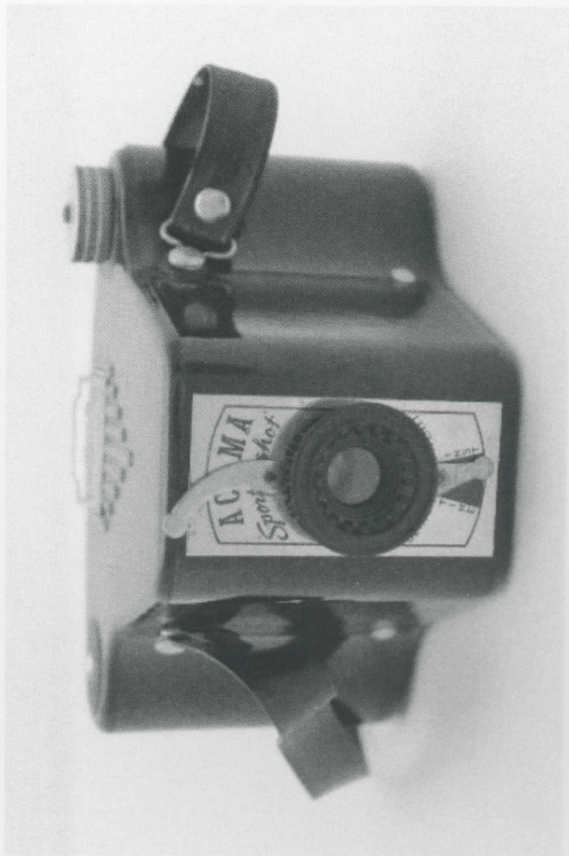


Queanbeyan

Volume 13 No 1
April 2020



*The Journal of
Queanbeyan and District Historical Museum Society Inc.*

Q&DHM Archive
10 Farrer Place
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

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.

Find us at:

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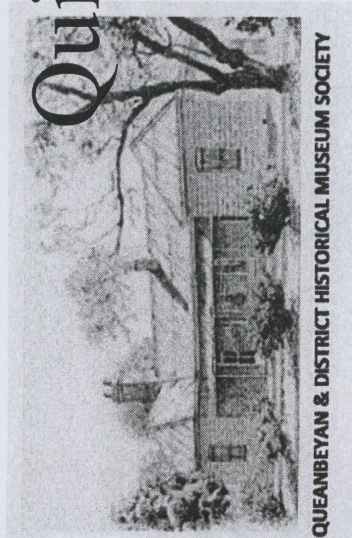
Facebook: www.facebook.com/queanbeyanmuseum

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. * PLEASE SEE NOTE ON LAST PAGE *

Cover Photograph: *ACMA Senior 20 Sportshot, c1948-1950,*
Australasian Camera Manufacturers Australia, QM 2011.2,
Monk Collection
Photograph: QDHMS



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SOCIETY REPORT

2020 started with the entrance to the Museum dug up for works on the new police station next door. This made access a problem and so the Committee decided to delay the opening of the museum to the public. However, this did not stop considerable activity inside the Museum. Members have been busy working on cataloging and on three new exhibitions. Further to this, we have now temporarily closed the Museum to the public because of the COVID 19 virus. The Heritage Festival has also been affected. See the note from QPRC on page seven.

The work of Connee Colleen, long time Society member and local artist and heritage activist, features at the Queanbeyan Hive, 5-25 April.

We were planning to have the 2020 QPRC Heritage Awards at our Museum Open Day on May 2, 11-3. Will notify members if anything changes because of the virus pandemic. Our three new exhibitions are: *Cameras; Games and Toys* and *Queanbeyan Players*. There are a wide variety of cameras exhibited and described: an attractive room of games and toys, and a display of *Yeoman of the Guard* costumes and objects loaned from Queanbeyan Players and others. During preparation for these exhibitions we have explored our Museum collections, with the aim to get our collection out for the community to experience. If any readers have any games and toys with a Queanbeyan connection to donate to the museum we would be happy to receive them.

Due to the increasing costs of printing and postage, the museum committee reluctantly has decided to increase the Society's annual subscription. The increase will come into effect as each member renews their subscription. Or, if a new member, upon joining. This is the first price rise since *Quinbean* was introduced in June 2007. See the back cover of this *Quinbean* for details.

FROM THE EDITORS

Thanks to all our regular contributors, in this edition we have a good variety of material for you. Our Family History Tips and Tricks continues with information about the QPRC Local History Collection from Brigid Whitbread and our Museum Collection Highlights include some interesting objects in the new exhibitions.

Our heart goes out to all our colleagues that have been affected by the recent bush fires. We are saddened by the loss of historic buildings in Cobargo, the Kiandra historic site and many Kosciusko huts in the recent fires. So glad that Klaus Huenke recorded many of them in *Huts of High Country*, ANU Press, 1982. Impressed that ACT Emergency and Victorian Emergency Services managed to protect some of this precious built heritage from the fires by protective wrapping of the buildings and installing water sprays. Rosemary Curry has written for us about early houses of the Queanbeyan District. This Australian vernacular architecture is becoming rarer and more fragile as time passes.

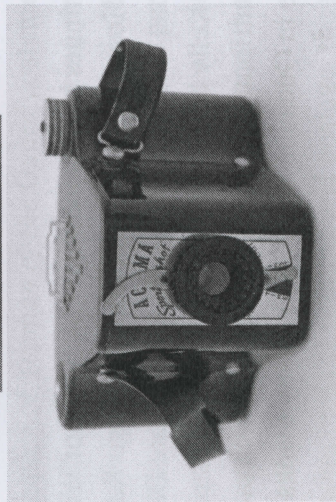
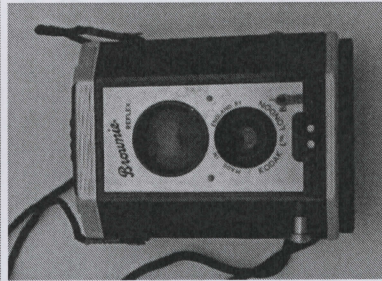
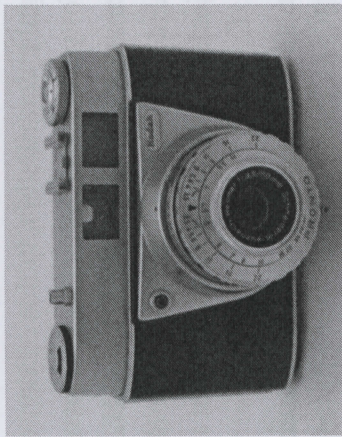
Peter Procter continues his fascinating exploration of William Davis Wright. Kristine Howard writes about the Michelago Railway Station. Nichole Overall has contributed the sad story of Kate Donnelly. Local Historian Gillian Kelly has written about JB Youngs stores. Brigid Whitbread has contributed an early poem from which much can be gleaned about life in Queanbeyan in 1854. Many thanks to you all!

Contributions most welcome to our journal, articles, short or long, poetry, snippets, quirky news clips - it is all of interest! Contact John McGlynn or Kerrie Ruth at mcglynn_john@hotmail.com

John McGlynn & Kerrie Ruth

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

From Upcoming Exhibitions



From top: *Kodak Retinette 1A Pronto*, Germany, 1962-1963, QM 2011.16, Monk Collection
Kodak Brownie Reflex, Pseudo-TLR 127, England 1940-41, QM2008.198, Vilim Hirsker Collection
ACMA Senior 20 Sportshot, c1948-1950, Australasian Camera Manufacturers Australia, QM 2011.2, Monk Collection
 Photographs: QDHMS



This gorgeous children's jigsaw on display in the new toys and games exhibition shows an attractive quaint barnyard illustration with vibrant, muted colours. Made by British firm, G.J. Hayter who set up business in the late 1920s. Their hand-sawn plywood puzzles ceased production in 1988.

Children's Jigsaw

Size: 300 x 240 x 15mm,

Description: Coloured pieces on light brown background, pigs and fowls in dark wood frame.

Made in England by G.J. Hayter and Co. Ltd

QM: 2012.43

Rescued from fire when Harris Park Pre-school burned down.

Donated by: Narelle HEYWOOD

Photograph: QDHMS

LOCAL HISTORY TIPS AND TRICKS

from QPRC Local History Librarian, Brigid Whitbread

Breaking news! With thanks to efforts by Brendan O'Keefe, Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council has agreed to fund digitisation by Trove of some of the *Queanbeyan Age* and some Bungendore newspapers over the next three years. The *Queanbeyan Age* is currently on Trove up to Dec 1926. This will be extended to the 1950s.

Sadly, as at March 19 2020, in response to the Covid19 pandemic, events for the Queanbeyan Palerang Heritage Festival 2020: Reimagine, have been cancelled up to 13 April. There is a strong likelihood that the remaining events up to early May will also be cancelled.

Our extensive Local History Collection contains a wealth of historical resources with a wide select of books on the history of Bungendore, Braidwood, Queanbeyan and the surrounding region. It is of particular interest to local residents, visitors, historians, descendants of early families, researchers and students.

The collection includes:

- The Queanbeyan Age from 1860
- The Queanbeyan Chronicle from 1976
- The Bungendore Mirror from March 2004 to September 2015
- The Bungendore Bulletin from May 1990 to December 2013
- The Braidwood Dispatch from October 1966 to June 1970
- A general genealogy collection
- A small map collection
- Historic monographs from the old Queanbeyan School of Art
- Early Queanbeyan rates books
- A number of research collections

- The Sheedy Memorial Local History Collection which is an extensive collection of family files compiled by Bert Sheedy with ongoing contributions from researchers
- The collection of Frederick J McCauley

We have an image collection from another prominent local historian, Errol Lea Scarlett. There is limited access to this collection as it is a manual process to search them.

We welcome local, national and global enquiries and it is amazing how many people have connections to this region. We supply guidance and direction to assist people to conduct their own research and are delighted to accept their contributions to the collections.

We run the annual Queanbeyan Palerang Heritage Festival in April/May each year as well as family history information and training workshops and book launches. We encourage suggestions for local events.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss your local history project or biography

Brigid Whitbread

Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council, Queanbeyan Library
6 Rutledge Street

Local History Librarian

I work Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays

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THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

Early houses of the Queanbeyan District

I have spent some time examining early houses in the Queanbeyan District, and it seems a pity their remains have not been preserved, or at least noted and recorded. I've mainly explored old mud brick buildings, wattle and daub, timber and metal shacks.

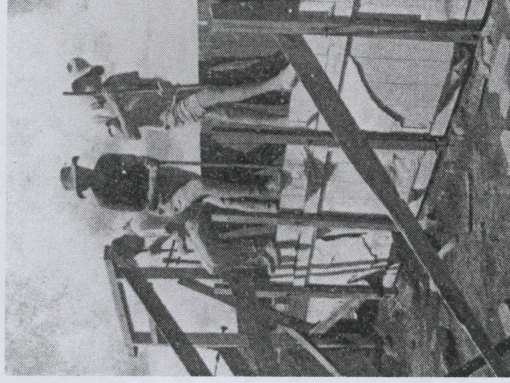
A lady I talked to in 1990 (Ada ... of Erin St) remembered some of these sturdy houses being built. "Our house was wattle and daub. You'd get the little pieces of sapling that were growing nice and long, and then they'd get the mud, all wet, and they'd put the soil in with it. No nails at all. Then you'd go up like a brick layer does. I used to see them doing it. The roof was a big piece of thick stringy bark. The water would just run off. Many property out buildings were wattle and daub." Ada was born in 1907, and had a clear memory of these houses being built.

Coral Watson (nee Corby) tells me she grew up in a wattle and daub home. "It had an iron roof, four rooms, back veranda closed in with hessian, very comfortable. Dad and his father built it, using clay from the dam next door. Our walls had lime on them, and as kids we would draw on the white walls. This sturdy house lasted ten years after we moved, when my uncle lived there after the war. Then they pulled it down."

Mud bricks were another common building material, which would bake in the sun, but deteriorate when the roof was removed. An interesting example remains on private property near Bungendore. Doing a dig around this once cosy little home revealed a brick foundation and several rooms. I was surprised that the walls contained less mud than I expected, and more aggregate of sand and crushed stone, with much

reinforcement of straw, grass and hay, holding the bricks together, and reducing shrinkage if too big a proportion of clay was used.

Clay for building material was obtained wherever deposits could be found. Some known deposits in the Queanbeyan district include in "Brickies Hill" (beyond Queanbeyan Golf Course), Gary Owen, Morrisett St, Captains Flat Rd, and near the Railway Station where Seiffert Oval now sits. As the Railway proceeded brick makers dug and baked their bricks on Queanbeyan Showground Reserve between Pound Hill and Yass Rd. Queanbeyan bricks were a poor quality up to the 1840s, highly grogged with coarse aggregate.



Building a rammed earth wall. "Too much clay, it will crack. Too little clay or too much sand or organic matter, it will crumble."

Photograph: John Culliton

This mud brick house near Bungendore, was built by Jack ... whose property ran along the growing Railway Line which finally officially opened at Queanbeyan Station 31 July 1887. Jack's job was operating a

permanent way ganger's pump trolley, loaded with bricks, along the line to the next needed overpass. I'm told that Jack shared the pumping with two other men. When they reached the point passing Jack's property, Jack would throw heaps of half bricks over the fence onto Jack's land. The story goes that as the heap of bricks grew, Jack's fellow pumpers realised what was going on, and made him do a bigger share of the pumping. He certainly acquired a large collection of free bricks, since doing a dig around the foundations of the mud brick house, I did not find one whole brick, so the story was true. The foundation consisted entirely of railway half bricks thrown over the fence all those years ago, to provide a sturdy base for Jack's self-built home.



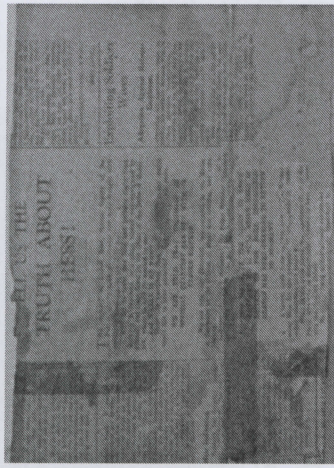
Foundations are usually large stones or clay. Jack preferred railway bricks.

A fascinating timber hut just off the road down Sutton Rd out of Queanbeyan, was another interesting self-built home. A cosy two room house with windows and a large fireplace, and inner walls covered with newspaper. The wallpaper would have brightened the walls up, but also covered the slits between the wood planks. Some colder places I've looked at used cardboard instead of paper. The dates on the newspapers in the Sutton Rd house reveal the oldest to be 1926, the most recent being coloured pages from the 1950s. So this small house continued to

provide a cosy family home for more than 20 years. The wallpaper I soaked off revealed a history of Queanbeyan horseracing, the Second World War, and later Woman's Weekly pages.



Cardboard wallpaper. Split log house



Newspaper wallpaper 1926. Timber house Sutton Road.

I have to mention a very sturdy metal hut at the foot of Jerrabomberra. Probably a depression built home. Its pressed metal work was efficiently used for walls, roof and drains, a small cosy shelter, home and hearth back in the days when wildflowers still abounded in the lower Jerrabomberra. It's gone now of course, and I wonder if whoever pulled it down paused to think of the person who single handedly built it and are there any wild flowers there anymore?

Rosemary Curry

References

Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Queanbeyan District and People*, 1968
 Rex Cross, *Bygone Queanbeyan*, 1985
 Rosemary Curry: Personal Oral Histories
 Photographs: John Culliton, Rosemary Curry

WILLIAM DAVIS WRIGHT: MOVING ON

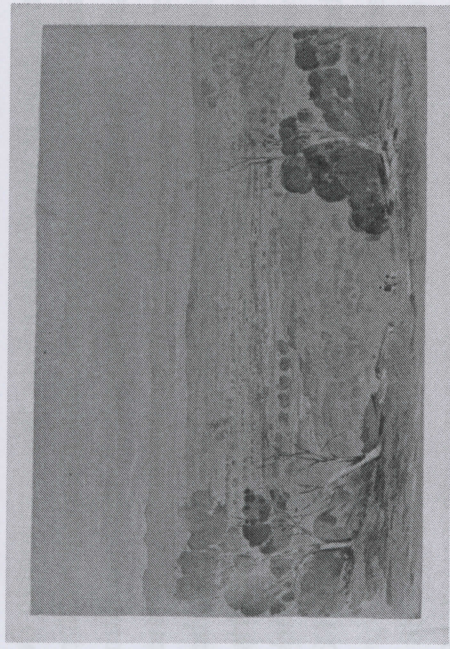
*It can be sensible to read the secondary sources,
with a stalwart scepticism,
and then to read the primary sources.*

Hibbins, Fahey, and Askew, 1985
Local History

Breaking news! It was reported in the local paper. The *Queanbeyan Observer* advised its readers that, 'Mr Davis Wright, an old and well-known resident of this district, intends locating himself and his family in Queanbeyan.' It was the first item of district news on that Friday, 24 April 1896. Actually, Wright was not so old. He was 55. Moreover, he had been seen in Queanbeyan for two years.

Wright liked to move along. So it was another three decades before he put together his book with the catchy title 'Canberra'. His father's acquaintances figured prominently in it. Now it is nearly a century later, and in all that time not one person interested in Canberra's local history has investigated Wright himself, although they do mention him. So, here is the fourth instalment in this short series. It asks, in what way was Wright a long-term resident of Canberra, or its district? Was the long line of local historians, who say he was, right about his bond to his birth-place?

First, William Davis Wright was born on 12 July 1841 at 'Lanyon', then situated at the margin of the new Queanbeyan township, which had been officially named and gazetted only in 1838. Known as Willie, he became the second child of eight in the family of immigrants James and Mary Wright (nee Davis). The infant was baptised by the Rev Edward Smith, then Queanbeyan's Anglican clergyman.



Volume 2: Sketches of N. S. [New South] Wales, 1857-1888 / by H. Grant Lloyd
FILE NUMBER:12414291 FILE TITLE: f.137 Approaching Queanbeyan

While he was a baby, Willie was nursed by Elizabeth Bass, a servant at Lanyon. She married in 1842. Wright wrote that he remembered her with affection. He said that her wedding and wedding dress was impressive. (*Canberra*, p45.) He was under two years old at the time. It must have been memorable!

All of this particular Wright family moved during the year that Willie turned six. They went across the Murrumbidgee to 'Cuppacumbalong', where they lived next for several years. As a young lad, Willie was educated at home. He heard his father's stock of family and local anecdotes. While he was a young lad in the late 1840s, his father employed a tutor. Willie called him 'Mr Nicholls', a 'Yankee'. Away from lessons, Willie played in the river. (*Canberra*, p84.) As well, Wright and 'a brother' spent many happy days with young Edwin Land. The three boys ran wild horses about Paddy's River. ('Reminiscences', *Queanbeyan Observer*, 6 September 1895.) Land's own son Edwin Henry Land in time became a Queanbeyan mayor.

Whatever he said, W D Wright was not the first boy born to European parents in this area. The claim better fits John Alexander Macpherson (or McPherson). He was born at 'Springbank', Limestone Plains, on 10th October 1833. As Alexander MacPherson, he was Premier of Victoria in 1869. Wright says nothing about him. Anyhow, their sisters were born in the district before those boys. None of these early children of the pioneers were baptised at Canberra either. The landmark church of St John the Baptist, on the 'Duntroon' estate of Mr Robert Campbell, was consecrated only in 1845.

James Wright, his wife Mary (Willie's parents) and their children left 'Cuppacumbalong' and the Queanbeyan district entirely in 1856. The property was sold. For son William there were frequent changes to where he lived and worked. Contrary to Jill Waterhouse's assertion in her 1977 local history paper, he was never a long-term resident in the Canberra district.

From his father's small farm at Balgownie near Wollongong, William Davis Wright and Margaret Neill were married on 3rd September 1864 by the Wesleyan Rev William Kelynnack. She came from a Parramatta family. The couple had twelve children between 1865 and 1891.

There was lots of moving around. William and Margaret Wright appeared at Cooma in 1865, and at Eden on the south coast of NSW in 1867. In 1868, they were at Anembo. While there, Wright prosecuted Patrick Ryan on 2nd December for stealing his cow. Wright knew of the local bushrangers like the Clarke brothers, who had just died. They thrived in that district through cattle rustling.

Margaret, Mrs W D Wright, was back with her mother at Glebe, a Sydney suburb in 1869. Margaret's father school master William Neill had died in tragic circumstances long before in 1855 at Parramatta.

The Wrights moved to the far north of NSW. He worked on a sheep station near Moree in 1871. Wright applied to be a police officer, but he was found unacceptable. An employee of his called John Gilchrist, aged about 35, deserted Wright's business in 1873. Wright prosecuted him under the grim Masters and Servants Act. Then the family was at Warialda in 1874. They may have had a residence for a while at Five Dock, in Sydney, in 1876. By 1878, William Davis Wright was on the electoral roll at Narrabri. His residence qualified him for a vote.

Another employee was charged with stealing one of Wright's saddles in 1879. By 1881, Wright had a position as one of the trustees of a corner of Narrabri cemetery. Then in 1882, he had a warrant out for the arrest of William J Cameron, his employee, who had absconded. Also in the same year, Wright was charged by the police for ill-treating a horse that he owned. He was fined. Next they were at Coonabarabran in 1891. That is where the Wrights' twins, their last children, were born and died. During that year, Wright came up with the idea of running a buggy or trap service carrying passengers between Coonabarabran and Gunnedah. Then they moved to Sydney. He appeared as a resident at Camperdown by 1894.

Back in 1886, W D Wright became bankrupt while he was in business as an auctioneer at Narrabri. He was still insolvent when he lived with his family at Camperdown. There, Wright was described in the official bankruptcy document, now in NSW State Records, as 'always travelling'.

Wright began his interlude at Queanbeyan in 1894. He acquired the business of the late Mr Alfred M Dulhunty. Now he could advertise that he was an auctioneer, stock, station, land, and financial agent. He said so in the *Queanbeyan Age* on 14 October 1896. Then, while his wife was away, a second house of his burnt to the ground in 1897. The inquest includes some quite sceptical moments about his insurance

policy. There was more amazement when it was discovered that Wright was still bankrupt. (*Queanbeyan Age*, 26 June 1897.) He shrugged it off for a time.

W Davis Wright also had a role as agent for Mr Fred Campbell of 'Yarralumla'. Wright publicised that in August 1898. Who remembered that Campbell once was W D Wright's brother-in-law? Fred married Wright's youngest sister Catherine in 1877 at Bombala. Catherine Campbell died in 1881 in Sydney. By 1889, Fred was married to Christina McPhee. The business link looks providential for W Davis Wright.



Scenes at Yarralumla Station near Canberra c.1913

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In Queanbeyan, W Davis Wright penned his series of 'Reminiscences of Olden Times' during 1895. The columns appeared in the *Queanbeyan Observer*. Also, he was elected to the committee of the Farmers and Settlers Association in 1902. He became a Freemason between 1902 and 1908, as a member of the local St Andrew's Masonic Lodge. Wright sat on the Queanbeyan Hospital Board too. All this did not last.

In August 1903, Wright began a court action against his hired servant George Ford, again under the Masters and Servants Act. It was for neglecting his duty towards Wright. Coincidentally, the Wrights moved out of Queanbeyan to Wild Cattle Flat. That locality is way south between Captains Flat and Anembo, near where they were many years before. Wright wrote to the *Queanbeyan Age* on 21 June 1904 complaining about the poor mail service. As for business, Wright grew potatoes on his selection, which he called 'Brooklyn'.

Then in 1910, William Davis Wright stood for State Parliament. He became endorsed as the Liberal candidate for Monaro. Remarkably, there is a record of his policy speech in the *Delegate Argus* of 9 September 1910. Wright lost that state election, as G T C Miller of Cooma was elected.

At Wild Cattle Flat, William Davis and Margaret Isabel Wright celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Notices appeared in both the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph* in 1914. All the family came along to the party. Sadly, it was followed by the death of Mrs Wright in March 1916. She had moved to private care at Thornleigh in Sydney, near a daughter. Margaret Wright was buried at Gore Hill Cemetery with her oldest daughter Minna (or Minnie) Lomax, who had predeceased her mother in 1904.

After his wife's death, W D Wright moved on. Relatives were nearby. There was a brother at Bombala and a daughter Mrs Jessie McNair at Muttama, which is between Cootamundra and Gundagai. In the same year Wright moved to Wyalong in mid-western NSW. Once there, he advertised a real bargain. He was the agent for the sale of a general store and its 'stock in trade'. State-wide notice of the sale was achieved through *The Land* in September 1916. Wright became very well-known in Wyalong. He was admired as the 'old battler'.

There was a short stay back at Muttama, but he next turns up as a grazier outside Yass. (*Yass Courier*, 15 March 1920.) From early 1920, Wright lived at 'Edgerton House'. It was named after an early settler, but became famous for other reasons. Wright's scheme to establish a jam factory in Yass was considered, but never supported. (*Yass Courier*, 23 April 1923, p3.)

Now comes a surprise. It was while he was at Wyalong that Wright put his book *Canberra* together. He self-published it in 1923 when he was at Yass. Nearly everyone thought it all took place in Canberra. Not so. His acquaintances at Wyalong recognised that W D Wright was immensely proud of three things about his book. First was his genealogy, back, so he said, to the time of King Henry VII. That Tudor died in 1509. Next, since he was 82, he was a long-surviving male descendant of the original European settlers and 'a native of Queanbeyan'. Thirdly, and most of all, Wright had a letter of praise from H R H King George V of Great Britain, and from his heir apparent, H R H Prince Edward. The Royals congratulated him for his book *Canberra* which they had received as a gift. Publicity was welcome because, as G B Lowery who had reviewed the book in *The Bulletin* noted, 'He sells his books as well as he can himself...' to avoid giving away commission. (*Wyalong Advocate*, 18 March 1924.)

In his book, W Davis Wright mentions that his father was born in Derbyshire in January 1797, but more details about his ancient lineage were provided in the 'Reminiscences' on 6 September 1895. He claimed he had references to cover fourteen generations back to the late 1400s, though he only mentioned three items. One was an uncorroborated Wright marriage in 1549. He next mentions his father's baptism. That was in August 1797 at Measham in Derbyshire, where his family were merchants, not landed gentry. There are more vast gaps

than sparse evidence. Today unlike Wright, local historians call on historic documents as evidence to support their claims.

Wright died in 1924 and was buried at Muntoonan Methodist Cemetery. His memorial gives his year of death as 1934, but Wright is not responsible for that mistake.

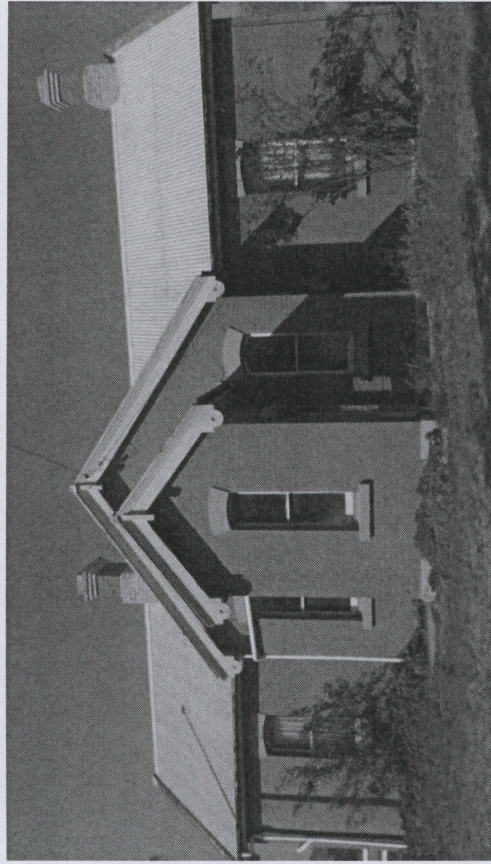
So, was Wright a long-term resident of Canberra, or perhaps of Queanbeyan? Yes, he was born in the district, but he moved on. When he was driving in Queensland (*Canberra*, p66) or passing through Illabo (*Canberra*, p87), do those places count as offshoots of Canberra because they feature in the book about Canberra? No, they are not, and his time in Narrabri or Wyalong does not count as living locally near Queanbeyan either.

At least two things become evident when Wright's stories are read. One is that he could spin a story about people, places, and events as if he were present. The other is that he is adamant that he was right, and opinionated to boot. It is not that he is deliberately lying, but the way he relies on his memory is all the authority he needed, however long ago he is talking about.

Probably, Wright's stories would hardly matter. Nevertheless, he is still cited today as the outright authority about one aspect of Canberra's local history. Be warned. The next article in this series causes ducking, weaving, and selective blindness, especially amongst politicians, their advisers, and many confident historians. It is about William Davis Wright and the original Australians in the Canberra and Queanbeyan district.

Peter Procter

MICHELAGO RAILWAY STATION



Michelago Railway Station today

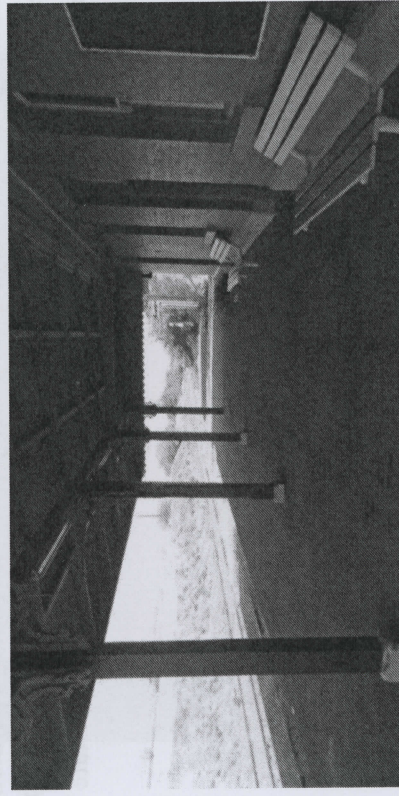
Surveying of the railway line from Bungendore to Micalago began in 1879, tenders being called by the Railway Branch of the Department of Public Works for the construction of the section in 1884. A Johnston and Co was the successful applicant.

A meeting of locals was held at the Hibernian Hotel, Micalago on 3 July 1886 regarding the siting of the future railway station. Most of the attendees were opposed to the siting of the future railway station, preferring that it was built closer to the village. The proposal was that the railway station would be built two miles away from the village, on land belonging to Alexander Rynie, MLA for Braidwood.

On 15 May 1886, Mr O'Sullivan, MP for Queanbeyan officially announced that the railway station could not be built closer to the township because of the steep gradients which extended for four miles from the Micalago River.

The result was the demise of the old Micalago village on the main road to Cooma. The current spelling of 'Michelago' was officially adopted at this time, differentiating the town from Rynie's 'Micalago' pastoral property.

The tender to build the Michelago Railway Station was won by Messrs Fred Pooley (of Pooley and Malone coaching fame) and John Harris of Cooma, the quote being £4,850 (\$9,700). In order to complete the station buildings in time for the opening of the railway line, Messrs Pooley and Harris had 80,000 bricks made on-site, the first bricks ever made in the district. It was observed at the time that these bricks were 'first-class'. The Victorian architectural style of the Michelago Railway Station is typical of those servicing larger centres in rural New South Wales. The station was opened on 7 December 1887.



Michelago Railway Station

The Postmaster General accepted an offer by Mr Alexander Rynie to build a post and telegraph office on his land, adjacent to the railway station, and lease it to the Département at £30 per annum.

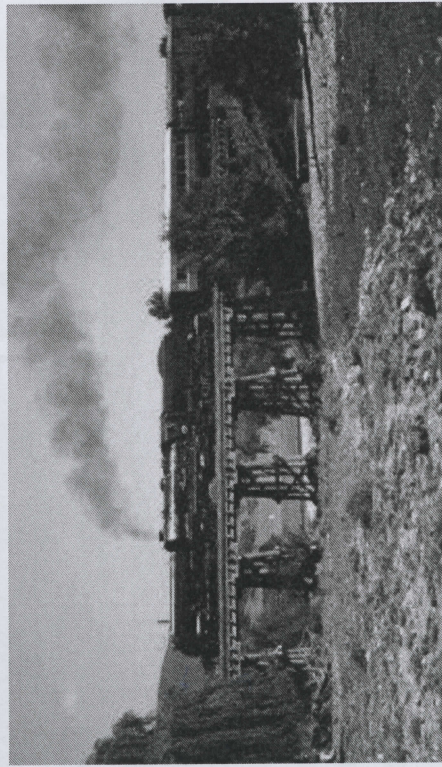
Mrs Jackson of the Hibernian Hotel built a new hotel close to the site of the new railway station. The remains of the old Hibernian Hotel can be

seen next to the Catholic Church on the Monaro Highway north of Michelago.

Coaches were still used from the Michelago Railway Station to carry passengers, goods and the mail to Cooma and Bombala, until the completion of the line to Cooma on 30 May 1889.

Competition from road transport was a factor in the closure of the station on 8 February 1976. The stationmaster's house was leased, no longer needed for its original purpose. The railway itself finally ceased to run on 31 May 1986, having run at a loss for most of its life. The Station and the Stationmaster's residence are the only buildings of the large complex to have survived.

The Australian Railway Historical Society (ACT Division) operated the Michelago Tourist Railway from Queanbeyan to Michelago from 1993. Michelago railway station was listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999.



A steam train crossing the Michelago Railway Bridge

Kristine Howard

THE MYSTERIOUS MIRACLE AT MAJURA



Kate Donnelly. Photograph courtesy Helen Jeffery

The schoolgirls step between the darkened voids of the rocky outcrops rising from the desolate landscape. The ethereal trio continue to gracefully ascend before each is swallowed by the deepening shadows. It's Valentine's Day, 1900. One will later be found, near-death, remembering nothing. Two are never seen again.

That, of course, is a wrap-up of Joan Lindsay's iconic *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, the haunting events unfolding in the remote surrounds of Mt Macedon, Victoria.

In the Canberra region, there was a mystifyingly similar scenario four years earlier than the setting of Lindsay's beguiling tale. And rather than the tantalising nature of the dream-inspired work she feverishly produced over two short weeks 54 years ago - fact or fiction, you must decide - the tragic case of Kate Donnelly is indeed true.

A frosty though dry mid-autumn day, 1896. In the wake of a particularly grueling Australian summer that killed 435; the beginning of the destructive seven year blight of the Federation Drought.

Along a depleted river running at the outskirts of Queanbeyan, a set of footprints are revealed. Ending near a "large, deep hole" in the riverbed, none are to be found coming out again. The discovery of a "lady's veil" above a steep approach down to the watercourse, believed a vital clue.

Five days earlier, 21-year-old Kate had vanished. Neither rhyme nor reason.

Wednesday, April 15; last day of the first modern Olympic Games, held in Greece. Locals soon distracted from their excitement that the only Aussie competitor, Edwin Flack, is bringing home two gold medals for track events and a tennis-doubles bronze.

Early that evening, Kate had made her way to Queanbeyan's impressive, decade-old railway station, perched south of the streets marking the almost 60-year-old township's centre. Off to Sydney for a throat operation. The next morning, failing to appear at Redfern for a pre-determined meeting with her employer, Miss Cunningham of Lanyon.

Abandoned on the platform at Queanbeyan, a box and two parcels belonging to the young maid. The perplexing disappearance is reported to police, but it would be Monday before an official search commences.

The 5ft 6in Kate was fashionably attired in "a dark navy blue dress, with full sleeves, and a feather boa round her neck, a sailor hat with black band"; a handbag to match her reddish hair. She'd apparently been seen "getting through a wire fence ... and making straight for the river" - the willow-infested Molonglo on the Canberra side of the train tracks.

Some 50 of 1500-odd residents hunt in vain. The local waterways combed; scrubby bushland for miles around, scoured.

Not a further trace, "alive or dead".

"Drowned" is the obvious whisper. Also making the rounds, theories to blemish a reputation: afraid of the procedure she was to endure, she's in hiding; she's "cleared out", or, "committed the sin of self-harm". The next was seemingly a heartless hoax, the motive equally unanswered. A letter from a "fellow servant" informing her Scottish-born mother, Mary, that Kate "intended to marry a gentleman, Mr T—, residing between Murrumbateman and Ginninderra, and that she was going to the house of his sister at Harden".

No so-named sister lived in that small town; the man referenced, in Sydney at the time.

Weeks creeping by. At the end of April, the unexplained saga pushed aside with news such as the death of former NSW Premier and ardent supporter of the country combining as a Commonwealth, Sir Henry Parkes, at 81.

Then, Friday, May 8: 23 days after Kate was last seen and 10 miles south, a cry goes up from John McIntosh of Majura Valley.

Some distance from his house, he'd come upon a trail of feathers he didn't recognise, leading off into thick scrub.

"Lying under a log exhausted, starved almost to death, helpless, and unable to speak" - still wearing her gloves and clutching the handle of her otherwise absent handbag - is Kate Donnelly.

In a "demented" state, she's unable to articulate what had befallen her, or explain the miracle of how she was alive. The greater concern is that she won't survive her ordeal and the mystery will never be solved.

Come Monday, on the mend, Kate's able to offer some details - as puzzling as they are. She'd been "knocked on the head by a man who robbed her". For days "insensible", unable to walk, managing only to crawl about, sustained with water and "what she could pick up in the bush".

Kate's story later alters somewhat. The trip to Sydney was debt-related - she needed additional work to pay for a frock she could ill-afford. However, she'd had a change of heart. Her memory ended at the decision to make her way back to her parents' Canberra home.

As with the conundrum of what befell Lindsay's three protagonists, 124 years on, questions around Kate's situation linger. Had the thieving cad simply chanced upon her walking along the river? Why would she leave her belongings behind?

It seems there was never a charge laid, nor even a suspect.

While described as "a girl of good conduct", was there an intended assignation after all? And what of the potentially adventurous young Kate? Sadly, an end grim enough to rival that to befall those classmates in the mists shrouding that ominous Rock.

Four months after Kate's disappearance, while warming herself by the fire on the morning of another Wednesday, August 12, her nightdress caught alight*. So badly burned was she, once again there "were grave doubts as to whether she would live through".

This time, she didn't.

Less a dream within a dream than a living nightmare.

*A similar fate befell Flora Blundell, the young woman said to haunt the historic cottage on the edge of Canberra's lake, and you can find out more about both of these sad tales at anoverallview.wixsite.com/blog

Nichole Overall

INITIATING AN EMPIRE - BE IT EVER SO SMALL

James Buchanan Young



Queanbeyan Store opened 1956; Collection Cowards of Canberra

There would scarcely be a person over a certain age in the Queanbeyan and Canberra districts who would not associate the name of J B Young with a small empire of department stores spreading from Queanbeyan across the growth areas of Canberra from 1914 until 1988. But who was J B Young?

James Buchanan Young was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in 1860. He was the elder son of William Young and Harriett Rosalie Buchanan, had five younger sisters and one much younger brother. Nothing is traced of his early life, except for the repeated statement that he arrived in Australia in 1885, was involved in the military efforts to relieve Khartoum, Sudan and as there is no evidence of his marriage in Australia, it is assumed his wife Emma came too.

By 1897 JB Young was employed by the biggest wholesale grocers west of the Blue Mountains, the Dalton Brothers. As a highly successful salesman he travelled around the western districts that included Cobar, Dubbo and Gulgong,

In 1910 he had accumulated enough funds to purchase the large general store in Blayney previously owned by C J Ferguson. He immediately set about improving its appearance with plate glass windows framed in nickel and marble. A new verandah was installed and the whole store was repainted. James Buchanan Young was in a sound financial position and established a home called *Lyndhurst* on Church Hill. *Lyndhurst* was once on the short-list as a site for the National Capital of Australia. Was this Young's main game?

James, or Jim as he was known locally, settled into Blayney involving himself in community life. At Lyndhurst he grew potatoes at a commercial level, became Secretary to the hospital, encouraged sport and was deeply involved in the show society and other agricultural pursuits. However, he preferred the life of travelling for Dalton Brothers and employed a Blayney man as his manager. Enter Herbert George Colman into the story of the B Young Stores.

By 1912 a persistent throat problem caused him to return to Sydney for treatment and he was immediately ordered away from the Blayney climate to the Blue Mountains where he was forbidden to utter a word! It was reported in the Orange Leader that

Anyone who knows the loquacious J.B.Y. will feel intensely sorry for him, as three months' enforced silence is a heavy cross to bear for one so full of energy, and who has often been credited with having kissed the blarney stone as the genial Jim Young. At any rate he is becoming an expert calligraphist, and is daily wielding a facile pen, which in some way makes up for the loss of his voice...

His banishment lasted nine months and upon his return he was in much better health but still not able to undertake running his business. However, he did extend and improve his home.

In May 1913 this big Blayney provider sold out to A. J. Shappere and Sons. While the community understood this move, it was expected he would continue his life in the district.

This was not to be. The contents of his home on Church Hill were auctioned and in mid-June he was fare welled with sadness by the Blayney community. He and his wife Emma left on a tour back to Londonderry where he later reported he had recovered his health, was really enjoying his break and was to travel to America in the February of 1914. By May he had returned to Blayney **looking** much improved. He was heartily welcomed back and seemed undecided about what he was going to do, but locally it was believed that it was on the cards that he would go onto the land. How wrong they were!



Henry Solomon's Universal Store in Monaro Street 1913. On the left was where HG Colman lived when he first arrived.
Errol Lea-Scarlett Collection, QPRC

1914 was to become a huge year for James Buchanan Young. He bought out Harry Solomon's business - Universal Providers - the store being in the Monaro Street Queanbeyan on the site of John Joseph Wright's original store, and Herbert George Colman was despatched by Cobb and Co coach from Blayney to open the new J. B. Young store on the first of June 1914. JB was content to allow Colman to run the business, adhering to both their firm beliefs in good quality merchandise and excellent treatment of staff.

The Youngs did not own property in the town, not even the store site until 1919. They rented the cottage at 274 Crawford Street, now The Hive, and lived there spasmodically until after the war. The war years were financially difficult for all as the anticipated building of Canberra slowed to a crawl, but JB Young continued to involve himself in the community being made a life member of the Pastoral and Agricultural Association, and generously supporting all war efforts. Immediately after the war commenced, he gave his full support to raising war funds and forming a Rifle Reserve as was being formed in all other parts of the State to give members the training in the use of arms and military discipline. He stated at a public meeting that he had some military experience and had witnessed the despairs and horrors soldiers endured - giving weight to the early mentions of his connection to the relief of Khartoum.

The new shop prospered and in December 1919 Young retired to Manly leaving Colman as managing director of JB Young Limited. The following year the company was floated on the share market with 20 000 shares selling at £1 each. Six years later JB Young sold his share to a newly formed consortium of Colman, Greenwood and Webb, and without changing the name or its values, it was Herbert Colman and his son who created the small empire of JB Young stores.



JB Young Ltd, pre 1929 and little changed from Solomon's store
Queanbeyan Local History Collection

James Buchanan Young and his scarcely known or mentioned wife Emma purchased a residence at 55 Osborne Rd, Manly for his retirement. Emma died at Ryde Hospital in 1933 and her death announcement recorded she was of Manly and formerly Queanbeyan. For the next several years James seems to have led a lonely life, living in various establishments - the *Carlton* on Victoria Rd in Mosman, then *Cooiwoo* on Kissing Point Rd.

In 1936 he married a much younger Hazel Amy Steele born in 1893 in Gulgong, a nurse whose family he may well have known during his travelling salesman's days working for Daltons. The couple returned to the house in Osborne Street

On November 29 1952 James Buchanan Young died at his home in Manly - late of Manly and formerly of Canberra, the loved husband of

Hazel. He left no heirs, a shadowy wife in Emma, a young widow and no known image but his name lived on in the Queanbeyan and Canberra districts until the end of JB Young Ltd in 1988.

Gillian Kelly

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Sydney Morning Herald 1914-1952
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Electronic Research

Ancestry.com
NSW Births Deaths & Marriages

A SKETCH OF EARLY QUEANBEYAN IN VERSE - 1854



Volume 2: Sketches of N. S. [New South] Wales, 1857-1888 / by H. Grant Lloyd
f.138 Queanbeyan

The Ghost in Hamlet says "Oh, list!"
" 'Till I a tale unfold;"
And tho' I am no ghost at all,
Yet still I will make bold
To use this ghostly form of speech,
And say "Oh, list!" to all and each.

My tale has nothing horrible,
Therefore you need not fear,
Not--as the royal Dane was served--
Pour poison in your ear.
Such naughty tricks I do abhor--
I wonder what you take me for?

I took a stroll thro' Queanbeyan,
To see the thriving town,
Which for its many goodly things
Is held in great renown.
But I must tell them one by one,
And you can judge when I have done.

It has a river smooth and clear,
Its centre running through,
Which to a stranger does appear
As if the town were two.
On either bank a town there is,
Quite separate, but vis-a-vis.

This river is as fine a stream
As any one could wish,
Only it wants two trifling things--
I mean a bridge, and fish.
And very strange it is to say
The flood did sweep them both away.

Some noble buildings grace the town,
The court-house 'mongst the rest,
Which really is a handsome house--
Perhaps you think I jest.
'Tis built of slabs, well split and cut,
As good as many a shepherd's hut.

But lately, as I understand,
The court has been removed,
And now is held, with formal state,
In a building more approved--
A noble house, three stories high,
Built by a publican hard by.

And here we have the law laid down
By sapient J.P.'s,
Who justice right and left dispense,
Which ever way they please
No prejudice nor private spite
Can e'er turn them from doing right.

And then, there is the church so
grand--I don't mean any harm--
But till 'twas pointed out to me,
I took it for a barn!
It has the very shape and size,
As all must know who use their eyes.

Ye citizens of Queanbeyan,
Rejoice with all your might,
For ye are blest with Parson S-----,
A great and burning light,
Who preaches in this noble pile,
And lays it down in first-rate style.

The Catholic Chapel truly is
Both elegant and fine,
A solid piece of masonry,
Of very chaste design.
On this account, much praise is due
To the people who belong thereto.

X. X. Original Poetry, Queanbeyan, Dec. 1854.

Contributed by Brigid Whitbread

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Original Poetry: The Goulburn Herald and County of Argyle Advertiser, NSW, Sat 30 December 1854. p.4. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article>

Artwork: Volume 2: Sketches of N. S. [New South] Wales, 1857-1888 / by H. Grant Lloyd
FILE NUMBER: FL12414292 FILE TITLE: f.138 Queanbeyan
<http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110577181>

The School-house I would now describe,
But can't, because there's none;
And no one knows, tho' I enquired
When it will be begun.

A proper state of things, no doubt,
Teach youth at home--or go without.

There is a Mill, which goes by steam,
To grind the people's wheat;
Another one is being built,
And soon will be complete,
Which may reduce the grinding down,
To something less than half-a-crown.

And then there is the Brewery,
Producing famous Ale,
Which really is most excellent,
And has a rapid sale,
While all who taste it, never fail
To speak in praise of "Bradbury's Ale."

We've got two Doctors in the town,
Both very clever men;
But not one Lawyer's to be found
To wield his legal pen,
I wonder some one don't contrive
To come, and keep the town alive.

We've Publicans and Storekeepers,
And "traps," who call the hours,
And a vigilant Chief-Constable,
Who loves to shew his powers.
So, may our township ever be
The seat of great prosperity.

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