

THE MURRUMBIDGEE AND WAGGA WAGGA



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Please be aware that this article contains terms that reflect views of the period in which it was written or recorded. While the information may not reflect current understanding, it is provided in a historical context.

	Aboriginal.	English.
Yalgan	The sun.
Yerole	Eel.
Yourer	Clouds.
Yungoone	Cod fish.

The names of some of the old warriors who often came to Lismore were Durobin, Hippi, Waggum, Kebber, Quibbum, Seranny Mickey, and Keppane.

The Murrumbidgee and Wagga Wagga.

By JAMES J. BAYLIS.

I was born in the old Courthouse at Hartley in September, 1857. My father, the late Henry Baylis, was then Clerk of Petty Sessions in that town. The Courthouse was, I believe, built by convicts, and was the first Government building erected on the west side of the Blue Mountains. In January, 1858, my father was appointed Police Magistrate at Wagga Wagga, and in June of that year he took my mother and me across to that town from Hartley. We travelled in a spring-cart drawn by two horses, one in the shafts and the other in an outrigger, camping out all the way. My father held the position for nearly forty years, being retired at the age of seventy years. We lived for ten years in a small slab house of four rooms, with shingle roof; and then we moved to Goonigul, near the racecourse. Wagga Wagga, or as the blacks pronounced it "Wahga Wahga," means "crows." It is really the noise the crow makes. The blacks double the word for the plural, such as grong grong, nap nap, cowl cowl, and many other words.

There were many blacks about Wagga Wagga in the 'sixties, and I have seen between three and four hundred of them camped in the bend of the river below where the traffic bridge crosses it, and have seen them holding a corroboree. They generally mustered in great num-

bers for Queen Victoria's birthday, May 24, when they were each given a blanket by the Government. The king of the tribe was Peter, and he wore a brass plate, of which he was very proud, and on which was inscribed "Peter, King of Borambola." After we went to live at Goonigul, Peter lopped several of the box trees that were growing round the house. Goonigul means a plain, and my father adopted that name because of the plain, now the racecourse, alongside. Wagga was a very small place in 1858. The Wollundry lagoon was the southern boundary, and where Newtown now stands was all wild bush. The old town of Wagga was surveyed in the year 1847 by Mr. Surveyor Townsend, who camped on the river about three miles to the east of the present town, intending to survey it on the high land which comes right to the river at that spot; but that site was on the run of John Peter, Gumly Gumly, who did not want a town there, so he persuaded Townsend to survey it lower down the river on his neighbour's (R. H. Best) run.

The Murrumbidgee River was discovered by Captain Currie and Major Ovens in June, 1823—at least, they are credited with the discovery, though Charles Throsby is supposed to have seen it somewhere near Canberra in April, 1821. In the years 1829-1830, Captain Charles Sturt, with young George MacLeay, went down the Murrumbidgee to Lake Alexandrina, passing over the site of North Wagga Wagga. They found the blacks very hostile in places. George MacLeay was afterwards the first member of Parliament for the Murrumbidgee, and was knighted before he died. The last habitation they saw was a shepherd's hut at Jugiong, belonging to Henry O'Brien, of Douro, near Yass. The first settlement around Wagga took place in the year 1832, when the Tompsons took up Oura and Eunonyhareenyah; R. H. Best took up the Wagga Wagga station, and the Jenkins family took up Tooyal and Buckingbong. Tooyal was first known as "Toyeo," which means the jag of a spear. Buckingbong was originally Boganbong; Bogan "rushes," and bong "dry." There are plenty of them in the big swamp near Buckingbong homestead. Eunonyhareenyah was originally spelled Eunanoreena, the way the blacks pronounced it, and as it can be seen on the old maps.

I have always understood that F. A. Tompson was responsible for the extravagant spelling, Eunonyhareenyah.

Other settlements gradually followed, and in the 'thirties and 'forties the following runs were taken up: Tarcutta, by T. H. Mate (his son still resides there); Kyeamba, by John Smith (now in the hands of his grandchildren); Gumly Gumly, by Mrs. Bourke (afterwards Mrs. John Peter); Gournain, by James Devlin; Pomingalarna, by E. New; Collingully, by W. Beaver (hence the name of Beaver's Island); Cumungdroo, by R. Guise; Borombola, by Alexander MacLeay; Berry Jerry, by John Bray; Wagingoberremby, by J. Rudd; Hanging Rock, by P. Supple; Tootal, by W. Mitcham; Mittagong, by W. Vincent; Mundawaddera, by C. Edghill and D. O'Neill; and Junee, by L. De Salis. Sandy Creek was the back station of the Wagga Wagga run, and is said to have once been sold for a pound of tobacco and two gallons of rum. The Davidsons went to Bullenbong in the year 1844, and the property is still held by members of the same family. Anthony Marshall went to look after Berry Jerry for John Bray, but the blacks, who were very ferocious, hunted him out, and he afterwards looked after Wagga Wagga run for R. H. Best. Marshall's Creek and Marshall's Point are named after him. His stepson, Basil B. Bennett, is still alive and hearty; he came to Wagga in 1840, and in the year 1846 helped Marshall sow the first wheat grown in the Wagga district. The clear sandhill near Pomingalarna was the site chosen, and the ploughing was done with an old wooden plough, single furrow, drawn by four bullocks driven by B. B. Bennett, then a small boy. In those days the river used to get very low, and I have heard F. Jenkins giving evidence before the local Land Board, when he stated that there was a period of twelve years—from 1832 to 1844—when it was not high enough to run into the Yanko and Colombo Creeks, and most of the water in the lagoons dried up. This is borne out by the fact that trees grew up in the beds of the creeks and lagoons, and were killed when the water again filled them. In nearly all the lagoons along the Murrumbidgee River the dead trees can still be seen standing. In the 'sixties I have seen the river very low, and at the eastern end of Kincaid

Street in the town of Wagga there used to be a shallow ford, and I have seen people crossing there dryshod on stepping stones.

Frank Jenkins has often told me of the early days. His cart was one of the first to go down the river, and the blacks, when they came across the tracks, could not make it out. They followed the tracks for miles, and as the two wheel marks never got any closer they thought it uncanny, and afterwards bolted—"debbil debbil." He told me how they were very troublesome spearing cattle, and at last all the settlers on both sides of the river determined to give them a lesson; so one day they all went out armed and drove the blacks before them, who took refuge on an island thickly overgrown with reeds in the middle of the river, about seven miles up from the town of Narrandera, and here they were shot down in numbers. The island is known as the Murdering Island to this day. The Davidsons, when they first went to live at Bullenbong, had to ride to Tarcutta, a distance of sixty miles, to get their mail. Sir Thomas Mitchell was the Surveyor-General, and it is most probable that the names of the streets in Wagga Wagga were named by him. He was an old Army officer, and the streets are named after the Peninsular and Waterloo veterans, such as Fitzmaurice, Gurwood, Kincaid, Johnston, Simmons, Beckwith, Travers, Frere, and so on.

Newtown was surveyed on the south side of the Wollundry lagoon in the year 1858 by P. F. Adams, afterwards Surveyor-General, assisted by C. F. Bolton, who afterwards became the first District Surveyor in Wagga Wagga, and whose district then extended to the South Australian border. Mr. Bolton died recently in Wagga, at the age of eighty-four years.

(To be continued.)

In the 1810 edition the three misprints are corrected, but the spelling "Mackheath" occurs in both editions. In 1810, by the bye, "eclat" for the first time appears in italics.

So at last we may hope to have done Mr. Henry Carter justice—though full justice will not be done until some patriot discovers and entablets the house in Leicester where the gentleman lived. One thought, however, still haunts me: Did Susanna persuade him to the alterations?

The Murrumbidgee and Wagga Wagga.

By JAMES J. BAYLIS.

(Concluded.)

There were no roads in the early days, only bush tracks. The track leading out of Wagga up the river went by Tareutta Street, there being no bridge over the lagoon; while the track going down the river went across the plain and then through the island now known as Warby's Island, past Best's homestead. The track marks can still be traced through the race-course, though fenced off and consequently unused for over sixty years. The river was crossed by punts, and when we went to Wagga the punt was kept by W. Brown, known as "Tinker" Brown; it crossed the river about half a mile below the present bridge. Brown afterwards owned the Hanging Rock station. Associated with "Tinker" Brown, who had a circus, were Henry Moxham and John Hely, the former as clown and the latter as ringmaster. Both afterwards became prominent citizens of Wagga.

The sandhills in Wagga were the burial grounds of the blacks, and Mrs. James Rudd, the eldest daughter of R. H. Best, who still resides in Wagga, tells me that she and her sister were riding on their ponies across the plain when they saw a large mob of blacks

on the sandhill where Goonigul house now stands, and on riding over to see what was going on, found they were burying a dead black, who was tied up in a bunch and buried in a sitting position.

In the year 1849 my father took over three hundred horses to Adelaide from Wallerawang. He struck across country, and reached the Murrumbidgee somewhere about Nangus, between Gundagai and Wagga, and then followed the river down. He passed through Wagga, which then consisted of a public house, store, and blacksmith's shop. He found the public house was kept by J. J. Roberts, known everywhere as "Ginger" Roberts, whom he had known before in Sydney, when they were both law clerks. After leaving Narrandera (Flood's station), some of my father's horses were stolen, and telling the men to go on a day's stage and wait for him, he stayed behind and hunted around, afterwards finding the horses planted in a deep bend of the river just opposite to where Tubbo Homestead stands. The last white man he saw on the river was at Lang's Crossing, now known as Hay. Until the settlement at Adelaide was reached he saw nobody but the blacks, who were quite friendly and not in any way hostile. When crossing the Darling River, some of the horses commenced ringing when swimming in the middle of the stream, and nine of them were drowned. One night all in camp were awakened by a strange cry in the river. The blacks were very frightened, and said it was the bunyip. Many years afterwards, when visiting a large travelling circus and menagerie, he heard the same cry. There were seals in the menagerie, and he came to the conclusion that the "bunyip" he had heard was a seal.

In the year 1858 the first newspaper was started in Wagga, *The Wagga Wagga Express*, and it is still going strong, being now a daily under the name of *The Daily Express*. The first proprietor was James T. Brown, who only owned it for a few months and then sold out to Fowler Boyd Price. There used to be a school on the flat below the bridge, but it was washed away by the floods; and E. H. Tompson kept a private school. The National School was built in the year 1860; it consisted of only one room, and

boys and girls were taught together. Afterwards a class-room was added, and then a room for girls. The first room is now the reading-room of the Riverina Club. Some of the bricks of the floor of the first school built on the flat about 1849 can still be seen. E. H. Tompson afterwards became Clerk of Petty Sessions and Crown Lands Agent in Wagga Wagga.

When Newtown was surveyed by P. F. Adams, he named the streets after the then prominent residents, and the main street, which leads from Fitzmaurice Street of the old town to the railway station, he named Baylis after my father. The bridge over the Wollundry lagoon, connecting Fitzmaurice and Baylis Streets, was erected in the year 1860. The Wagga Wagga Bridge Company was formed in the year 1861. The Government gave them a liberal charter, and the company's bridge was erected on the site of the present Hampden bridge. It was open for traffic in October, 1862, and was used as the main thoroughfare for large mobs of cattle travelling from Queensland to Victoria.

When we arrived in Wagga in 1858 there were only two stores, kept by F. A. Tompson and George Forsyth. In the year 1870 Wagga became a municipality, and George Forsyth was the first Mayor and F. A. Tompson the first Town Clerk. In the 'sixties the streets were gradually improved, and I have often seen prisoners sentenced to hard labour grubbing out the trees in the streets with the police on guard. Where the Criterion and Commercial Hotels now stand was a swamp known as Todhunter's lagoon. It was drained into the river, and then filled up. There was no doctor in Wagga, or clergyman, but Dr. A. B. Morgan and the Rev. R. Young came soon after we did. The post office was near to Forsyth's store, and was kept by P. S. Murray. F. A. Tompson acted as agent for the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, but a branch was opened under the management of W. H. Mackenzie in premises now occupied by the Club House Hotel. Prior, however, the Australian Joint Stock Bank opened a branch in a building near Forsyth's store, under the management of J. F. Skinner. This was opened on January 3, 1859. The Bank of New

South Wales opened a branch in premises now occupied as the Home Hotel, at the corner of Fitzmaurice and Kincaid Streets, under the management of A. J. Hooke.

When the Robertson Land Act came into force, whereby free selection became the law of the land, there was great friction between the squatters and free-selectors, and the pound was greatly patronised. The pound was on a sandhill at the corner of Dobbs and Docker Streets, where now stands the drill hall, and I have seen hundreds of horses and cattle impounded there. In looking over the old files of the newspapers, one cannot help being struck with the numerous advertisements of rewards offered for horses and cattle "stolen or strayed," and also the very long lists of impoundings. It is interesting to note that after the Free Selection Act came into force, on the first and second days appointed for receiving applications there was not one made at the Wagga Land Office, and only one at Albury and one at Tumut. Horses were very cheap then, and I know of young stock selling at one shilling each. I myself bought two colts out of the pound for eighteen pence each, and one of them turned out a very valuable horse.

In the early 'sixties Wagga progressed rapidly. A flour mill was erected by Robert Nixon, who owned all the land bounded by Fitzmaurice, Johnston, Tarcutta and Short Streets and the lagoon. The mill and his residence were then the only buildings on this block of land.

On looking up the official returns for the year 1862 in the Wagga Wagga Police District, I find that there were altogether one thousand two hundred and sixty-one acres under cultivation, of which eight hundred and ten acres were growing wheat, which yielded eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven bushels of grain and seventy-five tons of hay; three hundred and ninety-four acres were under oats, and yielded one thousand six hundred and thirty-four bushels of grain and three hundred and fifty-five tons of hay. Besides these there were forty-three and a half acres under maize and twenty-three and a half acres under barley.

From 1863 to 1866 bushranging was rife all through the country, and the residents were kept in a state of terror. The papers of the day gave columns of information, and the *Wagga Wagga Express* had their columns headed "Bushranging for the Week." The Gardiner gang, Gilbert, Hall, O'Meally, Lowry, Dunn, Peisley, and many others ranged over a large extent of country to the north and east of Wagga, while Dan Morgan held up the country south and west from Narrandera to Albury. He was undoubtedly the most bloodthirsty of all the bushrangers.

In August, 1863, my father, who had to hold monthly courts at Urana and Narrandera, was riding along the bush track between Bullenbong and Brookong when he was stuck up by two men—Morgan and his mate, "Flash" Clark. After he got away he went on to Urana and telegraphed to the Wagga police to meet him on the road somewhere near where he was stuck up. The bushrangers had cut the wires between Wagga and Urana, and he had to telegraph by way of Deniliquin, Melbourne, and Albury. The police, under Sub-Inspector Morrōw, met him, and after two days' hunting they came upon Morgan's camp in the scrub, somewhere near a place now known as "The Gumholes," in the Lockhart district. In an encounter which they had during the night, my father was dangerously wounded, and so was "Flash" Clark. It was a very dark night, and the bushrangers got away. They went straight to a shepherd's hut and shot the shepherd Haley, accusing him of having given information to the police. They, however, did not kill him. Haley said that "Flash" Clark was wounded, and wanted to go back and give himself up to the police, but Morgan would not let him. Two days later they were seen by a stockman on Mahonga station, when Clark was in a very bad way. He was never seen alive afterwards, and Morgan, when he burned down the Mittagong woolshed and store, said that he had been shot by that ——— Police Magistrate and that he had died in the scrub. Some three years afterwards the remains of a man answering the description of Clark were found in the scrub on Mahonga.

Morgan stuck up Alexander Burt, the manager of Tubbo station, and stole his watch and horse, leaving

him to walk in to the station, a distance of about ten miles. He twice stuck up Yarrabee station, and on one occasion had the brands on the fire, intending to brand the manager (Mr. Apps) and overseer (Mr. Waugh), which, however, he did not do. He on many occasions bailed up the mail coach, and robbed the bags and passengers. He also bailed up many stations, among them being Walla Walla, Piney Range, Wallandool, and Roundhill. At the latter place, he shot John Heriot in the leg and shot J. McLean dead. He shot dead Sergeants McGuinty and Smith, also a Chinaman, and committed many other depredations and crimes. It was not until April 9 in the year 1865 that he was shot at Peechelba station, near Wangaratta, by a man named Quinlan. I have in my possession a photo of him taken after he was dead. He would never let anybody cut his hair, and the photo shows him to have long hair down on his shoulders, and a very long, rough, shaggy beard.

Several members of the legal profession had now become established in Wagga, and also two doctors; before 1860, solicitors used to come from Gundagai and Tumut. The old Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England were erected in 1859, but have been greatly added to and altered since.

In the year 1864 Wagga sported a Champion Race of one thousand sovereigns, which was won by P. J. Keighran's Mormon; time, six minutes thirty-eight seconds, which was the slowest time on record for a Champion Race. In the year 1868 the celebrated Ten Mile Race was run; it was won by H. J. Bowler's Australian, ridden by W. Yecmans. R. Grosvenor's Comet was second, and W. J. Bowen's Riverina third, both of them being ridden by their owners. The time was twenty-three minutes thirty-five seconds, and there were twelve starters. That was the first and last Ten Mile Race.

In the year 1865 the Murrumbidgee Pastoral Association was formed, and held its first show on the racecourse in November that year. The first president was W. O. Windeyer, of Wantabadgery; and the vice-presidents were John Leitch, of Berry Jerry,

and Thomas Hammond, of Junee. These, with seventeen others, formed the first committee of twenty, out of which the only one now living is R. B. Wilkinson, of Wilkinson and Lavender, Sydney. Owing to some old files of the *Wagga Wagga Express* having been destroyed by fire, I have been unable to get the results of the first show; but I have seen those of the second show held in 1866, when there were eighty entries all told, which included eleven thoroughbred horses, four draught horses, twenty-one cattle, twenty-four sheep (of which eighteen were rams for sale, all belonging to one owner), and twenty miscellaneous exhibits, which comprised fat cattle, fat sheep, four hacks, one pair of buggy horses, and one single harness horse. In 1868 there were sixty-nine exhibits. In after years the name was changed to the Murrumbidgee Pastoral and Agricultural Association. Last year the members' roll amounted to over one thousand.

In 1866 Wagga received world-wide notoriety when the butcher, Tom Castro, claimed to be Sir Roger Tichborne, the heir to the Tichborne Estates in England. He, with his wife and child, went to England to enforce his claim. This was one of the most extraordinary cases on record, and it was not until the year 1874 that he was proved to be Arthur Orton, and was sentenced to fourteen years for perjury. He confessed his guilt before he died.

The first Circuit Court was held on April 23, 1866, when Mr. Justice Faucett presided, and he was presented with an address. The Quarter Sessions had been held for some years before that date. There was no telegraph to Wagga until after 1860, and then it was only obtained by public subscription. I have seen the list of subscribers who gave over £700 to defray half the cost of erecting the line from Tarcutta to Wagga. John Peter, of Gumly Gumly, known as "Big Peter," headed the list with £100.

William MacLeay represented the district in Parliament for a number of years; afterwards he was appointed to the Legislative Council, and before he died was knighted.

It was in June, 1852, that the great flood took place in the Murrumbidgee, when the town of Gundagai was swept away and eighty-nine persons out of a population of about two hundred and fifty were drowned. There is very little on record of this flood in Wagga; probably the residents got warning from Gundagai, and took refuge on the sandhills. Best, with his family, were living on the bank of the river about one and a half miles west of Wagga, and had to take refuge on a raft. After this, Best built a new home on the high land, and called it "Flowerdale." Both Basil Bennett and Hon. James Gormly were in the 1852 flood; the former was at Yab-tree, and when the flood came down, he, with others, took refuge on a hay stack. By and bye the hay stack floated away with its living freight, and got stuck in the branches of a tree, where they spent some days before being rescued. At last an old blackfellow, who I can remember well, came and rescued them in his bark canoe. He was named Yarric. Gormly was only a lad at the time, living with his parents at Gundagai; the house they were living in was washed away in the evening, and his father, mother, two brothers, and a sister were drowned. He and another brother swam to a tree and took refuge there, but the tree began to get loose at the roots and every minute was threatened with being washed away, so they swam to another tree, and were rescued next afternoon. It was a bitterly cold night in the depth of winter, and having divested themselves of all their clothing except shirt and trousers, they nearly perished—and it is a wonder they did not. Gormly always reckoned that there were over one hundred lives lost.

The early pioneers of the Murrumbidgee had to be very resourceful in those days, and had to put up with many hardships and inconveniences. Stringy bark and greenhide were the mainstays for building—no such thing as galvanised iron; and wire for fencing was unknown. They had to grind their own grain into flour, and on some of the old stations the stones so used can still be seen. They also had to make their own candles and soap, and many other things. What with trouble with the blacks, bush fires, stock straying (that was before the runs were fenced), and in cases of stations away back from the river being

dried out for want of water, these early pioneers had very hard times. Besides all these, the prices of stock were so low that grazing became unprofitable, and, unfortunately, many of the owners went under. These were the men who went ahead; took up the country and improved it, thereby opening it up for the closer settlement that was afterwards to take place. I know of one squatter (a term now seldom used—they are called graziers or pastoralists) on the Murrumbidgee starting off to Sydney with two teams of bullocks, his drays being loaded with wool, and driving one himself. It was nine months before he got back to his station with supplies, but then he was hampered by floods and other disasters.

Many stations were sold for a song, and there is an old story of Toganmain being sold for a gallon of rum. James Tyson, the millionaire, once owned North Goonambil, on the Billabong, and after building a hut and yard on it, got dried out (the creek having stopped running), so he sold it for £12, but never got paid. He first came on the Murrumbidgee at Jugiong, in the employ of Henry O'Brien, of Douro. I believe his salary was £35 a year. He afterwards went to Groongal, on the Murrumbidgee, in the same employ, and I have heard it stated that he never slept two nights running in the same place, as the blacks were so wild and treacherous.

It is interesting to read in one of the old files of the *Wagga Wagga Express* an advertisement of "Rams for Sale" on a down river station, and as a guarantee that they were good it is specially mentioned that they cut three pounds of wool last shearing. The Vermonts had not been imported to Australia then.

I have heard the late C. M. Lloyd telling that when he and Mrs. Lloyd first went to Yamma, they had only a one-roomed hut and they often had visitors. After tea they would sit round the fire yarning until bed time, when he would show them the front door, saying "Gentlemen, there is your bedroom!" They would have to camp under a tree.

Messrs. Edward Ray and Henry Angel took up Uardry station in the year 1840, on the lower Mur-

rumbridgee. Ray went there first and built a house. When Angel arrived some years later, Ray told him he had taken up both sides of the river, so Angel built a house on the south side, only to find that it had been taken up by someone else. He then shifted over to the north side of the river, and built a hut in a bend of the river, known to this day as Angel's Bend. The plain out in front is known as the Heavenly Plain, because of the Angels there. Henry Angel was one of those who went across to Port Phillip with Hume and Hovell in 1824. After selling Uardry he went to live near Wagga, and died there at the ripe old age of ninety-one years. His descendants in the district are now very numerous.

Uardry was first known as Yangunjular, but Mr. Crown Lands Commissioner Bingham altered it to Wardry. How it came to be altered to Uardry I never heard. Wardry is not a native name, and Uardry is; it means the yellow box tree. There is a brass plate at Uardry, and inscribed on it "Jackey, King of Yangunjular." Henry Angel, son of the original Henry Angel, lives in Wagga; he tells me that he and his father went to Sydney, taking a ton of cheese, in the year 1846. Their team consisted of a horse in the shafts of a dray and four bullocks in the lead; the trip took three months, and while in Sydney his father got the brass plate for old Jackey. The second "g" in Yangunjular should have been a "j," according to the way the blacks pronounce the word.

I lived for twenty-five years at Goonahra, near Narrandera, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, which the blacks call "Morumbeeja," which means a big expanse of water, or, as they describe it, "Big one water"; and I have collected many aboriginal names. Old Billy Murray and his gin Charlotte used often to camp in the bend of the river near my house, and bring up fish in exchange for meat and flour. They were both very intelligent, and I got most of the meanings of the native words from them, corroborated by Dick Weston, the black tracker at Narrandera, and Mungo,

another old black.* In the years 1871-1872, I attended The King's School, Parramatta, and going home for my Christmas holidays I had to ride from Rydal, then the railway terminus to Wagga Wagga, a distance of two hundred and forty miles, camping out all the way and using my saddle for a pillow. Now it sounds strange to hear the boys going to and from school grumbling because they cannot get a lower sleeping berth.

*A useful list of aboriginal words in the Waradgery dialect, with their meanings, collected by Mr. Baylis, may be seen in the Society's library.—Editor.