

Quinbean

Volume 11 No 2
September 2018



The Journal of
Queanbeyan and District Historical Museum Society Inc.

QUEANBEYAN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL MUSEUM SOCIETY INC.

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 Palerang Regional Council through the context of the Museum of Queanbeyan.

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THE MUSEUM OF QUEANBEYAN

Is found at 10 Farrer Place Queanbeyan, next to the Police Complex and opposite the State Office Building.

The Museum is open from 1pm to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays or by arrangement.

Cover Photograph: Queanbeyan Band, 1938
QDHMS Collection, MF13.1

Quimbeam

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

John McGlynn has stepped down from the position of President of the Queanbeyan and District Historical Museum Society (QDHMS) after many years. I was nominated as Temporary President in May. I am really nervous about it but am willing to give it a go, and learn along the way. I have much to learn with help from John and others.

A big 'Thank You' to our dedicated Committee members, who have also offered to help me while I learn what to do. I do not have a computer and am not computer literate, but I can be useful to the Museum and hopefully to the Committee.

I love our Museum and, enjoy volunteering on the weekends, welcoming and chatting to the visitors. I love helping on open days and taking part at our display table at the Multicultural Festivals.

I have never been an "office person" but want to be part of the Committee and its activities. I have been acting President since May and am happy to continue for as long as needed and continue to be useful to the Society.

Maria Lukacs

FROM THE EDITOR

I'd like to thank the contributors to this edition for their words and Gillian Kelly for her advice on editing and for designing the lay-out of the journal. I'd also like to thank Kerrie Ruth for her sterling work in producing the final version of the journal from a number of formats.

Quinbean September 2018 features a scholarly article from James McDonald which traces his forebears and in doing so reveals many interesting details of life in this district. The article by John Shortis emphasises the importance of entertainment in the Queanbeyan community and brings the history to the present times. Nicole Overall has outlined the celebration of 180 years of history in a display of objects. If you read this before October 14 don't miss out on looking at the exhibits. The official launch of *180 Mementos* | *180 Years* will take place on the evening of Thursday, September 27 at The Q and all are welcome to attend. To confirm interest and for further details and venues that will be hosting mementos, email:

qbn@qbcityofchampions.com.au or see 180Mementos.wixsite.com/qttown.

I have used an interview with two Polish ladies to present their story of what it was like to make a home in Queanbeyan after the 2nd World War. Rosemary Curry has found a fascinating snippet of history bringing together the growth of Canberra, the railway and Queanbeyan.

It is real learning experience to edit *Quinbean*. Not only are there valuable aspects of history to absorb but the details of dealing with computers and the software is an experience both frustrating and rewarding.

I urge any of our readers with a story to tell, long or short, of the distant past or recent present, in prose, poetry or pictures, to send it to me at mcglynn_john@hotmail.com or qbnmuseum@yahoo.com.au, or you can leave it at the Museum or post it to: Editor, Quinbean, QDHMS, PO Box 480, Queanbeyan 2620.

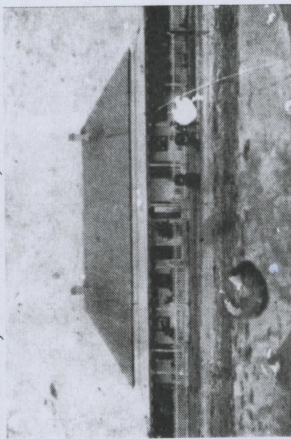
John McGlynn

THE COLLETT'S' KINDNESS

Two lines of my ancestors benefitted from kindnesses shown them from the industrious Collett family of Queanbeyan. In part, this article is a tribute to what was done so many years before. Members of the Lodge family were employed by the Colletts in Gunning and Queanbeyan when the Lodges had fallen upon some very hard times in 1865 and young Sarah Rich (post Reid) was employed by the Colletts when her father was struggling to abate a number of personal demons after the death of his wife in 1880. My family always spoke affectionately of the Colletts. This article explains why.

(i) The Lodge and Collett connection

Henry and Rebecca Lodge failed in their attempt to rejuvenate Goulburn's ailing *John Barleycorn Inn* in the early 1860s. Making matters worse, was the prosecution of their son, Thomas, on trumped-up charges for aiding the Hall gang at his own *Breadalbane Hotel* in early 1865. The Lodge family was now broke. Twenty years of funds from farming at Menangle had been accrued, invested, and then lost, in these two hotels by 1865.¹



Thomas Lodge's *Breadalbane Hotel*, c. 1875.

The individuals on the right may be Hannan family members²

¹ See J. McDonald, 'Henry Curran, Bushrangers, and a Boorowa Dream', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, vol. 38, 2017, pp. 22-6.

² The dating is controversial. Current owner, Shlomi Bonet has undertaken research which would suggest that the shingled roof in the photograph dates it to between 1858 and 1880 (when corrugated iron would have been used). The provenance of the photograph is the Hannan family, therefore, it narrows the range to 1866-1877 (i.e. their period operating it as a licensed hotel). The dress and hairstyles of the three individuals in the foreground suggests the latter end of that spectrum, hence: c. 1875.

Henry and Rebecca Lodge sold up in Goulburn and relocated nearby to the village of Gunning, eager to make a fresh start.³ We do not know specifically what the parents were doing in Gunning and no documentation has yet surfaced about the family's time there, but the move is confirmed in Rebecca's obituary some twenty-three years later.⁴ As there are no land records or business directories in which they appear, it seems that they were local workers of some description. Gunning was a smart choice for the family to use as a base to recuperate. It was growing steadily and was about to experience a mini boom in the 1870s, as a key servicing point for the teams engaged in the construction of the Sydney-to-Goulburn railway. Workers were camped close by to the town and along the line at key points and sleeper-teams were also busy sourcing hardwood from the nearby forests throughout the construction period, particularly, the harder timbers found near Nelanglo (now known as Bellmount Forest).⁵ It was in Gunning that the family first seemed to have benefitted from the kindness of the Collett family.

It is likely that the Lodges had first come into contact with the Collett and Bean families when they were all living near Appin in the 1840s. Philip Collett had migrated from Norfolk in 1844 and remained wheat farming in Appin until c. 1870. Lucy Collett's brother, James Bean, who used to run the *Union Hotel* at Appin may have anticipated an opportunity to profit from the railway work near Gunning and established the *Frankfield Inn* at Mount Pleasant, just outside the fledgling town.⁶

The Beans were also soon joined by their relatives, Philip and Lucy Collett, as rust had become endemic in the Appin wheat crops and they were keen to try

³ Reported in notes collated by historian, Brian Maher, in the late 1970s. Their son Thomas, tried his luck on the goldfields at Jacqua near Bungonia and ended up settling down to a fruitful life at Mandurama.

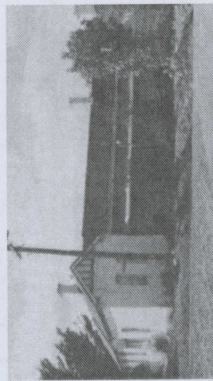
⁴ Rebecca's obituary (*Queanbeyan Age*, 24 June 1893, p. 2) seems to overlook the Goulburn years altogether, suggesting she had lived at Queanbeyan 1885-1893, Gunning 1870-1885, and Menangle 1852-1870. A more accurate reconstruction seems to be: Kirkham and Menangle 1842-1862, Goulburn 1862-c.1870, Gunning c.1870-1885, and Queanbeyan 1885-1893. It is only the exit from Goulburn and, hence, the duration at Gunning that is really in dispute.

⁵ See, for example, *Queanbeyan Age*, 20 October 1875, p. 2 (announcement of the Gunning extension); and, generally, E. Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, Canberra, 1972, pp. 57, 63 126.

⁶ For the inn, see K. L. Brown, *Where Once the Wagons Met: an Introduction to Some Inns and Innkeepers of Early Gunning from Breadalbane to the Gap on the Old South Road: 1830-1899*, Gunning, 2017, pp. 51-9.

their luck elsewhere. It is thought by family members that the Colletts stayed at the *Frankfield Inn* with the Beans, when they first arrived in the district. Perhaps they were also reacquainted with the Lodges around this time, who may even have been working in the hotel's kitchen, tap-room and/or stables.⁷

What is certain, is that from the early 1870s, the elder Colletts were farming at Mt Pleasant, near Frankfield until Phillip's death in 1876 and that they were active in the Anglican community.⁸ After this, their son, James, supplemented the farm income by running a butcher's business and some sort of stables or stock sales-yard in Gunning itself in the late 1870s.⁹ But by the mid-1880s, the Colletts moved to Queanbeyan where they became one of the most prominent families of the town, operating a large butcher's shop and bakery on Monaro Street for many years.¹⁰



The second Frankfield Inn at Gunning, run by the bean family in the late 1870s.
LHS: Philip Collett (1819-1876)
RHS: Lucy Collett (nee Bean) 1825-1897

⁷ R. L. Cross, *Bygone Queanbeyan* (revised ed.), Queanbeyan, 1985, pp. 96-7, 103.

⁸ *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, 25 February 1874, p. 1; 30 December 1874, p. 3; 13 November 1875, p. 3 (cf. 1 June 1878, p. 6 [for his son on a St Edmunds committee]). In the Gunning General Cemetery, grave 256 is that of Phillip Collett (died 24 October 1876, aged 57). Close by at grave 227 is buried Ada Rhoda Collett (died 16 May 1875, aged 20 months). The grave next to this (228) is that of Joseph Bean, who died at Frankfield nearby on 9 January 1885 aged 61. Graves 259 and 260 are Bean and McConville graves. The cemetery real estate also suggests a close relationship between the Bean and Collett families. I am in the debt of Keith Brown for this information.

⁹ For the yard, where saddles and carts were sold as well as stock, see *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, 6 January 1877, p. 5; 3 March 1880, p. 2; cf. 24 November 1879, p. 2 (cattle death); 21 January 1880, p. 2 (possible buggy hire by the Colletts). For the slaughtering licence and butcher's shop, see *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, 31 March 1877, p. 2; 12 January 1878, p. 4; 11 January 1879, p. 6; 10 January 1880, p. 4. Cf. *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, 9 February 1878, p. 3; 22 December 1879, p. 3 (race horses owned by James); 6 September 1879, p. 2 (court settlement).

¹⁰ P. B. Sheedy and E. A. Percy, *Monerovo to Monaro: History of Monaro Street, 1830s-1995*, Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan, 1995, p. 24. But note that James Collett's obituary (*Canberra Times*, 2 June 1933, p. 2) dates the move to Queanbeyan to the year 1885.

Gunning was also only to remain the Lodge family's home for a short period: about 10-15 years. The precise period is unknown. The two youngest children soon moved to Queanbeyan. Emma Rebecca Lodge, who married James Collett at Goulburn in June 1871, had relocated by 1883. It is also possible that the Lodges may have been employed as butchers by the Collett family in Gunning in the late 1870s and early 1880s, as indeed they were to be later employed in Queanbeyan in subsequent years. John Benjamin Lodge, who married Agnes Thompson of Boorowa in 1885, probably spent some time with Thomas Lodge at Breadalbane in 1865, but, at some stage, he settled at Queanbeyan, where we find him employed by his enterprising brother-in-law, James Collett, as a butcher.¹¹

According to her obituary, Rebecca herself did not leave Gunning until about 1885, when she moved in with her daughter Emma Rebecca Collett.¹² Perhaps she had been a cook for the Beans during her Gunning residency. Her husband, Henry, however, had left the district many years before his wife and daughter.

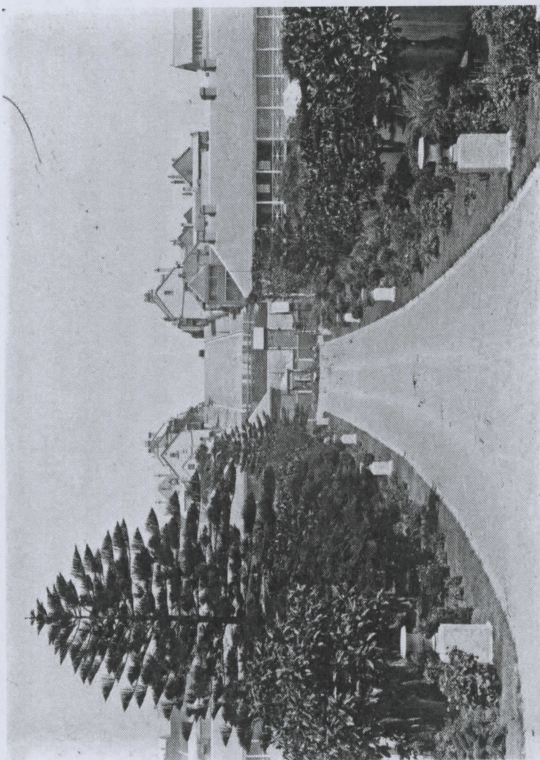
In his section on the Lodge family in *Bygone Queanbeyan*, Rex Cross says that Henry 'worked for John James Wright on "Woodside Farm", Michelago, where his son, John Benjamin, was also employed at the time'.¹³ Although the information on the Lodge family provided in this book is deeply flawed, we can probably accept this particular anecdote as being accurate, as Cross' source appears to have been John Benjamin Lodge's own family. John's work as a butcher at Collett's would have to be placed after the work at Michelago,

¹¹ *Queanbeyan Age*, 20 August 1887, p. 2; *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 23 August 1887, p. 4; *Queanbeyan Age*, 24 August 1887, p. 2. All three articles relate to an incident in which one of the butchers suicides and John Lodge (also a butcher with the Colletts) discovers the body of his poor colleague. Cf. Sheedy and Percy, *loc. cit.*

¹² The Gunning correspondent of the *Yass Courier* (quoted in *Queanbeyan Age*, 5 November 1884, p. 2) reported that 'Mr. James Collett, butcher of that town, intends starting in the same line in Queanbeyan'. Hence, the timing seems to be accurate.

¹³ Cross, 1985, pp. 101-2. The Lodge story is bungled in most respects. Cross thinks that Henry (who he calls John) and Rebecca migrated in 1848 (not 1842) and that, after staying briefly at Menangle, they left for Gunning in the following year (1849, not 1870) and makes no mention of the Goulburn interlude. He misses two of the four Australian-born children (Ann Eliza and Mary Ann) and ten of the deceased English-born children (although this error is forgivable given the paucity of material on that question). His account seems to be based on erroneous memories probably provided (in good faith) by the Cantle family about the early years. Unfortunately, on this occasion, the family stories have proved unreliable. He also has the wrong *Frankfield Inn* photographed. An earlier building was the hotel located at Mt Pleasant at this time (see Brown, 2017, pp. 51-9).

if it is to be accepted. Cross says that 'nothing is known' about Henry's fate, which indicates, at the least, that the family had lost contact with their father. What we have been able to piece together about Henry's last years, certainly supports that conclusion.



Carriage Drive leading into the Newcastle Hospital for the Insane (photograph by Ralph Snowball)¹⁴

Sadly, the father's mental condition had deteriorated significantly by the 1880s. Henry's death certificate of 1883 reports his residence as the Newcastle Hospital for the Insane. This document reports that he died after a four-month stint of dysentery and it contains no reference to his family.¹⁵ Conversely, no reference to Henry is made in Rebecca's obituary or death certificate. What we do *not* know, is what happened to Henry in between Michelago and Newcastle. On the surface, at least, it seems likely that we have here a severe family rupture, which saw Henry estranged and living separately in Newcastle while his wife and two of his surviving children were settled happily in Gunning and later in Queanbeyan.

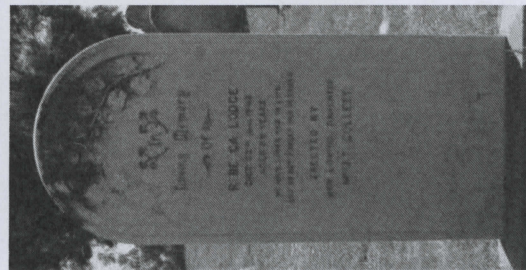
¹⁴ Image open source.

¹⁵ NSW death registration 1883/010392.

(ii) Rebecca Lodge's last years in Queanbeyan (1885-1893)

In her final eight or so years, Rebecca was cared for in Queanbeyan by her daughter Emma Collett.¹⁶ Rebecca passed away on 22 June 1893 in Queanbeyan through heart disease.¹⁷ The informant on her death certificate was her son-in-law, James Collett.

Rebecca and Henry Lodge had shared a remarkable life together, which is what makes it all the sadder that they remained un-reconciled and were not able to spend their final years together. In any case, Rebecca remained in the heart of her family. She would never have grown far from the anguish of losing so many of her children (eight out of ten) in England before her migration, but her grief would have been ameliorated to an extent in seeing her surviving children do so well in the new country. Even Thomas, whose Breadalbane adventure had ended so badly, came good and enjoyed much happier times in Mandurama.¹⁸ Rebecca Lodge is buried in the Catholic section of Queanbeyan's beautiful Riverside Cemetery.



In
Loving Memory
Of
REBECCA LODGE
DIED 22nd June 1893
AGED 88 YEARS
WE HAVE LOVED HER IN LIFE
LET US NOT FORGET HER IN DEATH
ERECTED BY
HER LOVING DAUGHTER
M^{rs} J. T. COLLETT.

¹⁶ Remembered to this day through Collett Street, which follows the south bank of the Queanbeyan river.
¹⁷ NSW death registration 1893/12479.

¹⁸ T. Treasure, *Mandurama and Its Neighbours*, Mandurama, 1992, pp. 44, 132; McDonald, 2017, *loc. cit.*

(iii) Emma Rebecca Collett (1849-1922)

In contrast with the information on her sister, plenty of information has survived about Emma Lodge (often referred to as 'Rebecca'), who – as we have already heard – married into the Collett family of Gunning and was part of their early history in Queanbeyan in the 1880s. Her kindness in taking in her elderly mother, Rebecca, has also already been discussed.

Emma and James Collett had eleven children:

- Percy James Lodge Collett (1871-1927), a baker and confectioner, who married Sarah Jane Swan of Burra in 1900, who died in childbirth, and then Lillian Hincksman in 1905;¹⁹
- Arthur Henry Collett (1872-1956), who took over the Collett family butcher's shop, and served as Mayor of Queanbeyan (1910-1912, 1917-1920) and married Georgina McDonald of Uriarra in 1918;²⁰
- Augustus John Hugh Collett (1873-1923), a postal officer and newsagent, who married clergyman's daughter, Annie Pickering, in 1900;
- May Rebecca Collett (1875-1951), who married Charles Mackintosh, a banana grower, in 1905;
- Ida Maud Collett (1877-1941), who married Thomas Michael McCabe of Redfern in 1910 and settled in Tubbul, NSW;
- Ada Emily Collett (1879-1955), who married Ernest Hincksman (Mayor of Queanbeyan, 1907-1909) in 1903;
- Fanny Lucy Collett (1880-1964), who married John Gay (co-proprietor of the *Queanbeyan Age*) in 1904;
- Deborah Eliza Collett (1882-1943), who married Duncan McDonald (Canberra school teacher) in 1905;

¹⁹ Birth, death and marriage information for these children are all sourced from NSW birth, death, and marriage indices. Cross, 1985, pp. 99-101 is useful for the children's details. For Percy, there is also the monumental inscription at Queanbeyan Riverside Cemetery; NSW deceased estate file for 1927 (no. 30756). It is unclear whether Lillian was related to Ernest Hincksman, who married Percy's sister, Ada Collett. Cf. Sheedy and Percy, 1995, pp. 10, 23-24.

²⁰ Cf. E. Lea-Scarlett, *Queanbeyan: District and People*, Queanbeyan, 1968, p. 151; Sheedy and Percy, 1995, p. 26; the Queanbeyan City Library Mayoral Collection and local trade directories for the shop. Brothers, Percy and Arthur, are also mentioned in the interview of Oswald Woodger by Mel Pratt (recorded 21 January 1971 = NLA 716995).

- Edith Pearl Collett (1884-1960), who married local man, Samuel Parcell, in 1914;
- Ernest Joseph Collett (1886-1913), unmarried; and
- Lillian Alice Collett (1888-1955), who married Edwin 'Ted' Land in 1912 (son of Edwin Land, senior, another Mayor of Queanbeyan [1890-1891]).

As can be seen, the Colletts were prominent in Queanbeyan retail trade as butchers, bakers, newsagents, and confectionary makers. But they were also front-and-square in Queanbeyan's civic leadership. Arthur was twice Mayor of the city, Ada married an ex-Mayor, Lillian married an ex-Mayor's son and Fanny married a proprietor of the *Queanbeyan Age*.



Staff of Collett's butcher's shop. Emma's husband, James Collett is the elderly man seated second from right. Ernie Collett is standing second from right and Arthur Collett is sitting (without apron) next to his father.²¹

²¹ The images of Emma and the Collett butchers are from the Lea-Scarlett Collection. The latter photograph would have been taken around 1930 as James died in 1933 and Ernie was born in 1886.

A transcript of Emma's obituary is provided below (*Queanbeyan Age*, 3 February 1922, p. 2).

Death of Mrs. J.T. Collett

The death occurred last night at about 8 o'clock of Rebecca Emma, wife of Mr. J.T. Collett, of 'the Elems' (sic), Rutledge Street. The deceased lady was taken ill only a few days ago, and in spite of the best nursing and medical attention, she failed to rally, the end coming as stated. The news came as a shock to all who knew her – and they are legion – for she was known throughout the district to both old and new alike for her sweet kindly nature. She was generous to a degree, and will be greatly missed by all to whom she has been benefactress. The late Mrs. Collett, who was 73 years of age, came to Queanbeyan many years ago from Gunning, of which place, we understand, she was native. Her maiden name was Lodge, a brother (the late Mr. John Lodge), who also came from Gunning, was one time a resident of Queanbeyan. Since residing in Queanbeyan, the family has been most successful in every respect. The husband of the deceased lady has accumulated considerable town property here, and retired from business a few years back. He was at one time an alderman of the municipality and his son, Mr A.H. Collett J.P. filled the Mayoral Chair for some years in succession with distinguished ability, and still is a member of the Council. Another son, Mr. Percy Collett, also resides in Queanbeyan, where he is conducting a successful business. Another son, Mr. Augustus Collett, is, we understand, postmaster at Grafton on the North Coast of this State. Mrs. J.J. Gay (Sydney), Mrs. D.A. McDonald (Crookwell), Mr. S.A. Purcell [sic] (Sydney), Mrs. McCabe (Sydney), Mrs. E.C. Hinckman (Queanbeyan), and Mrs. E.F. Land (Queanbeyan), are daughters. One son, Mr. Ernest Collett died some years ago. Much sympathy is expressed on every side for the bereaved husband and family in their hour of sorrow. The late Mrs. Collett was a loving wife and devoted mother.

The funeral takes place tomorrow (Saturday), and will leave Christ Church at 3 p.m. for the local cemetery.

(iv) The Colletts and Sarah Rich

And now for the second ancestor to benefit from Collett kindness.

Sarah Rich (post Reid) lived and worked with the Collett family in Queanbeyan as a domestic servant from c. 1886 until her marriage in 1892. This is during the time when Rebecca Lodge was living there and the last two Collett children were born (Ernest and Lillian). The Rich family would

probably have come to know the Colletts when they were residing at Gunning in the 1870s. Throughout this same decade, the Rich family was living in nearby Nelanglo until their mother, Margaret Rich (nee Phillips), died in 1880 and Alfred Rich took his family to set up a private school at Ginninderra on the property of the famous Gribble family of Ginninderra/Gungahlin.²²

Sarah was well educated and full of prospects, but her troubled father was no longer able to support his family after his wife died.²³ Alfred junior, the eldest (aged thirteen), sought farm-work in Gunning and then became a labourer in Goulburn. The youngest children were fostered out. Honora Cartwright (nee Reid) of Tallagandra took in Frances (aged six). Florence went to live with the Jones family in Gundaroo and later married their son. Lionel, a baby of just five months, was fostered by the Elliotts in Sydney.²⁴ It is thought that Sarah (aged ten) lived a few years with her father at Ginninderra, helping him with housework and in his preparations for the classroom, before leaving Ginninderra to take up a position with the Colletts as a nanny for the children and/or nursemaid for the elderly Rebecca.

During these years, Sarah became very close to the Colletts and the Rich and Reid families, thereafter, spoke fondly of them. In 1891 Emma Collett gave Sarah Rich a fine leather-bound photo album, which reflects the close bond forged between these families in those years. The photographs that Sarah Rich collected of her family and friends were later digitised by Rich descendant and renowned Canberran, Lyall Gillespie.²⁵ They now form a core of the Gillespie collection of photos held by the Hall School Museum and Heritage

²² For the Gribbles, see J. McDonald, 'The Chaff-cutters', *Canberra Historical Journal*, vol. 79 (September 2017), pp. 11–19.

²³ See J. McDonald, 'Migration as an Opportunity for Reinvention: Alfred and Margaret Rich of Gundaroo', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (<http://oa.anu.edu.au/essay/18/text32361>), originally published 19 November 2015, accessed 20 April 2018). Neither Margaret Rich (nee Phillips), who is buried in Gundaroo's general cemetery, nor Alfred Rich, who is buried in Gunning's general cemetery, have been interred in identified graves. The family had obviously fallen on very lean times, not being able to afford headstones. The matter will be rectified in late 2018 with separate memorial plaques to be positioned for them at the respective cemeteries by their descendants.

²⁴ L. L. Gillespie, *A Pictorial History of the Reid Family in Australia, 1849–1979*, Canberra, 1979, p. 12.

²⁵ Sarah may even have named her youngest daughter, Lillian (Lyall Gillespie's mother), after Lillian Collett.

Centre. In this way, the impact of the Colletts' kindness is still enjoyed to this day.²⁶

James McDonald

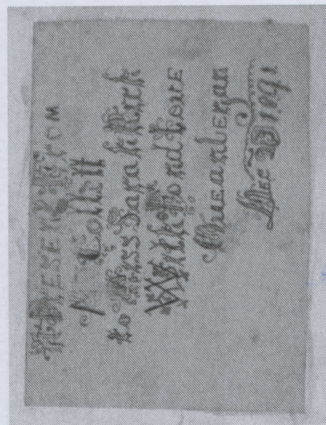


Sarah Reid (nee Rich)²⁷
c.1910



Emma Collett (nee Lodge)
c.1905

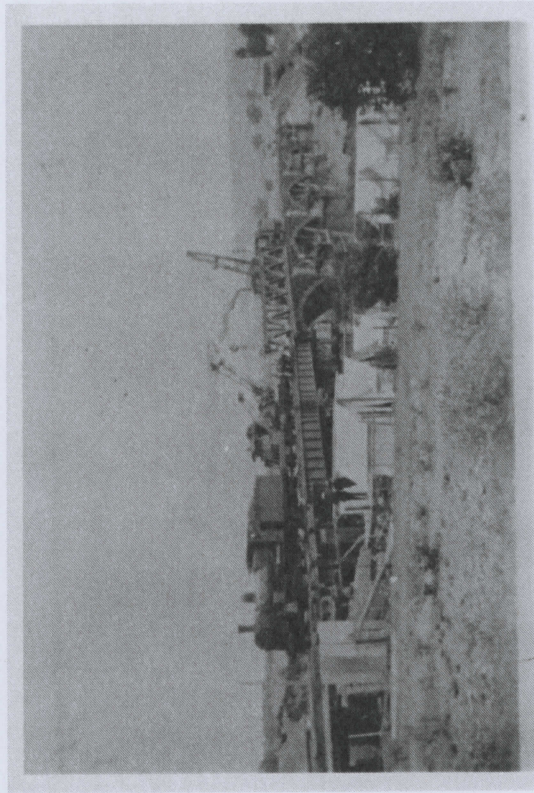
Inscription from Sarah's photograph album: *A present from Mrs Collett to Miss Sarah Rich with fond love, Queanbeyan, Dec. 23 1891*



²⁶ In 1892 Sarah left Queanbeyan to marry Richard Reid, an emerging grazier at Spring Flat, near Tallagandra. She had four children. Descendants (Tom and Andy Hardwicke) and their families still live and work on the original Reid family property at Tallagandra.
²⁷ Sarah's family has another fascinating connection to the history of Queanbeyan. Her family had roots in the Atlantic island of St Helena, where Napoleon was briefly buried. They owned the land and willow-grove where the emperor was first interred and, if the stories about the St Helena origin of the Queanbeyan and Molonglo River willows are true, then the cuttings must have been sourced through them or at least obtained with their consent. See J. McDonald, 'Queanbeyan River Willows', *Quinbean*, vol. 9.3 (December 2016), pp. 10-21.

NO CASH IN CANBERRA

Changing guards at Queanbeyan Railway Station in 1931, once caused a serious upheaval in Canberra. On the night of April 30th, the Canberra Mail Train was found to have been robbed of all the public servants' pay it was carrying, 10,000 pounds in notes. Canberra at that time not only was without alcohol, but also without cash. The procedure for Canberra workers' payments was for a consignment of notes to be sent to Canberra each week. In Sydney, an armed guard would escort the sealed bags of cash from the bank to the GPO, and from there slipped down a chute to a waiting motor lorry to be taken to Central Railway Station. Once on the train, the bags were watched over by a guard. The only time the money was unattended, was when the guard changed at Goulburn, and again at Queanbeyan.



Queanbeyan Railway Bridge during alterations MF 149 QDHMS collection

Alas, when the sealed and registered sacks arrived from Queanbeyan railway station, they revealed no cash, only crinkled up paper rubbish. When Canberra workers heard they were not going to be paid, there was a run on the banks in the town. Black trackers were used to inspect the tracks around Queanbeyan station for signs of bags being dragged along the ground. A reward was

offered of 500 pounds. A Queanbeyan railway guard was dismissed but reinstated. A similar robbery had occurred with the Mudgee Mail Train, and it was thought to be the same gang.

Several men were tried, once on October 8th where the jury failed to agree. Trials in October and December failed to convict anyone, despite some of the spoils of the robberies being found in a Paddington backyard, and at Jamieson Town near Penrith. Some of the Canberra money was dug up, but most of the missing cash was never recovered.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported "the theft is regarded as one of the cleverest ever perpetrated in this state."

So how did those public servants get paid in the end? The Commonwealth Bank did manage to find enough cash to make their due payments, and police were forced to provide a belatedly attentive escort for government cars to take employees' wages to various parts of Canberra. "For added safety, small fortunes were tossed in amongst ordinary mail bags, and left to take their chance."

References: *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Lapstone Zig Zag Railway*, by W Bayley

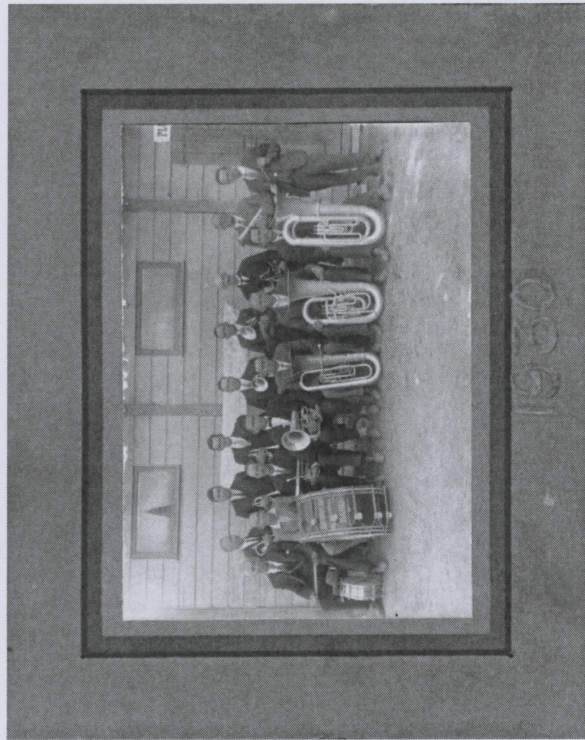
Rosemary Curry

THANK Q FOR THE MEMORIES

When I started work at Council in August 2007 The Q was still in the construction phase. I remember my first venture into the auditorium very clearly and the feeling remained with me for some time after. Even with no seating installed there was a palpable feeling of intimacy in the room. The stage floor had not yet been laid and I walked across beams to centre stage. When I looked out to the audience I got goose-bumps, thinking to myself that when completed this space would be a unique experience for both performers and patrons in this region. I believe those initial emotions have proven to be true....

These were the thoughts of Program Manager Stephen Pike when he first set foot on the stage at The Q. Now as our performing arts centre chalks up ten years, I would like to take you through its story, starting in the nineteenth century when travelling theatrical troupes brought drama, ballet, vaudeville and the like to our town. For instance, a black American group called the Fisk Jubilee Singers played three times at the Protestant Hall in Crawford Street (now used by the Macedonian community) to standing room only.

Queanbeyan had quite a few venues back then, like the Oddfellows Hall, the Temperance Hall, and the courthouse which apparently had great acoustics, and it had its share of local arts activities, with a town band, a dancing school, and a number of amateur dramatic societies.



Queanbeyan Band 1930 QDHMS Collection

In the story of The Q there is one such group that is at the heart of the push for a cultural centre, and that is The Queanbeyan Players. Their search for a home took them from church and school halls to a disused cinema, The Nova, situated above where the Riverside Plaza is today.

It was 1980 when the group's eager members swept away the pigeon poo and turned the Nova into a theatre. It had its limitations though- the players had to share an old-fashioned dunny with the clients of the nearby Central Café, and were forced to make some of their entrances and exits by going out in the street and running the gauntlet of the heckling drinkers in the local pub.

When news came of Bicentennial funds for a new hall in Queanbeyan, they thought that finally they'd have a permanent base. But when it opened they realised that it wasn't the perfect venue. There were the sight lines, the acoustics, the black plastic seats that were far from comfortable, and the pièce de résistance- the walls were decorated with sports memorabilia.

It was thanks to the inadequacies of these venues that the push began for something more suited to the needs of a growing community. The Queanbeyan Players' cause was taken to council, where the proposal was met with a range of views, but with enough support to get the ball rolling with a Cultural Advisory Committee, Cultural Development Officers, and a lot of community consultation.

Council funds were allocated, grants were applied for, architects called in, the Queanbeyan Players raised \$50,000. It looked like it was going to happen, but not without opposition. Some wanted a cinema instead of a theatre, others hated the design, but most complaints were aimed at the fact that it would be located in the car park.

Council prevailed, and The Q was officially opened by the then Governor-General, Major Michael Jeffreys, at a Gala Variety Concert on March 1 2008.

When asked for any stories about the first ten years, Stephen Pike recalls the day in 2008 when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was at The Q to launch the Asia Pacific Military Centre, amid heavy security. Lights set up close to the sprinkler system set off a deluge, and the fire alarm, so the event was finished off in the car park without any security at all.

By the end of the first year, twenty thousand people had bought tickets to see shows, but there were some who saw it as a drain on Council's budget, and that the only response was to privatise. To its credit Council not only continued to support The Q, but also decided to produce its own musicals, which it still does to this day.

The theatre has gone on to host touring acts, ranging from drama and musicals to dance, cabaret, children's productions, and senior citizens' concerts. End-of-year concerts by schools and dance centres have been presented there, and it has been very supportive of local companies and writing. Shortis and Simpson, for example, have presented about 10 shows there.

We are not alone when we say that it's one of the best theatres in the country, both to perform in and to attend. It had its detractors, and many of them, including Councillors, have gone about turn, as this brilliant theatre has won

the hearts of the community.

Local butcher Peter Lindbeck, now a Q board member, epitomises the change in heart...

I was dirty on the council that they were going to chew up our car park for what I could see was just a black cardboard box

My opinion changed when I was issued an invitation by Stephen Pike. I just was overwhelmed with what a great feeling it is there. You actually feel like you're having a yarn with the actors

I feel now that The Q is one of the greatest features of Queanbeyan. When you take someone there for the first time, it actually gives you pride

The theme song for Thank Q For the Memories was written with interested members of the community in a song writing workshop. I'd like to let their chorus have the final say...

Thank Q for the memories, here's cheers

Thank you for these ten amazing years

Thank Q for the memories, it's said

Thank Q for the joys that lie ahead

John Shortis is half of local cabaret duo Shortis and Simpson who created and performed Thank Q For the Memories to mark the 10th anniversary of The Q in March 2018.

John Shortis

"IT WAS A BUSH TOWN BUT IT WAS A FRIENDLY PLACE"

IRENA SPAITS AND JANINA DABROWSKI

Some time ago I wrote an article based on an interview with an Italian migrant to Queanbeyan, Frank Presutti, now I would like to look at another example of the rich diversity of culture that added to the influx of people to Queanbeyan after the Second World War. This time based on an interview by Lee Davy of two women from Poland, Irena Spaits and her mother Janina Dabrowski on 19th February 2013.

I have used Irena's and Janina's words for the most part but have removed questions, repetitions and re-ordered some comments to make the narrative more chronological.

The story is about how a Polish mother and daughter came to Queanbeyan after being in a German labour camp during the war, their early difficulties and how they finally settled in a home of their own.

There is more to tell from the interview but I shall leave that for a later edition of *Quinbean*.

Irena and Janina came to Australia in 1949, at first to Bonegilla, then Cowra for three years and finally settled in Queanbeyan.

As Irena said:

We left Germany after the war, you know, as displaced persons and Australia offered us to come and live in Australia. And they were the only country which really, at the time, took in people with children. You could go to America, Canada, everywhere, but Australia was the only country, at that time, that accepted families readily and so my parents would have gone and filled out forms and started proceedings: passport things in Germany. And then we went through Italy and there again we were there just a few weeks while they sorted out papers.

And the Australian authorities would have sorted out our passports and things. Then, of course, they put us on an old ship, *Casablanca*, it was called.

After four weeks we arrived in Melbourne. It was close to Christmas 1949. And they took us away by bus, it's hard to remember, I was only six. And they took us to Bonegilla. And Bonegilla to us, who came from a beautiful area, like the green pastures and beautiful poppies and things, to us it was like coming to another planet, it was dry and horrible and not very nice. But, you know, we were happy to arrive there because, you know, coming from war and camps anything was good, if it was peaceful.

We were there for three weeks. And then they get us all into order and then, again by bus, we went to Cowra for about three years.

There Janina got work in a hospital, Irena went to school but the husband (Franciszek) went to Canberra to work in a timber yard.

Irena was six when they arrived, so it was very hard because her parents spoke Polish and Irena had to go to kindergarten after learning German as kid, in a kindergarten, and Polish at home and then they arrived and had to learn English, and English is such a hard language to learn.

Irena still remember her mother going to one class somewhere, and she came home and you said, "Oh, this silly English language" she said, "They say, 'See the sea and see with your eyes.'" And those sorts of words, because there are words like that in English that mean two different meanings

Irena continued to explain how they ended up in Queanbeyan:

And, yes, because in those days it wasn't very much to rent houses in Queanbeyan or Canberra, so Queanbeyan was the ideal place because land was a little bit cheaper and so most of those people who came with us on the ship also came to Queanbeyan, most of them, didn't they Mum? And the nice thing was, they also helped each other. You know, as soon as someone had a little bit of money they bought a piece of land and they all helped each other and built a little shack, in those days it would have been a lovely place, but today they'd call it a little shack, with two rooms. It didn't have even a stove, we cooked on a Primus. There was no gas, no electricity, nothing.

We came by bus, finally left Cowra, by bus and I can still remember that because we arrived in Canberra and we said, "Where's this Canberra?" and there was only about four big buildings there, it was a dead place, and they said, "This is Canberra." And we caught another bus to Queanbeyan, I don't remember. From Canberra we caught another bus, I guess.

They came to Queanbeyan because the man of the family (Franciszek) was sent to work in Canberra. At first in the timber yards and then he was working on the roads and later he was putting in big sewerage pipes.

As Janina remembered: Everybody had to contract to I think one year, you have to work in that place where you've been sent by the government and you had to work it off. You had to pay them back, because it wasn't free in those days, you had to pay back for the voyage and for your accommodation and food. And whatever you had left, well you put it aside, you know, to buy a block of land. And the land was quite cheap in those days, in Queanbeyan.

The father brought the mother and child from Cowra to Agnes Avenue. Actually, to a structure that is still standing there, used for a garage.

The whole street was Polish immigrants. Well, because they helped each other. They all came together, most of them on the same ship and they helped each other build and that's the way they could do it cheaper, you know, support each other. And of course people like mum, and even me, who arrived, we had not much language so if you were with other Polish people that's why they congregated. It's not because we didn't want to assimilate, is that the word? But it was just because Janina's English was so bad that they could talk with one another and help each other.

But not all was rosy as Irena remembers:

So then I went to school in St Gregory's. I give a big sigh, because it wasn't a very happy school and we were very picked on, as new Australians. Given a very hard time, even by the teachers there, they gave us a hard time. A lot of them said, "Go back to where you came from." It wasn't a very nice atmosphere. And even in the shops, if Mum went to a shop a lot of time they'd just ignore her, isn't it? You'd stand there, stand there, and they'd,

what's the word, go to the other customers and then last they would go to you, I remember that. And even in government, you'd go to somewhere like HCF or something like that and they would just ignore you. I don't know if they just knew you were a new Australian, we were different, dressed different, they would just - not everyone, there were some lovely - we had a lovely neighbour behind us in that - where we lived in that hut and they were a beautiful Australian family. And actually they were the first family I met who talked so beautifully. They said "pet" to each other and "darling" and I thought, "Wow, there's such lovely people in the world." Because all I'd ever heard was cussing and swearing.

Janina worked at the Prime Minister's Lodge for Menzies and then at the Royal Hotel, and finally at ANU as a cleaner for 27 years, working hard to save money. As Irena commented: they wanted to build a life. You know, they had two rooms and we had a kitchenette and one bedroom and I used to live in the kitchenette, on a little sofa. But we didn't mind, because it was away from war and it was ours, wasn't it. We felt rich, even though we weren't, but not to worry.

Irena remembers that, when we were first in Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan was very small. It's not like now, it was a tiny little place. It was like a bush town but it was a nice, friendly place. And I still remember a horse being tied to the Royal Club there on the corner, they went to the pub and some of them came on horse. There would have been one or two carriages even in those days, not much but there wasn't too many cars. People couldn't really afford them until a little bit later. I still remember dad bought his first old car, a Vauxhall. We were so excited to get a car. And then from there my parents looked around and they found an old house here next door, at 50 Atkinson Street.

It was at least 50 years ago when we came here to Atkinson Street. And Atkinson Street was a dead street, there was nothing else. There was one house next door and there was a house beyond that, where a nurse lived. And she was the first nurse, which is lovely history, she was the first nurse in Queanbeyan. And she was called Nurse Bower, and she was a lovely lady. And she was like a district nurse. She's a big, hefty lady. Did everything for everybody and helped... and she was very good with migrants. She liked everybody, didn't she?

Very nice. I remember her. And she had that lovely big property, you know, there on the corner, and that whole land was hers. And do you know, she used to go down to the river, because we didn't have taps and things in those days when she was here. She would go to the river, I was told by people, and carry big buckets of water and water her trees. She was a tough old lady, but beautiful lady, part of the history.

And across the road from there it was all bush. Where the golf course is it was all bush. I remember, as a kid, running around, there was a little rubbish area there. It was all bush, right up where you are that was all untouched. And it was a lovely place for kids to run around. Then later on, many years later, then they started to dig and put the golf course in. But as a kid it was a lovely area because there wasn't many cars, not many people. People knew everybody, it was a lovely community. Your neighbour knew if she didn't see you for a few days they'd ask, "How are you? Are you okay?" which I didn't get in Canberra. When I went to live in Canberra you didn't get that. Your neighbours hardly ever said hello. So I like Queanbeyan.

Queanbeyan's got a soul, I always say, in it.

John McGlynn

Based on an interview by Lee Davy with Irena Spaits and Janina Dabrowski on 19th February 2013 as part of the Queanbeyan's Living History Oral History Project



Janina and Irena at home 2013 – Photograph Lee Davy



A UNIQUE CELEBRATION OF MOMENTS IN TIME

The double-handled solid silver cup is a little tarnished, the engraving on its plaque well worn, but given it was presented 121 years ago to the first internationally-recognised sports star to hail from the City of Champions, Queanbeyan, it is in remarkably good shape.

Talented sportsman George Gribble received the trophy in 1897 in Dublin from Queen Victoria herself. It was for his dominance of the ancient equestrian art of "tent-pegging" - retrieving ground targets with a lance while on horseback - at a military tournament honouring the monarch's Jubilee.

It is just one of the rare and unusual items to form part of a unique exhibition for the area once known as the Land District of Queanbeyan: *180 Mementos | 180 Years*.

Staged from September 28 until October 14, it is a tangible celebration of one of the oldest regional townships in Australia as well as an acknowledgement of that which came before.

Most widely known for its prodigious sporting prowess and its location on the doorstep of the nation's capital - itself 75 years the smaller city's junior - Queanbeyan was officially proclaimed a Village on September 28, 1838, a decade after the first settler called it home.

To mark this milestone, are 180 historically significant and little-seen objects displayed throughout the city at various venues and businesses including The Q Performing Arts Centre, the Library, the Queanbeyan Sporting Gallery, the local Museums, and the Royal Hotel, a local institution there almost from the beginning. It encompasses a number sourced from private collections as well as some nominated and voted for by the public - and a selection available for closer inspection and monitored handling.

Each memento is a window onto the development of the region, from the pre-European history, to the instigation of a town with a population of less than 50, Queanbeyan's significant role in the establishment of Canberra, and its more recent incarnation as cosmopolitan centre.

Many people know Queanbeyan thanks to our impressive list of champions including international names such as rugby legend David Campese, acclaimed author Miles Franklin, and one-time Bond, George Lazenby, who grew up here.

Our story though is even more rich and varied with extraordinary and far-reaching successes in everything from business and industry to cultural pursuits and the arts.

This exhibition is another chance for us to present some of these amazing stories, people, and events in an engaging and interactive way, highlighting our journey which, to a degree, also charts the progress of a nation.

Another rarely seen item displayed is be the first gravestone ever erected in the town, the year after its proclamation.

On January 31, 1839, the baby daughter of the district's first police magistrate, Captain Alured Tasker Faunce, was buried alongside the Queanbeyan River. In one of the many engaging mysteries to have emerged from the area, the grave and marker belonging to Anna Maria were somehow lost until,

incredibly, stumbled across almost a century after her passing. It then disappeared again before being rediscovered after almost another four decades.

Now the stone fragments, with parts of the inscription still readable ("Beneath This Stone an Infant's Ashes Lie"), reside at the Queanbeyan Museum. Stored away due to their fragility and importance, on this occasion they're being presented as a particularly poignant physical representation of the passage of time.

Reminders such as this give something of an idea of the harshness and isolation of those early times and also the enduring connection to this place. Descendants of many of the pioneering families, including the Faunces, continue to live here almost two centuries on.

Local businesses, organisations, and individuals - including our local State Member and Deputy Premier, John Barilaro - have all come together to help support this initiative, proving once again the strength of our community spirit and our civic pride.

Nichole Overall