died she had risen to become a respected member of the community. She managed to flourish 'against the grain'.

### Migration, 1841

Margaret Conba was an Irish dairymaid from Charleville, Cork. In 1841 she married Joseph Curran, a farm hand. A few weeks later, they migrated on assisted passage to New South Wales.

In her migration records Margaret is said to have been able to read, but not write.<sup>25</sup> English proficiency for a Gaelic-speaking dairymaid is remarkable. The literacy rate (i.e. the ability to read English) for women in Cork was just 28 per cent.<sup>26</sup> It can be safely assumed that the rates were much lower for émigrés as they were traditionally drawn from the poorer and less educated cohorts. From this, we might conclude that Margaret was lucky enough to have attended a 'hedge school', or similar, conducted by an itinerant priest or teacher, who was paid 'in kind' by local families.

<sup>25</sup> 1841 assisted-passenger records for Joseph and Margaret Curran and the *Lascar* passenger list.

<sup>26</sup> The tables in S Duffy, *The Illustrated History of Ireland*, Dublin, 2000, p. 159 include the 1841 English literacy statistics for all counties, split by gender.

At Cork Harbour in July 1841, the young Currans boarded the *Lascar* and headed for their strange new home. They were the first and only children from their respective families to take this immense risk. The brig arrived in Sydney almost four months later. Margaret and Joseph disembarked with 145 other 'bounty immigrants'.<sup>27</sup> The young couple must have been viewed as being of sturdy character, as there were two illiterate single young women listed as travelling 'under their care'. The immigration papers also show that they were both to be indentured to Archibald MacLeod, of 'Maryvale' farm at Liverpool. Convict transportation to NSW had just ceased and the MacLeods would have been keen to secure new workers. In any case, the 'bounty migrants' were viewed as 'better' workers than their 'unwilling' convict counterparts.<sup>28</sup>

Nothing specific is known about the Currans' days in Liverpool, but we do know that Margaret was newly pregnant, when she disembarked. With this emerging responsibility, the young couple must have been intent on securing a good start. Members of another Irish family on the *Lascar*, the Shumacks, were also indentured to the MacLeods.<sup>29</sup> Like the Currans, they too ultimately moved southwest to settle on the Limestone Plains.

Margaret and Joseph were still in Liverpool by July 1842, as their first son, Patrick, was baptised there. By late 1843, however, we find that they had moved to Gundaroo, as their second son, Henry, was born in the district in September. The work arrangements and/or the precise location of the dwellings occupied by the Currans is not known, but from the baptismal records for their children, it can be confirmed that Joseph worked in the district as a shepherd and farm labourer.

<sup>27</sup> 1841 assisted-passenger records for Joseph and Margaret Curran and the *Lascar* passenger list. Cf. the announcement of its arrival in *Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser*, 13 November 1841, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> E. Lea-Scarlet, *Queanbeyan: District and People*, Queanbeyan, 1968, pp. 16-18.

<sup>29</sup> These were Peter and Joseph Shumack. See *Canberra Times*, 31 August 1931, p. 2. For the *Lascar* immigrants, see B. Maher, *Planting the Celtic Cross: Foundation of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn*, Canberra, 1997, pp. 54-55.



Perhaps the decisions of the Currans and Shumacks to move southwest originated during their time together at the MacLeod farm at Liverpool. It is tempting to conclude that the Shumacks influenced Joseph and Margaret's decision to settle in Gundaroo. On the other hand, the close connection of Irish migrants and the settlement patterns could be sufficient explanation in itself. After all, a number of other *Lascar* families had settled close by in County Murray; namely, the Sheas, Sheedys, Kellys, and Gillespies.<sup>30</sup> The latter family is listed immediately above the Currans in the passenger list and continue to this day to have a close ties with Curran descendants.

As Brian Maher proposed in 1981 the Gundaroo connection is likely to have been influenced by the fact that Archibald MacLeod's brother, Donald, had extensive land holdings there.<sup>31</sup> However, Donald had died in 1840 and it was left to Archibald to manage his brother's estate on behalf of Donald's son and heir. It seems, therefore, quite likely that it was Archibald who sent Joseph and Margaret to work on his brother's 'Barnsdale' station, situated on the western bank of the Yass River, opposite where Gundaroo village was beginning to emerge.<sup>32</sup> By the time the young Currans arrived at Gundaroo, most of the riverfront acreage had been appropriated in large parcels secured by a small number of established families and absentee landlords.

At this time the bulk of the Gundaroo workforce was comprised of convict workers and emancipists (known as 'lags'). The 1836 census of the County of Murray, which covered Yass, Gunning, Queanbeyan, Bungendore, and Gundaroo, shows that precisely half of the population was identified as convicts. At Gundaroo, the split may have been even higher with the area dominated by larger estates, which tended to rely more heavily on seconded convict labour. But this situation was changing quickly. By the 1841 census, Gundaroo was listed as having 388 inhabitants with convict representation having dropped to about a quarter of the count. The Currans, as bounty migrants, were in a steadily increasing cohort of citizens. Another emerging

<sup>30</sup> B. Maher, 'Bounty Migrants from Emerald Isle', *Canberra Historical Journal*, 7 (1981), p. 11; B. Maher, *In Praise of Pioneers: an Account of the Keffe and Curran Families - Queanbeyan District*, Canberra, 1981, pp. 6, 28

<sup>31</sup> Maher, *In Praise of Pioneers*, p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> E. Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, Canberra, 1972, pp. 10, 21-22.

class was comprised of settlers and emancipists, who were taking up small land holdings, either as tenant farmers, or leaseholders in their own right.<sup>33</sup>

It is also interesting to note that the 1841 census showed that Barnsdale was not only the second-largest Gundaroo station in terms of residents, with 42 people enumerated, but the homestead itself was only one of two stone buildings in the district.<sup>34</sup> Of course, the workers, like Joseph and Margaret, would have been housed in outbuildings constructed from poorer building materials. Some may even have set themselves up as tenants on small leaseholdings in slab huts that they had fashioned themselves.

When the Currans arrived in 1843, conditions in Gundaroo and its hinterland were starting to deteriorate due to drought and a general downturn in the colonial economy. Lea-Scarlett says that Archibald MacLeod had sent his young sons to work on his brother's selection at Gundaroo to gain some 'bush experience' in the early 1840s; i.e. the time that the Currans would have been there. According to him, the boys 'allowed Barnsdale to become more afflicted than any other property by problems of convict insolence and time-wasting'.<sup>35</sup> If this were true, then the Currans, as trusted employees of the MacLeods and with years of farming experience between them, would have been valuable labour assets. In any case, the impact of a rural recession and the alleged mismanagement of the young MacLeods seem to have precipitated the demise of the family's presence in the district. In early 1845 the MacLeods quit Barnsdale, leasing it out to Thomas Turner.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> This group, of course, was about to expand dramatically when Robertson's land reforms were enacted in 1861. But at this stage, it was still very difficult for the smaller farmers to get established. See *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 38-46 (s.v. 'Sir John Robertson').

<sup>34</sup> The other was the *Harrow Inn*. There were also three brick buildings, but the rest were all timber constructions. See Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, pp. 15, 17, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, p. 17; cf. p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> This is the same Thomas Turner who is recorded as the groom of the very first marriage recorded in the registry of St John's Church, Canberra (23 July 1845).



Donald MacLeod junior explained his situation as follows in correspondence to the incoming proprietors.<sup>37</sup>

*I waited up to the last possible moment but finding it in vain I have moved on with all and sundry ... I have arranged with one of the Tenants to thresh and remove the wheat out of your way and if you could secure the fence round the Hay you will oblige me.*

The Turners soon restocked and made the property, once more, into a profitable operation. It is a reasonable assumption that the Currans would have stayed on to help with the transition.

During the Currans' time in the district, it could be argued that the young family would have related more closely to the local Catholic families (mostly of Irish origin and Gaelic speakers), who tended to be congregated in smaller holdings at Mugwell and Back Creek and towards Tallagandra, rather than with their Protestant masters or with pioneers of non-Irish origin.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, they would have joined them in worship, congregating at Mugwell and other places to celebrate Masses delivered in the open by Michael Brennan, the resident priest at Yass, or by itinerant priests travelling out from St Mary's in Sydney, conducting bush ceremonies.<sup>39</sup>

Thankfully, the intermingling of cultures and views in the new country would eventually dilute these prejudices. For example, we have already seen the

<sup>37</sup> Quoted from the 'Turner papers'; cf. Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, p. 22. I am grateful to Brigid Whitbread of the Queanbeyan City Library for arranging access to a set of these papers. Unfortunately, I could find no reference to the Currans in the other correspondence and documentation in the Turner archive.

<sup>38</sup> Speaking Irish by convicts in Australia invoked an automatic penalty of 15 lashes, yet it was still the common language of Irish immigrants in the 1820s. See C. Fritz in T. Foley and F. Bateman, *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers Delivered at the Ninth Irish-Australian Conference, Galway, April 1997*, Sydney, 2000, pp. 57-66.

<sup>39</sup> For a summary of Fr. Brennan's career, see *Nepean Times*, 4 August 1914, p. 8; Maher, *Planting the Celtic Cross*, pp. 93, 98, 101-104, 109, 115-116, 119, 294; B. Maher, *Sesquicentenary (1862-2012), Diocese of Goulburn (1862-1948), Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (1948-2012): Collected Documents and Clergy Directory*, Canberra, 2012, p. 58.

patronage of the MacLeod brothers and its positive impact on the Currans, but many years later, Donald MacLeod junior, donated some his family's land to be used as a non-denominational cemetery (primarily by local Catholic families), when the Anglican Minister refused to bury people of other denominations in the general Gundaroo cemetery.<sup>40</sup>

### Life in the Queanbeyan district (1847-1862)

In 1847, Margaret was aged 28 years and Joseph was about 32. Maher suggests that after a few years in Gundaroo they moved to the Queanbeyan district so that Joseph could take up employment with the Palmer families on the Limestone Plains.<sup>41</sup> The baptism registration for the Currans' third son, Richard, shows that Joseph was still working as a 'shepherd' in the Gundaroo area as late as November 1846. But in the following year, their first daughter, Elizabeth, was baptised on 27 June in Queanbeyan. The documentation from this time shows that Joseph was now living and working as a farm hand at Jerrabomberra station.

The couple probably had little choice in moving to Queanbeyan. Conditions for the cattle stations along the Gundaroo riverfronts were worsening. The prospects at the Palmers' Jerrabomberra property and other stations in the Queanbeyan district were much better and the new village at Queanbeyan was larger and less isolated than little Gundaroo. Religion may also have been a factor. The first Catholic Church at Gundaroo, St Josephs, was not built until 1881. Queanbeyan, on the other hand, had a stronger Catholic presence. St Gregory's was founded in 1850. A formal Catholic school, attached to it, had been established in the town as early as 1852.<sup>42</sup>

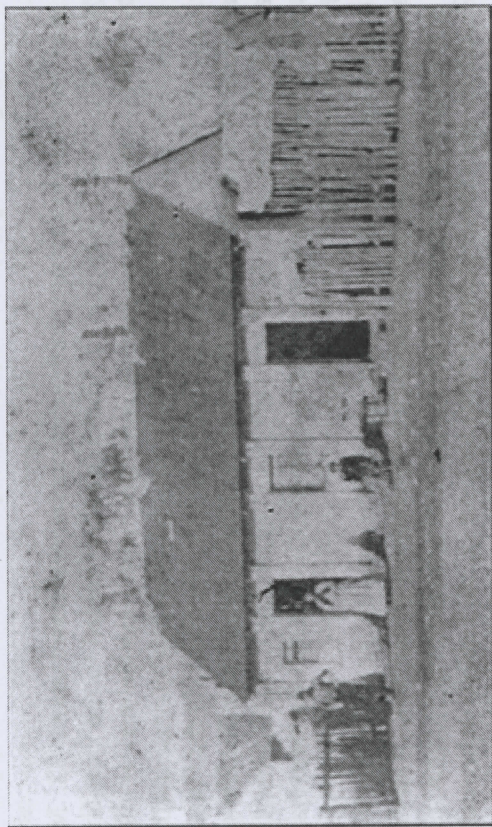
<sup>40</sup> See Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, p. 101 (cf. pp. 52-53, 146). MacLeod's kindness is recognised at the old cemetery in a plaque.

<sup>41</sup> Maher, *In Praise of Pioneers*, p. 28. As early as June 1843 we read in the Queanbeyan register of Catholic baptisms that Joseph and Margaret were sponsors at the christening of Ann Roberts. For the Palmers, see their entries in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 308-10; J. Palmer, 'The Palmers of Ginninderra', *Canberra Historical Journal*, 2 (1978), pp. 26-31.

<sup>42</sup> Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, p. 39. Ginninderra had its own Catholic Church (St Francis) as early as 1872. In the Canberra region, the divisions were already clear enough. The



We next hear of the Currans in the baptism certificates for Joseph (born 1849), George (born 1852) and John (born 1855). In these documents, the Currans are described as residents of Queanbeyan. Family tradition has them specifically placed at, or near, 'The Oaks', a station immediately north of Queanbeyan nestled in the junction of the Queanbeyan and Molonglo Rivers.



**Believed to be the Curran's home at 'The Oaks', near Queanbeyan (now Oaks Estate in the ACT), c.1861**

This photograph has survived in the family album, which claims to be of the Curran dwelling. It dates to the early 1860s. Unfortunately, there has been no independent confirmation that it is an Oaks Estate home, although most

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Campbells at Duntroon tended to employ Scottish Presbyterians, Terence Murray's Yarralumla station attracted Catholics and the Palmers and then Davises at Palmerville (later Ginninderra) created a largely Anglican core with a few English Catholics. Although many of the older generation of historians, out of discretion, tend to be reluctant to address the issue of sectarianism head on, nevertheless, see it is raised in Lea-Scarlett, *Queanbeyan*, pp. 35,144; Maher, 'The History of the Catholic Community of Canberra', *Canberra Historical Journal*, 27 (1991), pp. 27-8; Maher, *Planting the Celtic Cross*, pp. 27, 50-51.

pundits accept the identification as likely to be accurate on the basis of the strong oral tradition passed on in the family and the architecture of the building. Like so many aspects of the lives of this generation of Currans, we are forced to rely on probability. But if it is the Currans, as widely believed, the photograph appears to show Joseph standing on Margaret's right. On her left is seated an elderly, unidentified man, who may also have been an Oaks Estate farm hand.

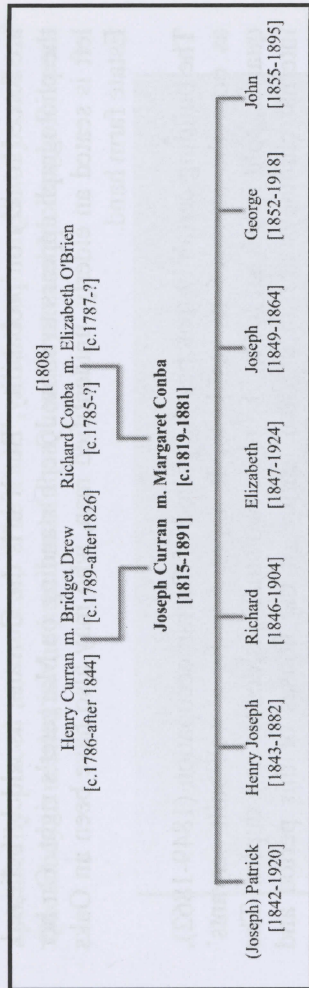
The building certainly matches the period of Curran occupation (1849-1862), as does the attire of its residents. It appears to be a well-built servants' quarter, split into what looks like to be two small residences as a duplex. The internal chimneys are an unusual feature of the houses of this period and indicate that it was professionally built. Homestead outbuildings constructed at this time tended to have semi-detached chimneys or separate kitchens as a precaution against fire. At this time, more substantial stone buildings with glazed windows and slate or shingle roofs were gradually replacing the old slab and bark-roofed structures that dominated the countryside and it looks like the Currans were lucky enough to be housed in one of them.

As mentioned above, the family was residing in the district by 1849 – probably at Oaks Estate – before moving to a separate home in the township itself. Queanbeyan was located very close to the large properties and it is a sensible conclusion that Joseph continued working as a shepherd and farm labourer for the wealthy pastoralists who had taken all the river frontage and prime agricultural land.

In the space of 13 years, Margaret had given birth to seven children; i.e. about one child every two years. We have already heard about the arrival of many of these children, as their baptism records were important clues in tracing the Curran journey from Liverpool to Gundaroo, then Jerrabomberra, before finally coming to Queanbeyan. By 1855, therefore, Margaret was tending a brood of seven: ranging from John, a new-born, to the eldest, Patrick, a teenager of 13 years. Just one of them, Elizabeth, was a girl. Unusually for the age, all children survived infancy. It is a fair assumption that the Curran children would not have been so lucky, if their parents had remained in Ireland. Nevertheless, this large family and its low income must have put

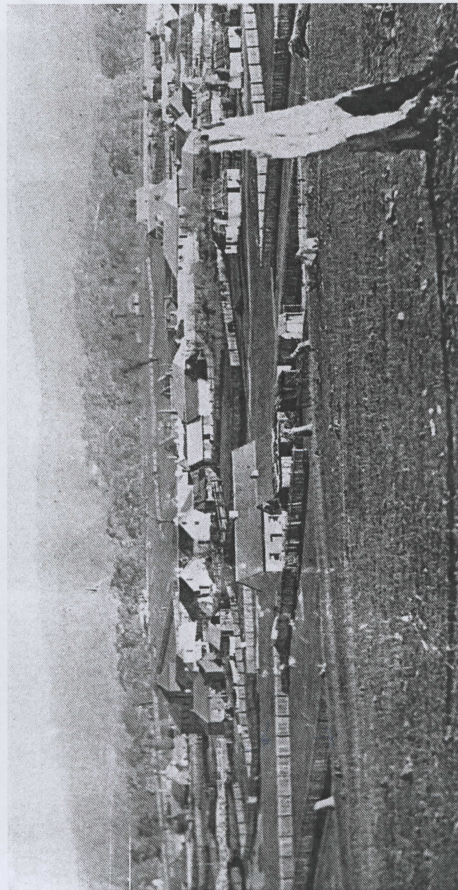


considerable strain on the limited resources and capital of Joseph and Margaret.



### The family of Joseph Curran and Margaret Conba

The story of how Margaret survived with seven small children will be concluded in the September issue of *Quinbean*.



Early Queanbeyan, c 1875, showing Quigley's cottage on the corner of Morisset and Collett Streets in the foreground, Photo Pickering's Panorama, QPRC Library

## THE STORY OF THE LANYON SAWMILL



The remains of the Lanyon sawmill. Photograph Patrick Jeffrey 2016

The location of the remains of this sawmill is adjacent to Brian and Helen Read's Homestead on South Lanyon on the opposite side of the river to the Tharwa village.

Bert Edwards came to Lanyon Station in early 1940 as a hands on Station Manager with the experience of all sections of farm management and set about making Lanyon more self sufficient as well as providing materials such as fodder and stock to send to the other Stations owned by the T.A. Fields family.



During the war years materials such as building timber were very scarce so Bert Edwards set about building a small sawmill to provide timber to build houses, sheds, gate posts, fence posts and railings on the property.

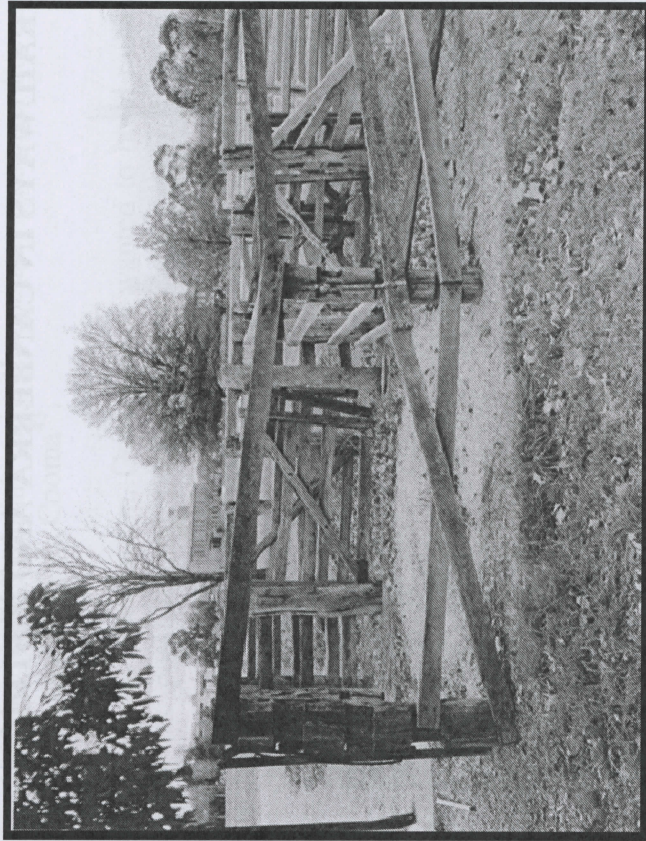
There were plenty of yellow and red box trees on the hills forming the eastern boundary of the property and these were cut down to manageable size with a drag saw (early Hargan saw model) and dragged to the sawmill by tractor or small bulldozer, hence the location of the sawmill being nearby.

The timber to be milled was shifted in steel trollies on a miniature railway line to the cutting saw and the waste material was shifted away the same way after milling was finished. The power for the mill saw was provided by a heavy leather belt attached to the flywheel of one of the station tractors.

During the late 1940's I worked on Lanyon during the Christmas school holidays burr cutting and during 1951-52 I worked five and a half days a week as a Station Hand for five pounds a week less tax. This brings me to my experience with the sawmill.

Bert Edwards was at that time President of the Queanbeyan Show Society and with the blessing of the Fields Family provided a lot of help to the Society in Labour and materials to improve the Showgrounds.

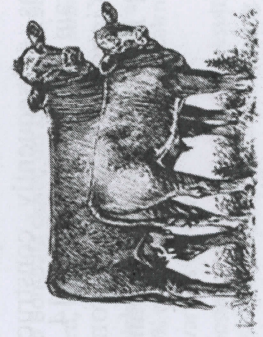
New cattle yards were needed at the showgrounds so a team of us from Lanyon Station went out to a property on Gundaroo Road between what is now the suburb of Forde and the village of Sutton and cut down stringy bark trees with cross cut saws, cut them to manageable sizes transported them back to the Lanyon sawmill cut them into the required sizes, took them to the Queanbeyan Showground and built new cattle yards which part of them are still standing and being used today.



The Cattleyards, Queanbeyan Showground. Photograph Pat Jeffery, 2016

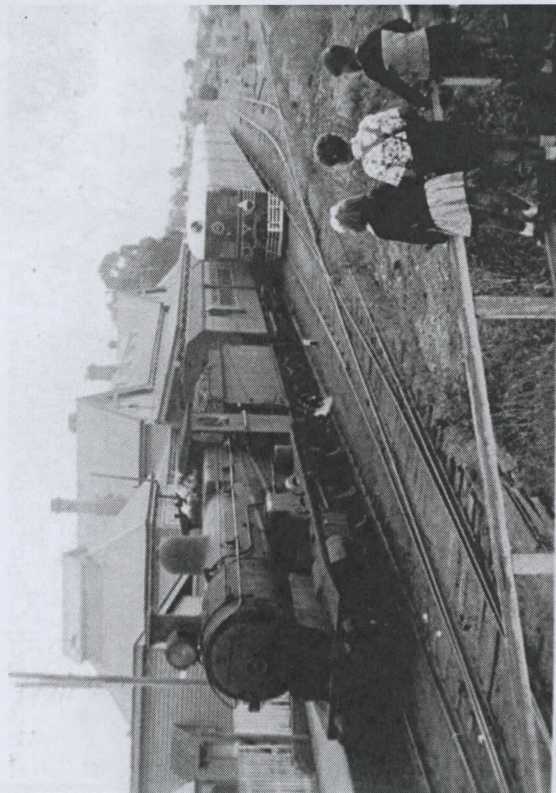
To my knowledge the sawmill has no connection what so ever to the Tharwa Bridge, the mill was private and the bridge was the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

**Patrick Jeffery**





## RAILWAYS IN CANBERRA AND DISTRICT



Train movements Queanbeyan c 1950

The railway south from Sydney reached Goulburn in 1869, then Gunning 1875, Binalong 1876, Yass Junction 1876, Cootamundra 1877, Junee 1878 and Albury 1881. Public pressure led to a branch line being constructed from Joppa Junction, near Goulburn to the Monaro, reaching Tarago in 1884, Bungendore 1885, Queanbeyan 8 September 1887 and Cooma 1889.

A further extension to Bombala was completed in 1921. A branch line from Queanbeyan was subsequently constructed for the National Capital and the first train arrived in May 1914. The current Canberra railway station is at Kingston, about 6km from the city centre. The railway to Cooma and Bombala beyond Queanbeyan was abandoned

after 1989 but NSW Trainlink currently operates passenger bus services to Bombala and Eden via Cooma<sup>43</sup>.

At the time of construction, Governments wanted to build railways as cheaply as possible and the political debate centered around the preference for using steam locomotives on steel rail or horse drawn wagons on wooden rail. Hence the tracks constructed are now considered substandard due to excessive curvature and additional distance required for easy gradients for steam engines. Trains travelling from Sydney to Melbourne via Albury traverse curves totaling 72 complete circles<sup>44</sup>. Much locomotive energy is consumed in speed variations due to the many curves. As a result, railways are at an acute competitive disadvantage and the proportion of freight conveyed between Sydney and Melbourne by rail is estimated as much less than 20% of total<sup>45</sup>.

Improvements since original construction have been minimal. In 1919, the section between Picton and Mittagong was shifted to an eastwards alignment with easier grades for steam engines and the track was also duplicated.

Further duplication was completed as far as Junee between 1941 and 1946. A significant engineering feature is the Bethungra spiral between Cootamundra and Junee which was also intended to ease the gradients for steam engines.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> The section from Cooma to Bombala closed on 26 March 1986.

<sup>44</sup> Estimated by Dr. Philip Laird, University of Wollongong, *Submission to National Transport Commission*, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Rail moves over 80% of freight from Adelaide to Perth and around 90% from Adelaide to Darwin. Rail moves about 30% of freight on the Brisbane-Cairns corridor. Information from *Railway Digest*, ARHS NSW, various editions.

<sup>46</sup> Additional traffic on the Joppa-Junction to Cooma line resulting from the Snowy Mountains scheme in the 1950's resulted in additional passing loops being installed at



Beyond Junee, the track in New South Wales is only single apart from some crossing loops. In recent times, the Australian Rail Track Corporation has effected some further improvements. These include installation of concrete sleepers, additional and longer crossing loops on the single track sections and electric signaling. Some bridges have been replaced, e.g. that over the Murrumbidgee River at Wagga Wagga. In Victoria, the broad gauge line from Albury to Seymour has recently been standardized and duplicate "east and west" tracks operate<sup>47</sup>.

On Sunday 15 January 2012, management of the Joppa Junction to Canberra branch line was accorded to John Holland Rail on behalf of the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority of the NSW Government under a 10 year contract<sup>48</sup>. In addition, *Train Order Working* was introduced on this section during 2012. This has eliminated the need for the train driver to vacate his cabin to obtain a "staff" clearance before proceeding from one section to another as well as the need to manually adjust the semaphore signalling.

NSWTrainlink currently regularly operates passenger trains from Canberra to Sydney. However Canberra passengers wishing to travel to Melbourne need to catch a NSWTrainlink bus to Yass Junction to board the train there, or a V/Line bus to Albury or Bairnsdale to catch a V/line train to Melbourne. Very little freight is currently conveyed by rail to Canberra following cessation of oil cartage by Shell during 2009.

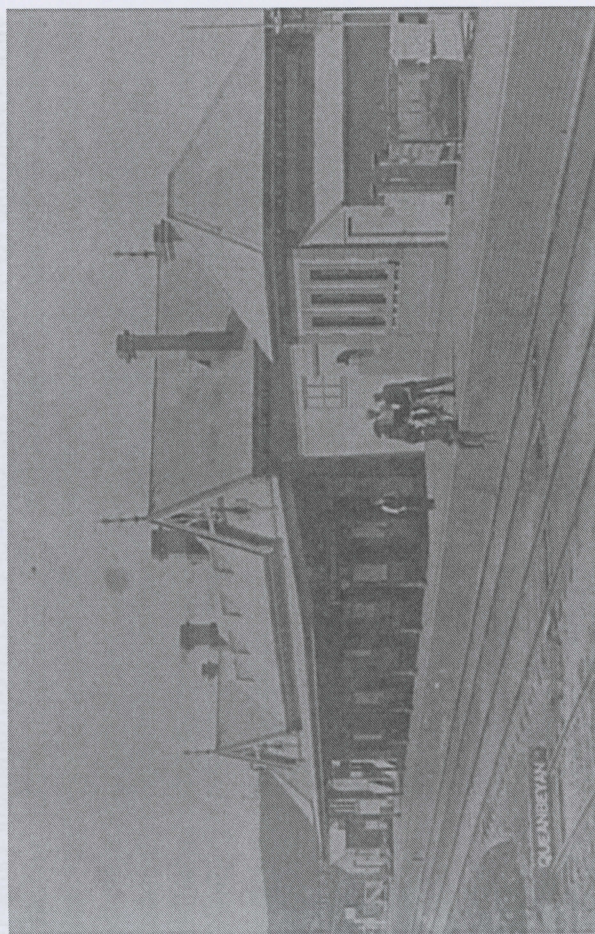
A railway formerly operated between Cootamundra and Tumut. The towns served included Gundagai, where the line crossed the

Springfield, Farrer, Royalla and Bredbo. These have since been removed or abandoned. *Railways of the Canberra and Monaro Districts*, HW Stokes, ARHS Canberra, 1984.

<sup>47</sup> The newly converted standard gauge line was ready for testing on 1 November 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Movement of trains is now controlled from the company's network management centre at Mayfield NSW.

Murrumbidgee River on a large iron girder bridge and wooden viaduct. The line opened as far as Gundagai on 10 November 1885 and was finally extended to Tumut on 12 October 1903. A branch to Batlow opened in 1922, which was extended to Kunama shortly after. Operations were suspended after flooding in 1984, and the Tumut line is now abandoned.



Queanbeyan Railway Station, Errol Lea-Scarlett Collection

## NEW XPLOER TRIN SERVICES FOR CANBERRA AND QUEANBEYAN

Passenger train services from Sydney to Canberra have been operated for several years using Xplorer multiple unit diesel railcars. However these were not acquired without much public agitation. The new Canberra services commenced operating on December 1993 initially using only two cars. Xplorers were also introduced on the North



Western service in October 1993 i.e. Sydney to Armidale and Moree. In November 1994 the NSW Government ordered a further four Xplorer carriages which permitted an additional intermediate car to be added to each Canberra service. Occasionally, a fourth has been used.

Prior to the Xplorers, three daily services operated, two using 900 series railcars and one XPT service. The Greiner Liberal Government came to power in 1988 and set about drastically reducing railway services throughout New South Wales. Over 9000 rail employees were discharged and many passenger rail services replaced with buses, including Canberra services. A protest meeting was held at Canberra Station organised by the Labor federal member for Eden-Monaro, Mr. Jim Snow prior to the arrival of the last XPT from Sydney to Canberra on 9 February 1990. A raft of speakers included politicians, environmentalists and unionists. The Canberra rail services then operating were replaced with two 1940's HUB/RUB train sets providing three daily services at inconvenient hours, taking around 5 hours to complete the journey, with frequent stops, one even arriving at 4.00am, supplemented by eight bus services bearing the fancy title *Express Passenger Coach* (XPC).

A public meeting in response to widespread concern about the inferior services was held at the Queanbeyan Leagues Club on 22 May 1990 chaired by the Labor candidate for Monaro, Ms. Penny Lockwood. The meeting resolved to form a volunteer working group to campaign to save the passenger train service from Sydney to Queanbeyan and Canberra, and possibly beyond. The group was titled *Canberra-Queanbeyan Regional Transport Action Group* (CQRTAG) affiliated with a state wide group, the *Transport Action Council of NSW*. A transport action group was also formed in Cooma in response to train services ceasing there. Another group, *Friends of the Northern Railway* was formed in 1989, which led a campaign to save the passenger train service from Sydney to Armidale on the Northern Tablelands of New

South Wales and to Moree on the north-western line. Passenger train services north of Tamworth were also axed in February 1990.

The CQRTAG sought consultation with all local politicians in Canberra, Queanbeyan and district. Response from the conservative politicians was indifferent, but on 3 July 1990, Mrs. Elizabeth Kirkby, NSW Democrat MLC visited Queanbeyan and received a deputation. On 11 August an intense public demonstration was held at Queanbeyan Railway Station on arrival of the train from Sydney carrying the Labor Shadow Minister for Transport, Mr. Brian Langton. On 25 August, the *Transport Action Council of NSW* organised a conference at the National Press Club Canberra, to launch a transport program *Towards 2000*, speakers included the Rt. Hon. Bob Browne and Hon. Gough Whitlam.

Tenders for the new Xplorer trains were called on August 8, 1990. On Friday 15 May 1991, the NSW Transport Minister, Mr. Bruce Baird visited Queanbeyan to sign an agreement for purchase of the Xplorer Trains from ABB Brown Boveri Australia.

Greiner called a snap election for 25 May 1991, resulting in a hung Parliament, with the Coalition one seat short of a majority. Greiner was forced into a minority government, relying on support from four Independent MPs. Cuts to public services, including railways, were cited as significant to the outcome. Endangered National Party MPs in marginal seats, welcomed the restored services.

The Xplorers initially provided three daily services, but this was reduced to two for a time, citing reduced bookings, by eliminating the evening services. However the present NSW Government restored the three daily services which are currently heavily patronized.

**Bill Fraser**



## FIRE!

### THE TINDERRY FIRE OF 1957



Bush Fire, photo Science Illustrated

The last big fire in the Tinderry Mountains began in October 1957 and it started from Tinderry Creek south of the Prouse's property *The Big Tinderry* and burnt through the high country of the *Cockatoo*, *Wool Pack*, *The Little Tinderry*, *Calsbash*, *Sandy Flat*, *Fisties* and through to Jerangle, then blowing across to the *Slap Up* area in the Baja Mountains and burning north through the Anembo Forrest area onto Tumanang Mountain and on to the Wild Cattle Flat Road.

At that time there were many eucalyptus distilleries operating in the area as the oil was worth 100 pounds for a 44 gallon drum and two men could cut and boil a drum a week. By comparison a shearer was paid five pounds one shillings and six pence for every 100 sheep shorn.

Most of the country burnt at the time had been stocked with sheep with very few cattle, not many kangaroos and there were no wild pigs at the time. There were many trees that had been lopped for eucalyptus leaves and with lots of regrowth and a build up of limbs, twigs and dried leaves there was a heavy load of fuel in lots of areas. The green tea tree was growing quickly and had spread over a large area at the time but had not grown as high as it was to grow in later years. There was also a lot of monkey and poa tussocks which always grew high and seeded in the late spring.

At the time the closest Fire Brigade was at Jerangle and they only had a hand pump and a 100 gallon galvanized tank with cracks in it and many holes. Mostly the mode of transport was by horse as the country was not very accessible by any other means and there was only a few tractors in the area. Walter Russ had his new Bedford truck which he used mainly to go to Jingera to do the mail run three times a week when the Queanbeyan River was running strong and was too high for his car to cross.

There were no fire trails - they were to be constructed in stages at a later time. Frank Hribar, Joe Semividge, Frank Romp and other immigrants were making the eucalyptus oil in the area. Their mode of transport was mainly by motor bike. Frank had a big Four Cylinder B.S.A. which was a very big bike and they were able to carry big loads of supplies on it. Both Frank and Joe were very big men.

With the vast amount of fencing destroyed by the fires both Frank and Joe went fencing after the fires and Frank Romp went to work for the Phillips family at Jerangle.

As the fires burnt day and night for over six weeks there were many times when there would be a lull in the winds and a slow down in the



spread of the fire but it continued to spread over many properties and the men trying to contain the fires were getting worn out and exhausted.

The women had done a wonderful job supporting the men by preparing food and drinks and delivering them to the fire front and feeding not only the locals but also the man power that was coming from far and wide.

Disaster almost struck when the wind changed one day and Don Phillips and Jack Boate were almost trapped in Sandy Flat. It was said at the time the only thing that saved them was their knowledge of the country and having very good horses and their skills as good bushmen.

The fire was high in Towneys and with a strong westerly wind blowing embers across to the Bagja mountain area behind *Slap Up* and into this mountainous country with no access other than on foot or horseback it became a very difficult task to try to contain it.

Many trails were raked by hand so back burning could be carried out at night only to find that the next day a big westerly wind about lunch time would result in not enough man power being available to patrol the fire line on the back burn carried out the night before and the fire would take another run into a new area.

Jack Boate grazed cattle in the *Slap Up* mountain area and Jim Grady grazed sheep in the Tumanang mountains and both knew the area very well. Jim was renowned as being a good horseman and with his beloved grey mare Peggy proved to be invaluable.

Days and weeks had passed and with no rain for almost the whole of 1957 the area was in severe drought conditions. The Forestry Department would offer no help nor would the State Government assist in any way. Les Whiley had not long bought the property *Adjinbilly*

from Laurie Kelly of Michelago. Les had been associated with the sawmilling company of Donaghue and Hopkins of Queanbeyan and owned three bulldozers which had been working some distance away and he offered the free use of them if transport could be arranged and paid for.

Again there was no financial assistance forth coming from any Government agency and even the Shire Council that had a low loader required a payment of 180 pounds for transporting the dozer. The only way to make things happen was for the land holders to collect the money themselves and pay the Shire before the transport would begin.

A Caterpillar D8 bulldozer arrived and Les, being very experienced in the bush got things underway as soon as possible. With man power in very short supply and many nearing exhaustion it was decided to see if it was at all possible for some help to be provided from the Army. Kevin Grady, Darcy Strudwick, Jack Grady and Jim Brown were delegated to approach Allan Frazer, the Member for Eden Monaro and Jack Seifert the Member for Monaro for assistance from the Army.

An approach was made that afternoon and by that night arrangements had been made for both Members to carry out an inspection of the fires early the next morning after which they were to report back to the Minister for the Army. It was decided that Jack Grady would pick up both Members from Queanbeyan at 9.30a.m. and travel to the fire ground at *Adjinbilly* and then on to what was known as Whites Paddock, a distance of 37 miles each way. They quickly decided they had seen enough and understood what was required and they would report back to the Minister as soon as possible on their return to Canberra. It was apparently a very fast trip in both directions.

By 3.00p.m. approval was granted for 80 cadets from Duntroon to be deployed to the fire ground and by 6.30p.m. they had arrived and



worked well into the night and were replaced in rotation from then on. By this time the fire had almost reached the Wild Cattle Flat Road but with the use of the bulldozers and the extra manpower the fire was brought under control and put out after a little over six weeks.

Work was pressing on the farms as almost all farmers involved in the fire did their shearing in the months of November and December. A good Christmas was had by all.

The Autumn rains came in 1958 although the wool prices were still depressed and remained that way for some time. This report was compiled from information obtained from a report prepared by Gary Grady on the Tinderry Fire 1957.

### John Rosewarne

## GEORGE LOCHART NAIRN MCINNES

### Block 10B Lanyon District - Property Name: 'Riverview'

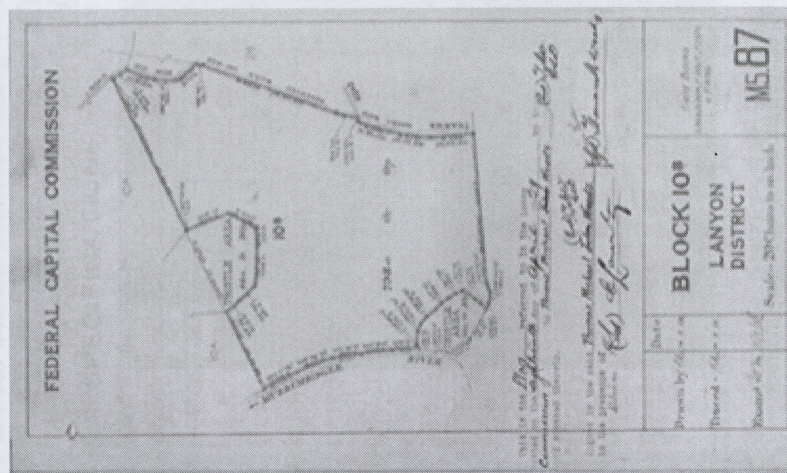
George Lockhart Nairn McInnes was born on 27th December 1876 at Kowen, NSW. He was named after the former Presbyterian Minister for the Queanbeyan district (1875-1880), the Rev. George Lockhart Nairn. McInnes was also prominent in the local Presbyterian community as an elder of St. Stephen's in Queanbeyan, NSW from 1926 to 1959. He was a well-known shearer in the Canberra district but had also served an apprenticeship with McPherson and Hannaford as a coachsmith.

McInnes enlisted in February 1916 in Sydney and served with the 18th Battalion in France from October 1916. In November 1916, he was

hospitalised with trench foot before returning to his unit in May 1917. He was hospitalised in October 1917, once again with trench foot.

McInnes was awarded the Military Medal for his actions as a Company runner on the 9th August 1918 at Rainecourt. He was at Mont St. Quentin on the 31st August 1918 and in the assault on the Beaurevoir Line in October 1918. He returned to Australia in July 1919 and was discharged on the 19th August 1919.

Lanyon Block 10B was a Soldier Settlement block in the Tuggeranong Subdivision. It was 890 acres (360 hectares) in size and was leased to McInnes from 5th April 1920 for 5/6 per acre per annum or £278/2/6 per annum. He did not live on the lease and apparently did not work it because in December 1921, McInnes asked that the lease be determined. The Commonwealth was prepared to do so but early in 1922, he wanted to assign the lease to a Samuel Daniel, a grazier of some note from the Captains Flat area of NSW. The Commonwealth did not agree to the transfer.





Government inspectors believed that McInnes:

*"found the cost of the destruction of noxious weeds (particularly saffron thistle) so great as, with the rental fixed at that time, to be beyond the earning capacity of the land. As certain rocky knobs within the two areas were so heavily infested with thistles and so studded with rocky outcrops that in the opinion of the Inspector it made cutting by hand a practical impossibility."*

The Federal Capital Commission (FCC) decided to fence off the area and let the weeds be choked off by grass. McInnes walked off the block and in 1924. Lanyon Block 10B was then leased to Thomas Woods from Tidbinbilla. Woods referred to this block as *Riverview*.



Google Maps image c2013 with Lanyon Block 10B boundary in black.

*George McInnes never married and was living on Surveyor Street, Queanbeyan when he died on the 23rd December 1959, four days short of his 83rd birthday.*

## Lee Davy

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NB – Mrs Davy has made particular use of the greatly expanded collection, on line, of the National Archives of Australia and encourages our readers to include this marvelous resource in their research tools.

## THE BUSHRANGERS

In January 1867, the people and Government of N.S.W. were outraged to hear of the ambush and killing of four "special" constables in the Jingera ranges 40 miles to the south of Braidwood.

For some years the depredations of bushrangers in the rugged, sparsely settled southern districts had alarmed the authorities, and **they** lied resorted to a number of methods to try to capture them, without success. In the early 1860's, Tom and John Clarke and their uncles Pat and Tom



Connell, were the leaders of a gang that ranged over many miles, stealing cattle and horses. Gradually they turned to robbery with **violent** w and held up stores, hotels and homesteads, in a great arc centred on their headquarters in the wild mountains, ravines and gullies of the **Jingerra** mountains near Jinden. Michelago, Foxlow, Gundaroo, Bungendore, Manar, Mongarlowe, and Araluen were all scenes of their exploits.



Thomas Clarke on racehorse Boomerang, NSW Police Public Relations Branch

The police, insufficient in numbers, inadequately trained and inadequately equipped with horses and guns, lacking the bushcraft mid knowledge of the country that the local boys possessed, were constantly thwarted in their attempts to capture the gang. The latter's whereabouts were protected by the small settlers either because of family ties, friendship, admiration ... or through fear. The police force was reorganize along para-military lines but this proved too inflexible and decision-making was too centralised and remote. It also reminded many of the settlers of the Royal Irish Constabulary and increased disaffection with the police.

In April 1866, the gang crossed over the Coast Range to attend the Bega races and afterwards held up the hotel at the gold town of Nerrigundah. Constable O Grady, although ill, went to "do his duty" and was shot and killed. In desperation, Premier Parkes appointed I "special" constables, to operate in plain clothes and without even the knowledge of the local police.

John Carroll (the leader, aged 38), John Fegan (aged about 30), Patrick Kennagh (aged 26), and Eneas McDonnell (aged about 50) pretended to be a surveying team working near the home of the Clarkes' parents and sisters, at Ballalaba, 12 miles to the south of Braidwood. Making friends with the family, they endeavoured to find out about the gang's movements, and indeed, hoped to take them by giving them doped grog. But the bushrangers were not fooled and were easily able to give the "specials" a wide berth. Carroll wrote to Premier Parkes, *'It would be impossible for me to convey to you a correct idea of the great sympathy shewn for the bushrangers, or the rapid means of communicating the movements of suspicious parties which they have established; but we have every hope before long we will outwit them.'*

At the end of 1866, Carroll and his men struck openly at the known sympathisers of the Clarke brothers and arrested seven people including the mother and two sisters, Margaret and Ann. In January they made a sweep south to Jinden, hoping to find the Clarkes in one of the selector's huts. When close by, they left their horses and went on foot, but never reached their destination. They were ambushed and shot. Carroll and Kennagh had retreated for half a mile, but had then apparently surrendered and been shot in cold blood. The police, called from Braidwood wrapped the bodies in bark, bound them with green hide, and buried them close by. After a few days, on the order of Parkes, the bodies were exhumed and taken by cart to Braidwood, where they were buried in the cemetery. Though many of the townspeople and indeed the police also, had been antagonistic to the



"specials", 150 people attended the funeral and the bell of St. Bede's tolled as the procession went to the cemetery.

Suspensions were naturally cast on the Clarke gang, but no evidence could be found that they were in fact the murderers. In a state of shock people of the district held meetings, expressing sympathy for widows and children of the "special" constables, and directing their **fear** and **anger** against some of the local magistrates.

It was obvious that the property of some magistrates, and even of their employees, was never stolen, and that some magistrates refused to adjudicate in cases involving the gang, or gave liberal bail and light sentences. The meeting called for an enquiry into law and order in the Braidwood district.

The Government acceded to the request, and appointed a commission of enquiry into the conduct of the magistrates and the police, "into the state of the population in relation to the existence and encouragement of crime in the District ... and into the personal connection of the bushrangers, and to what extent they have at any time been shielded or assisted in their desperate criminal courses by the connivance or the culpable silence and inactivity of persons not actually connected with their crimes." The Commission was asked to report within 4 weeks.

A reward of £5,000 (equal to approximately \$250,000 today) was offered for capture of all the men concerned, or £1500 for each person. Many more police were sent south and the Governor issued an extraordinary proclamation to the magistrates, freeholders and other residents to show their active support for justice or be suspected of supporting the criminals. However, in the next few weeks more robberies took place at Gundaroo and Bungendore, but Tom Connell was captured, found guilty and imprisoned. Another gang member.

Long Jim Taylor, was killed in a fall from his horse, and yet another follower, Billy Scott, was found murdered at Manar. It seemed that he had probably been killed by his "mates". Only Tom and John Clarke were left.

The police now had paid informers in the heart of Clarke country, the Jingeras, and on April 17th they ambushed the brothers in Berry's hut. Shots were exchanged, a policeman and the black tracker "Sir" Watkin Wyne were wounded but at last the two brothers surrendered.



The Clarke brothers in captivity, 1867

They were taken to Sydney by ship from Nelligen, found guilty of shooting with intent to kill, and sentenced to death. This sentence was delayed while an appeal was launched on the grounds of "non direction" by the judge Sir Alfred Stephens, the Chief Justice of N.S.W. The appeal was unsuccessful, and Tom and John Clarke were hanged on June 25th 1867.

So ended a dramatic and turbulent time in Braidwood history. What were the circumstances that turned promising young strong men to robbery and killing? There must have been general factors at work because bushranging was endemic

in the Eastern States at that time. The commission criticised the quality of many of the police. A few were even drunkards and had lost the respect of the community. The system of local honorary untrained magistrates sometimes resulted in biased treatment of prisoners and the average person lost faith in the justice system. Many small farmers,



anxious to realise a dream of land ownership, found that the small acreages available for selection were insufficient to maintain a family so cattle and sheep stealing became a way of life, and small children participated as soon as they could ride a horse.

Most importantly, the Commission reported, the Government had made no effort to spread education to the children of these isolated areas. Tom and John Clarke were both illiterate; they could not even write their names. The Churches had opposed the introduction of a free, secular school system, and the priests rarely ventured into these remote parts. Young people grew up without moral training, rejoicing only in their ability to ride like the wind in their wild native mountains. Untrained for any trade, they ignored other possible occupations that appeared staid and boring by comparison. Reverend Allan, giving evidence at the Commission said "they supply themselves with funds by stealing ... From that they go to stealing cattle and selling them, and stealing horses, and from that they go to the highway."

After the execution of the Clarke brothers, the Braidwood area was quiet. The turmoil of the height of the goldrush over, the pastoral economy began to dominate the region again. The illiterate Clarkes left no written declarations, as their more famous "brother in arms" Ned Kelly did, a decade later. There was no myth or legend created to stir the curiosity of sociologists a century later.

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