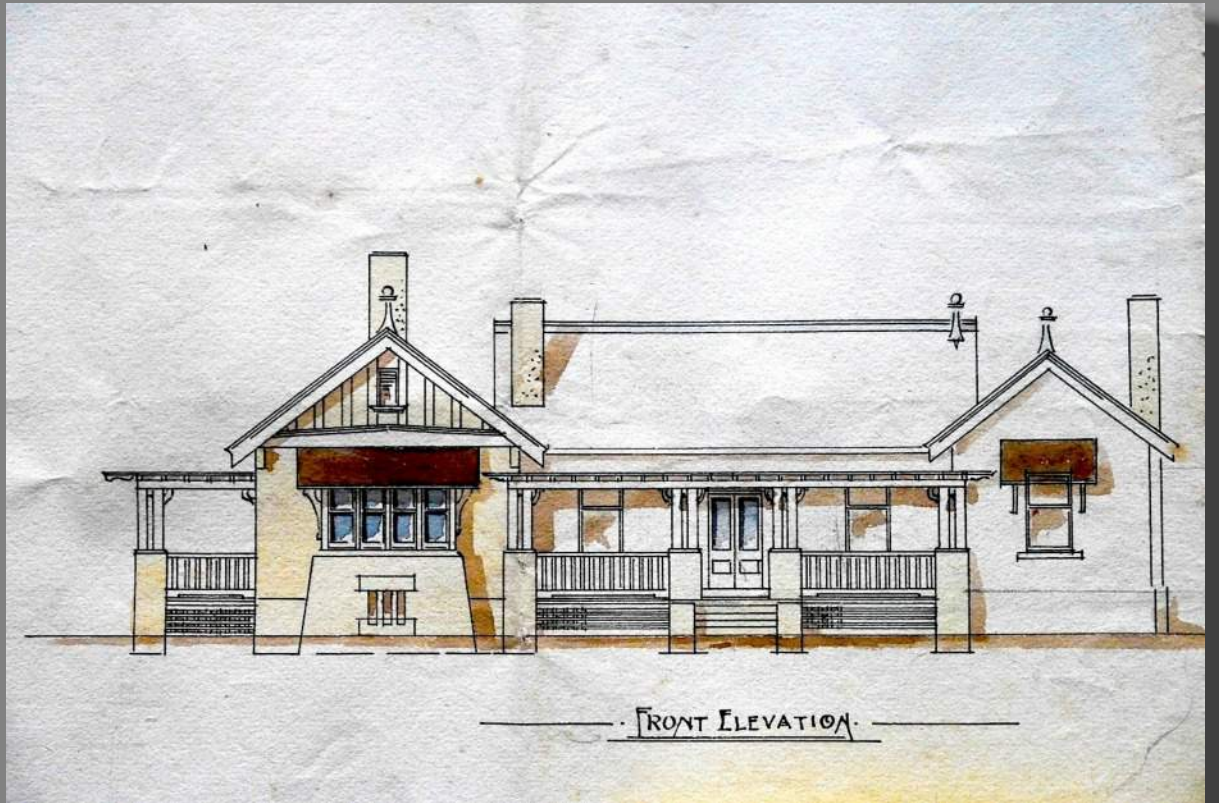


BLUE MOUNTAINS HISTORY JOURNAL

Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations



Issue 8

February 2018

Cover Photo *Section of 1910 plans for extensions (Pitt 1910)*
The house at Wentworth Falls later named *Green Gables*.

Blue Mountains History Journal

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CONTENTS

Editorial	Peter C. Rickwood	iii
A Blue Mountains House and its Owners: <i>Green Gables</i> at Wentworth Falls	Jeff Warnock	1
George Kitch (1843-1914): Katoomba Photographer and Businessman (1889-1914) – Part 1	Ted Szafraniec	23
Tuck's Jenolan Caves Oilette Postcards	Erik Halbert & Ross Ellis	35
Playground 'Rockets' reflect the Space Race Era	Susan Jackson-Stepowski	49
Cumulative Index		67

EDITORIAL

Issue 8 of **The Blue Mountains History Journal** contains four papers, three on specific topics and one which is essentially a review.

The first is a detailed account of the construction of, and alterations to, the oldest house in Wentworth Falls - now named *Green Gables*. One of its former owners, Jeff Warnock, has painstakingly documented the work done by owners that preceded him and while he was living there (2004-2017) he searched for evidence of the changes that had been made to both the house and its grounds. This paper gives a fascinating insight into the activities of some of those owners, people who made important contributions to the development of the village.

The Blue Mountains are renowned not only for their scenery but also for the many photographers who endeavoured to capture the views. One such was George Kitch about whom little has previously been written.

Ted Szafraniec has been researching that photographer for many years and has compiled a lengthy account about him and his work. In this issue comes the story of the man and being designated 'Part 1' you can be assured that a sequel is in preparation which will deal with his photographic work.

In Issue 6 Erik Halbert and Ross Ellis introduced us to historic postcards of the Blue Mountains called Oilettes. Now their attention has turned to companion postcards displaying the splendours of Jenolan Caves. This paper is accompanied by superb images of those postcards alongside of which are photographs to show the accuracy of the painter of those scenes, A.H. Fullwood, which in most cases is impressive.

For a long time Blackheath was well known for its playground equipment, and especially for its rocket, all items which were constructed by local engineer Dick West. But his creations were distributed widely across Australia and his work has been researched by Susan Jackson-Stepowski who in her professional capacity (International Vice President, ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for Shared Built Heritage) wrote a State Heritage Register nomination for one of those Dick West playground rockets located in Moree. Not only has it been appropriate for Sue to write this account about playground rockets built for children, but also it is timely for during 2016-2017 the Rotary Club of Blackheath Inc. have raised the funding for, and have had constructed, a replica playground rocket that soon is to be installed in Blackheath Soldiers Memorial Park.

For the convenience of readers, at the end of this issue there is a cumulative list of the papers that were published in Issues 1 to 7.

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Dr Peter C. Rickwood,
Editor



A BLUE MOUNTAINS HOUSE AND ITS OWNERS: *GREEN GABLES* AT WENTWORTH FALLS.

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Abstract

The building and evolving design of the house *Green Gables* and the development of its plantings and gardens by a succession of owners reveal much about the history of Wentworth Falls as a Blue Mountains settlement from the late colonial period. The core of the house, a large cottage, was built by Walter D. Armstrong, a government surveyor, on a seven hectare property, sometime between 1877 and 1882, when he sold it. From 1884 until the mid 1920s the house and its gardens were maintained and developed successively by Jane Forster (the wealthy youngest granddaughter of Gregory Blaxland), by William H. Wood (a New South Wales Government Minister, who, in addition to extending the house, began the process of subdividing the land surrounding it), and by Frances Roberts and her husband (who had grazing interests elsewhere in the State). It was occupied part-time by owners up to about 1952 and since it has been a fulltime residence for owners who have maintained it essentially as it was in the 1920s.

Key Words: *Green Gables*, Walter Armstrong, Jane Forster, William Wood, Frances Roberts, Wentworth Falls, Blue Mountains

INTRODUCTION

In 1867, the western railway line from Penrith reached the tiny Blue Mountains settlement known from its inn as 'The Weatherboard' or 'Weatherboard'. In 1879, the settlement was re-named 'Wentworth Falls', reflecting its proximity to the cascades on Jamison Creek that fell into the Jamison Valley. The railway brought increasing numbers of people from Sydney and the Cumberland Plain to enjoy the natural splendours of the nearby waterfall and the surrounding cliffs and valleys. Soon, small numbers of land speculators and would-be settlers were exploring the

upper Blue Mountains, including Weatherboard, for home sites.

By 1882, a substantial house had been built on the northern side of the railway at Wentworth Falls (Figure 1) - the core of what is today at 28 Railway Parade probably the oldest extant domestic building in the township [See Appendix]. From some time in the 1880s it was known as *Gila*, from 1914, until it was sold in 1918, as *Minniewanka* (Anonymous 1918), and, continuously from 1919 up to the present time, as *Green Gables*. The following life story of the house reveals much about how it was built and cared for, as well as about the social lives and connections of some of its architects, builders, owners and gardeners.



Section of 1910 plans for extensions (Pitt 1910)

Figure 1. The house at Wentworth Falls later named *Green Gables*.

Walter Dickinson Armstrong Acquires Land at Weatherboard (1876 to 1877)

In January 1877, Walter Dickinson Armstrong (Figure 2), son of a late well-known Sydney surveyor, and himself strategically employed as a surveyor by the New South Wales Lands Department (Rickwood 2002; John and Mary Small Descendants Association, Inc. 2012), together with three associates, was granted title, by Crown Grant, to two portions of land totalling 70 acres (*c.28.3 ha*). The land was on the northern side of the railway at Weatherboard, a few hundred metres from the station and from Blaxland Road (CoT 1877b).

[The progenitor of Blaxland Road had been Cox's Road across the Mountains, built following the 1813 exploratory crossing.]

Armstrong had first attempted to acquire other land adjacent to the scenic Wentworth Falls as early as 1868 (CoT 1877a). His re-kindled interest in acquiring land in the Blue Mountains in 1876 may have been influenced by the fact that his brother-in-law was Sir James Reading Fairfax, who was shortly to succeed his father as proprietor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and as the joint owner of the substantial *Manor House* higher up the Mountains at Mount Victoria (G.B. 1930; Mount Victoria Community Association Inc. 2016; Anonymous 1925).

Armstrong's fellow grantees were David Fletcher, Robert Fitz Stubbs, and Thomas Boland. Fletcher, a ticket of leave man turned Sydney dentist and a long-time close friend of Sir Henry Parkes (Anonymous 1890), was the first to be designated Mayor of Waverley, and from the 1870s was the owner of beach-front and cliff-top land at Tamarama in Sydney (Mayne-Wilson & Anderson 2010). Fitz Stubbs was a Sydney auctioneer, land speculator, and owner, from the late 1870s, of substantial holdings in the Lawson area (NSWOoEH 2004b). Thomas Edward Boland was the son of a well-known Springwood publican and was himself to become licensee of another Springwood hotel in 1882 (Anonymous 1882a,b; 1892; NSWOoEH 2002).

In an agreed subdivision and transfer [in which Boland apparently surrendered his interest], just five days after title



Courtesy of Anne Paul of the

John and Mary Small Descendants Association Inc.

Figure 2. Portrait of Walter Dickinson Armstrong.

to their grant near the Weatherboard railway station was confirmed, Armstrong took a portion of 17½ acres (*c.7.08 ha*), running northward across the valley at the head of Water Nymphs Dell and up the ridge on the other side, as far as the present Westbourne Avenue, Wentworth Falls (CoT 1877b,c). Armstrong's portion on the northern side of the railway line was to become the site of the house that later became *Green Gables*, now 28 Railway Parade, Wentworth Falls.

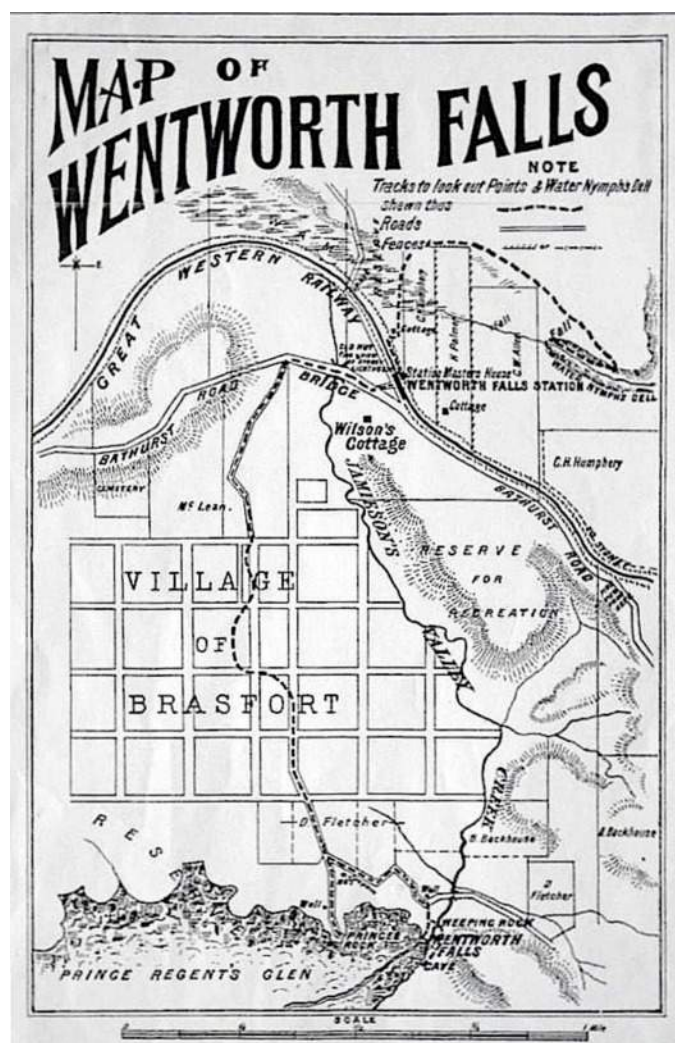
Armstrong Builds a House (1877? to 1882)

In February 1877 Walter Armstrong had gained title to his portion north of the railway line (CoT 1877d) and in October 1878, he was appointed, together with David Fletcher, Sir Henry Parkes and two others, as Trustee of the Wentworth Falls Reserve Trust (Smith 2011, p.5) and became its first Secretary. He was therefore intimately involved in what became the Trust's proposal for the establishment of a village between the railway at Weatherboard and the Falls, a

proposal that seems to have reached fruition as a Government proclaimed plan and release of Crown land for the village of Brasfort in 1881 (Department of Lands, NSW 1881; Burge 1997; Smith 2011). The plan may have been drawn by Armstrong.

[The name, ‘Brasfort’, is a literal translation into French of ‘Armstrong’ and key streets in the plan were named after Armstrong and his fellow Trustees – Parkes, Fletcher, Backhouse and Pritchard.]

Reflecting these interests, by no later than mid 1882, and, allowing say two years for land clearing, perhaps as early as sometime between 1879 and 1881,



ex Russell (1882, p.28)

Figure 3. An 1882 Map of Wentworth Falls showing the location of Armstrong’s cottage, near the Railway Station in the south western corner of the block, designated ‘H. Palmer’ (owner of the property from early September 1882 until 1884). The outline of a plan for the village of Brasfort (Department of Lands, N.S.W. 1881) was possibly contributed by Armstrong.

Armstrong had built what is referred to on the 1882 map of Wentworth Falls (Figure 3; Russell 1882), as a ‘cottage’ in the south western corner of the 17½ acre (c.7.08 ha) block north of the railway line at Weatherboard. It was to be the foundation building of the house later named, as it is today, *Green Gables*. It is possible, as others have surmised (Smith 2012, p.1), that it was Armstrong who first gave it the name *Gila* [perhaps meant to evoke comparison of the bush environment to its north with the Gila wilderness in New Mexico, c.300 km SSW of Albuquerque], by which it was known from some time in the 1880s until about 1912 or 1913. [However, the first known references to the cottage by that name occur later after Armstrong had sold it (Canale 1889a,b).]

Whatever his original intentions may have been about extending his presence in Weatherboard (now re-named ‘Wentworth Falls’), in 1883 Armstrong, while retaining a house, *Paraza*, he had bought in Hunters Hill (Anonymous 1881), resigned from the Reserve Trust to take up a better paid Lands Department post in Goulburn (Rickwood 2002). In September 1882, he had sold his cottage on the portion north of the Railway line at Wentworth Falls to a friend, a Sydney railway survey engineer, Herbert Palmer (CoT 1877d; Palmer 1876; Dalley 1885, p.2213).

Evocative advertisements for Palmer’s attempted re-sale of the cottage in November 1882 (Hardie & Gorman 1882a) (Figure 4), and again in October 1883 (Hardie & Gorman 1883), make it clear that, by no later than its sale by Armstrong in September 1882, that cottage must have been a substantial home, sited on a significantly ‘improved’ block that had undergone extensive land clearing.

Notwithstanding a statement in a New South Wales Heritage Inventory report that the current *Green Gables* is an example of an “inter war bungalow” (NSWOoEH 2004a) [contradicted by other information in the otherwise useful report] and despite some substantial additions made in 1910 and 1911 and later minor modifications made in 1922 [for all of which, see below], the core structure and fabric of the original Armstrong cottage remain as they were when it was first completed. That was, perhaps around 1880, but by

WENTWORTH FALLS.

FIRST-CLASS COTTAGE RESIDENCE at Wentworth Falls, on the G. W. R., within three minutes' walk of the Platform, and one mile from the WEATHERBOARD WATERFALLS, together with

17½ ACRES OF LAND.

The Cottage contains sitting-room, 4 bedrooms, and bathroom, kitchen, servant's room, and pantryman's room and yard, and two earth closets. There are two tanks at the house and another in the garden connected with a force pump, which is erected over a never-failing spring of excellent water. There is a good garden planted with a choice selection of fruit trees, stable containing two open stalls and two loose boxes, large fowlhouse, pigsty, &c. The whole of the ground has been cleared (the timber stacked for firewood), and a substantial post and 7-wire fence encloses the property; 4 acres adjoining the garden have been stumped, ploughed, and laid down with grass, and enclosed with a double fence, a variety of English trees being planted between the fences. In the centre of the property another acre has been stumped and sown, a lawn tennis ground has been formed, necessitating the excavation of 200 cube yards of earth; an avenue of trees has been planted leading to the tennis ground, which is also surrounded by a circle of trees, all protected by a 2-rail fence. A constant stream of water (in addition to the spring mentioned before) flows through the property, and there is a fine waterfall, the stream beneath which has been dammed for bathing purposes, and a bathing-house and a springboard being erected on the dam.

The property is 2850 feet above sea-level, and there is an uninterrupted view to the coast level, the Sydney South Head Light-house being visible. The whole of the ground having been cleared, it could be advantageously subdivided, and being close to the station the locality is a very favourable one for the erection of cottages, leaving the tennis ground, bathing place, &c., as a reserve for the use of the occupants of the cottages, or it is now complete as a private residence.

HARDIE and GORMAN will sell by public auction, at their SALE ROOMS, in PITT-STREET, at 11.36 o'clock on WEDNESDAY, 6th December, The above described MOUNTAIN RESIDENCE, close to WENTWORTH FALLS STATION.

Courtesy of the Photographic Department, Australian National Library.

Figure 4. Palmer's advertisement for the sale of his property (Hardie & Gorman 1882a), repeated in almost identical wording in later advertisements (Hardie & Gorman 1882b; 1883).

no later than September 1882, when it was sold for the first time.

The likely footprint of the cottage, together with additions made by later owners, is given in [Figure 5](#).

Examination by the author of extant building structures, and external wall timber and floor timber profiles, suggests that the sections coloured green and yellow in [Figure 5](#) may have been constructed at different times. The clearest evidence of this possibility is a marked join separating different external wall timbering that can be seen today at the junction of the "Pantryman's room" and the "Rear entrance hall" delineated in [Figure 5](#). However, although the wording of the advertisement shown in [Figure 4](#) makes it clear that both sections had been

[Go to Index](#)

completed by 1882, in the absence of more professional investigation it is not possible to say, categorically, if they were built at different times and if so which was built first and precisely when.

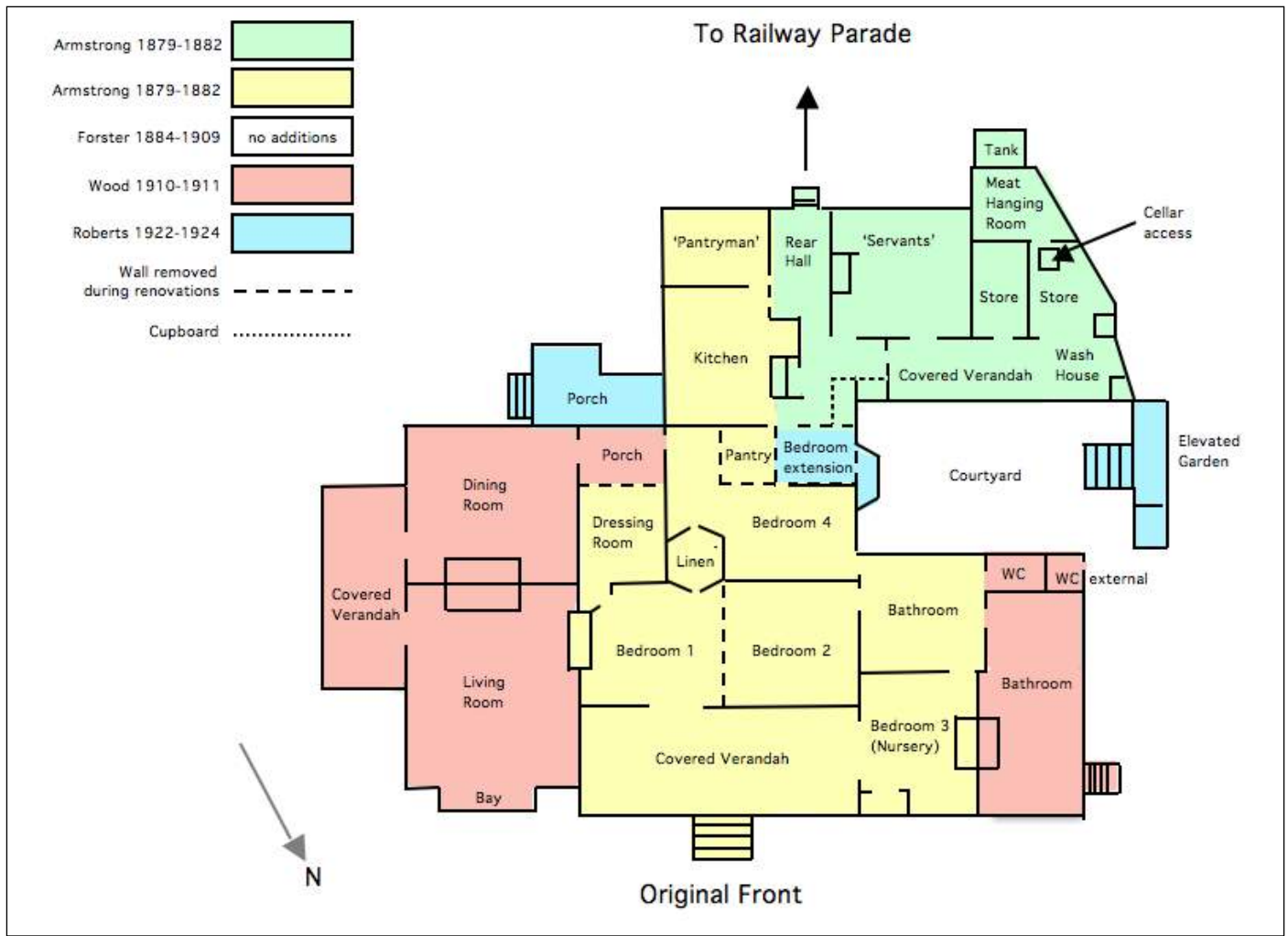
The section of the cottage coloured yellow in [Figure 5](#) was the core of the cottage. A section of architectural plans for the modification of the house (Pitt 1910), reproduced in full below as [Figure 7](#), together with the wording of the 1882 advertisement and still extant structures, enables identification of the rooms in that section.

Under a north/south running gable, there was an oregon-floored, "spare bed room" or sitting room, an adjoining pantry, a hardwood-floored kitchen with a large, rough-bricked fireplace and, at the southern end, a "pantryman's room".

[Compass descriptions herein are approximate, true orientations are shown in [Figure 5](#).]

Under an east/west running gabled roof, perpendicular to the north/south gabled section at its northern end, there were two additional, oregon-floored bedrooms, looking onto a north-facing, covered verandah. Flanking the westernmost of those two rooms and the western end of the verandah was an additional north/south running, gabled section, containing a bathroom and a north-facing bedroom (perhaps, as identified in the later 1910 plans, a "nursery"), floored in baltic pine. The roofs of all of those northern rooms were originally covered in cedar-shingles [revealed during repair work], over which corrugated iron was later laid.

The section coloured green in [Figure 5](#) was a simple brick and timber structure with corrugated iron roofs. While the 1910 plans do not include full details of that section (omitted presumably because no alterations were then proposed for the section), the still extant structure makes it possible to be reasonably confident



Devised by Gail Huon and Jeff Warnock.

Figure 5. House Footprint at 2017, showing indicative chronology of its evolution; *not to scale.*

(The order of the Armstrong constructions (Green & Yellow) is not known.)

about its configuration and furnishings. Under the east to west running gable, the small hall with its door opening to a track leading to the railway station [this rear entrance hall is still extant but was not shown as such in the 1910 plans] was floored in baltic pine as was the room called “servant’s room” in the advertisement (Figure 4).

Adjacent to it was a small utilities area with washboard, shelving and sink. On the western side of the servant’s room there was an internal storage room or shed. The obliquely angled north-west gabled section was constructed of brick and timber. It housed a wash-house area with copper boiler, fireplace and sink, and an elevated meat hanging room and a cellar, both of the latter accessed by roughly made sets of removable stairs. A concave roof covered the rustic, half open, north-facing verandah.

To judge from a rare, near contemporary source of information about houses built in Wentworth Falls (M.C. 1888), timber for Armstrong’s cottage must have been sourced in Sydney and was presumably brought to the village by rail. Bearers, studs and rafters were of Australian hardwood, with tongue and grooved jointing for the studs [as revealed recently by repairers]. Flooring was a combination of oregon, baltic pine and Australian hardwood. External, weatherboard wall timbers, with mostly minimal decorative moulding, were of Australian hardwood, while internal walls were clad mostly in tongue and grooved pineboard, with the exceptions of some horse-hair plastering and, in the bathroom, a decorative, pressed metal dado surround. Skirting boards and some window frames were constructed from cedar.

Table 1. Owners of the House, 1877 (?) to 2017

Owner	Date span	House Name	Area of Property
William Dickinson Armstrong (builder and owner - surveyor)	1877 (?) to 1882 (builder and owner)	<i>Gila (?)</i>	17.5 acres (c.7.08 ha)
Herbert Palmer (railway trial survey engineer)	1882 to 1884	<i>Gila (?)</i>	17.5 acres (c.7.08 ha)
Jane Forster (independent means)	1884 to 1909 (some modifications)	<i>Gila</i>	17.5 acres (c.7.08 ha)
William Herbert Wood , MLA and Govt. Minister	1910 to 1918 (responsible for significant additions and subdivision)	<i>Minniewanka</i>	17.5 acres (c.7.08 ha) to subdivisions in 1912 and later reservations, then just over 3 acres (c.1.22 ha).
Frances Mary Roberts (independent means and grazier's wife)	1918 to 1939 (responsible for cosmetic alterations)	<i>Green Gables</i>	Just over 3 acres (c.1.21 ha) until 1922, then 5 acres, 1 rood and 8 perches (c.2.21 ha)
Rev. Frederick Hugh Hordern (minister of religion) and Iris Mary Hordern (housewife)	1939 to 1951	<i>Green Gables</i>	5 acres, 1 rood and 8 perches (c.3.15 ha) to 1951, then, after subdivision, 1.75 acres (0.71 ha).
Harry Douglas Hardingham (company director)	1952	<i>Green Gables</i>	1 acre, 3 perches (0.41 ha); remainder of land sold to Alexander Gordon Campbell
Patricia Frost (housewife)	1952 to March 1953	<i>Green Gables</i>	1 acre, 3 perches (0.41 ha)
Eleanor Gertrude Mather (ex-librarian)	1953 to 1975	<i>Green Gables</i>	1 acre, 3 perches (0.41 ha) (?)
Florence Evelyn Mather (nurse)	1976 to 2003	<i>Green Gables</i>	1 acre, 3 perches (0.41 ha) (?)
Dr Gail Florence Huon (university academic) and Jeffrey Neville Warnock (university administrator)	2004 to May 2017	<i>Green Gables</i>	Just under 1 acre (c.0.40 ha)

Later Owners and their Additions and Alterations to the House and Gardens

Development of the now (2017) extant structure, internal fabric and garden layout of the house was substantially completed before 1939 during the ownerships of Miss Jane Forster, the Honourable William Herbert Wood, MLA, and Mrs. Frances Roberts (with the help of her husband, William Roberts). They and other owners of the house together with some relevant information for each, are listed in [Table 1](#).

Miss Jane Forster, Occupier of the House 1884-1909.

Herbert Palmer, who bought the house from Armstrong in September 1882, apparently had only a

speculator's interest in the property, since it was on the market again almost immediately. In 1884, he finally sold the cottage and the 17½ acres (c.7.08 ha) of land on which it stood to Jane Forster CoT 1877d) a person who has been referred to as a 'Darling Point spinster' (NSWOoEH 2004a, p.2). Miss Forster owned and maintained the property until she, in turn, sold it 24 years later, in 1909.

More important than her marital status in explaining Jane Forster's interest in the Blue Mountains is the hitherto unrecognised fact that she was a granddaughter of Gregory Blaxland (Anonymous 1919 b), who, together with Wentworth and Lawson, had made the 1813 crossing. Jane Forster inherited shares and property (in the County of Villiers,

Victoria) from her mother, Eliza Forster (Gregory Blaxland's eldest daughter), who died in 1876 (Anonymous 1919c). Before purchasing the Wentworth Falls cottage in 1884, she may have lived first with her mother and later with her elder brother, William, a prominent New South Wales politician (for five months the Premier), until his death in 1882 (Nairn 1972). It is not clear when she became a resident of Darling Point in Sydney, but, by the early 1900s, her residence there was a property in Darling Point Road called *Kyalla*, which she may have bought at auction in 1897 (Lawson 1897).

How much time Jane Forster spent away from Sydney at *Gila* in Wentworth Falls is not known, but she owned another property in Wentworth Falls. She was also instrumental in the building and maintenance of the settlement's Anglican Holy Trinity Church (Anonymous 1917) which was consecrated in 1889 (NSWOoEH 2000c) and to which she donated "three cathedral windows" (Anonymous 1901), and money (Anonymous 1910a). Probably, therefore, she visited the settlement often (Lambert 1972).

Advertisements placed by an Italian couple, Pietro Canale and Lugina Canale, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1889 (Canale 1889a,b), together with notes prepared by McLaurin (1951), reveal that Miss Forster probably employed the Canales as caretakers at the cottage, when she was not resident there. The Canales also looked after Forster's other Wentworth Falls property, *Lanark* (now 164, Great Western Highway, at Wentworth Falls) (Smith *undated*), which lay diagonally across the railway line and the Great Western Road from the cottage, to the south west. [It served as the village Post Office from 1905 until 1910.] From time to time, the Canales evidently also took in "ladies" and "gentlemen" (Canale 1889a) as boarders at *Gila* (Canale 1889b). Electoral roll evidence suggests that Pietro Canale was probably working for Jane Forster as a gardener at *Gila* as late as 1903 (Commonwealth Electoral Roll 1903).

Miss Forster obviously had the means to invest in her Mountains properties, as following her death in Sydney in 1919 (Anonymous 1919a) her assets, then not including the Wentworth Falls property that she

had sold in 1909 to William Wood (CoT 1877d), were recorded for probate as being in excess of £55,000 (Anonymous 1919c). Nevertheless, there is no evidence that she made any structural alterations to the original cottage. On the other hand, while it is difficult to be certain, she (or possibly the next owner) may have been responsible for some internal decorative carpentry, such as diagonally offset corner cupboards and doorways in one of the northern bedrooms and the kitchen and an imposing arts and crafts room divider in that bedroom.

A 1909 advertisement (Goyder Bros. 1909) effusively announced the sale of...

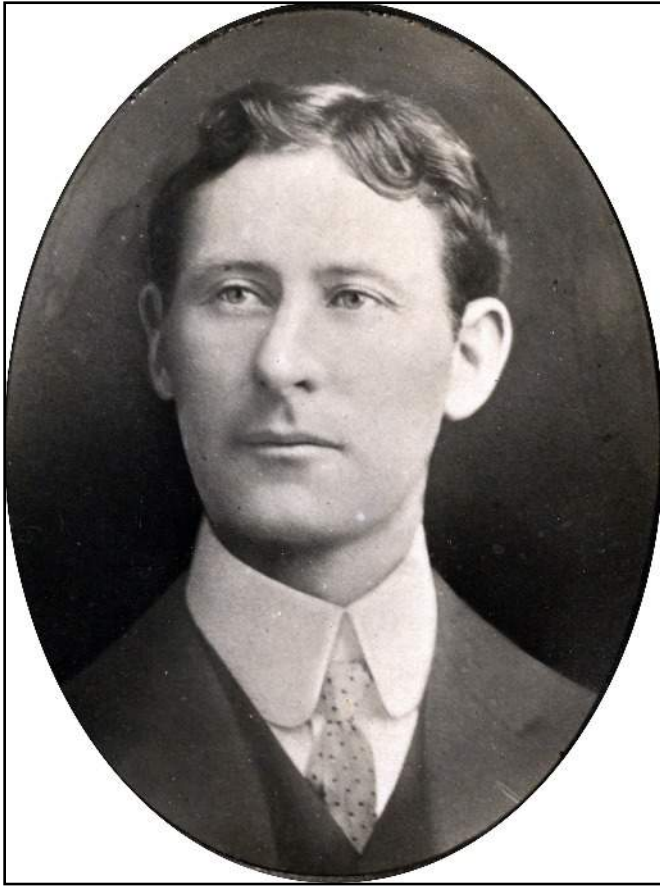
"That Well-Known Property, GILA,
the Residence of Miss Forster.

Large Cottage, containing hall, 7 rooms, kitchen, and offices, splendid verandahs, 2 min from station, 17 acres of land, good orchard, flower and vegetable garden, stabling, coachhouse, poultry houses and runs."

William Herbert Wood, MLA, Extends the House

Goyder Bros. (1909) advertisement for the whole property (part cited above) also contained the enticing blandishment, 'Cheap' (!). However, the price agreed was evidently not cheap enough to enable a single payment by the new purchaser, the Honourable Herbert Wood, MLA (Figure 6), because, in December 1909, he entered into a mortgage agreement with Miss Forster, which he was to discharge in 1914 (CoT 1877d).

Herbert Wood was an accountant turned politician who, from 1904 (Anonymous 1910b) until 1913 (Anonymous 1913b), after a redistribution, was the MLA for Bega (Anonymous 1913a). He served in the Carruthers ministry from 1907 and, at the time of his purchase of *Gila*, in December 1909, was Colonial Secretary and Minister for Mines in the government of Premier Charles Gregory Wade and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. Wood acquired a reputation as an active Minister and a vigorously partisan, anti-Labor, parliamentary debater (Parliament of New South Wales *undated*; Anonymous 1910b; 1912, p.8,



Photograph courtesy of the Archives Department,
Parliament of New South Wales

Figure 6. The Rt. Hon. W. H. Wood, MLA, owner

col.2.). The effective end of his front rank political career came, in 1913, four years after he acquired the cottage, in the midst of a disintegration of the Liberal Party in New South Wales (Anonymous 1913a).

Wood purchased *Gila* at a time when Wentworth Falls was about to undergo a growth spurt. In 1907, despite the protests of some local landowners, the State Minister for Lands and Wood's ministerial colleague, James Ashton, had approved a subdivision adjacent to the railway station (Anonymous 1907). By 1910, that subdivision was to become the site of shops and a new Post Office that constitute the nucleus of the present day village of Wentworth Falls. Other important subdivisions, including some of Wood's own land, followed before and during the World War.

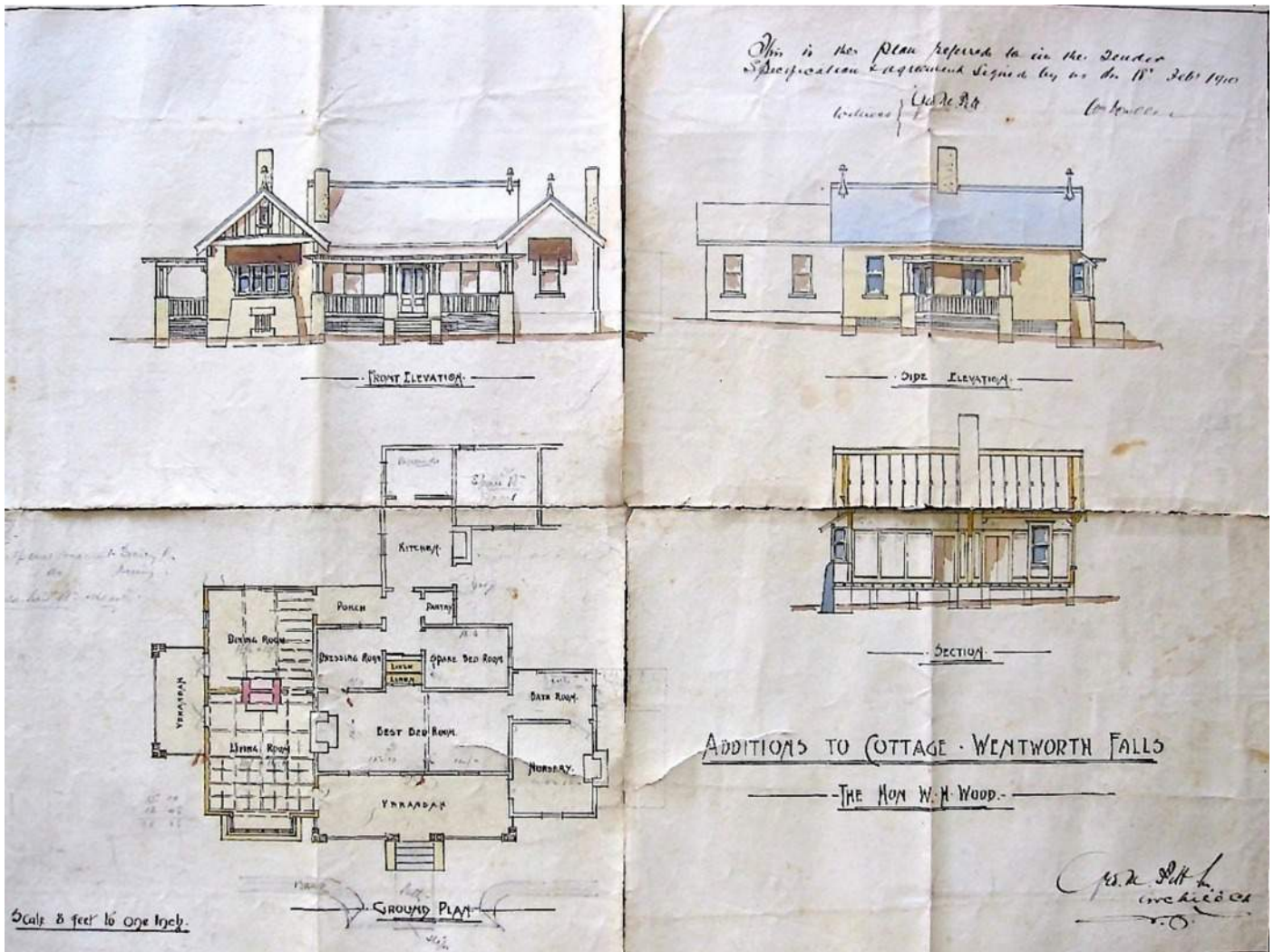
One reason for the early mortgage arrangement with Jane Forster, and for Wood's subsequent selling of some of his land in 1912 (*see below*), was no doubt the need to pay for the substantial further

modifications to *Gila* that Herbert Wood had set in train, following his marriage in November 1909 to Lillian Mackenzie Young (née French) (Anonymous 2013). She was an English widow with a daughter (Mary Mackenzie Young) who had accompanied her from London to New South Wales where to Wood she had two more daughters, Margaret Janet and Lillian (Anonymous 1924a).

A few weeks after his purchase of *Gila*, Wood contracted George Matcham Pitt to draw up plans (Figure 7) for a further major development and expansion of the house (Pitt 1910). George Matcham Pitt, or George Matcham Pitt Tertius as he was known (Anonymous 1920), had, by the time of his work for Wood, an extensive practice in Sydney, Richmond and Windsor. His work for Wood in 1910 reflected his family's close historical ties with Wentworth Falls, including his father's extensive surveying work in the district (Douglas 1989; Warmbath 2009, p.3) and his uncle's ownership of the substantial house *Coorah* (Edwards & Burge 1989, p.17 *et seq.*), built on prime, elevated land (with a view eastward over the slopes to Sydney) selected by Pitt Tertius's grandfather.

The builder for Wood's additions was to be William Noller, a notable Parramatta and Sydney master builder and former (and future) Mayor of Parramatta (Wikipedia 2017b). Wood had had civic connections with him there (Anonymous 1900) and Noller had previously worked with the architect Pitt on a major building project in Castlereagh Street, Sydney (Anonymous 1908b). The estimated cost of the 'additions' to *Gila* was £450 (Blue Mountains Shire 1910-1911, 7 April 1910).

The original of the 1910 plans for the development of *Gila* show, in the 'Ground Plan' section (lower left), the additions made by Wood. They appear in the same yellow shading as the external modifications that are coloured more clearly in the top half of the plan above it. To the eastern side of the house, Wood added two very large, connected rooms with exposed, timber-beamed ceilings (a south-facing dining room and a north-facing living or drawing room, the latter with a large bay, housing double-hung windows that were set above a high sandstone plinth). Both rooms were



Huon and Warnock collection.

Figure 7. G.M. Pitt's 1910 plans for modification of the main house, *Gila*, exclusive of most of the oldest part of Armstrong's cottage, which lay to the right of the kitchen and included the 'Spare Rm' shown in the 'Ground Plan' section.

floored in kauri pine and were situated under an entirely new north/south running, gabled roof. Markings on the plans, together with floor patching recently uncovered by the author, show that Wood also removed a wall between two existing northern rooms to create the 'Best Bedroom' (later Bedrooms 1 & 2 - [Figure 5](#)), flanked by a long verandah (perhaps a replacement for Forster's original) on the northern side of the house, set between sandstone pillars and with sandstone steps. Another new verandah at the eastern end of the house, also flanked by sandstone pillars, and an entrance porch on the southern side of the house were also added.

A late, faintly pencilled addition to the plans provided for construction of a new bathroom at the north

western end of the building, abutting the original Armstrong bathroom and nursery and replacing that bathroom so that it became a hallway or anteroom. Later plans (C.G. 1922) of the house suggest that the almost flat roof of the new bathroom supported two large, galvanised iron water tanks.

Not included in the 1910 plans, but perhaps added at this time, if not earlier by Forster, were the ornate arts and crafts arch in the 'Best Bedroom', creating a snug in front of the open fire, and stylish arts and craft fire surrounds in that room and in the new living room. It is possible that it was also Wood who was responsible for lining the 'dressing room' and the 'spare bed room' (later Bedroom 4 - [Figure 5](#)) opposite with oregon sheeting. As investigation by the author

has shown, on a wall of the ‘dressing room’ that was originally external to that part of the house, the oregon lining (or cladding) was simply superimposed over the original, external, wall timbers.

Perhaps an indication of Wood’s determination to put his or his Canadian-born wife’s stamp on the refurbished house, is that the name *Gila* was replaced in 1913 or 1914 by *Minniewanka* (Wentworth Falls Rates 1914-1916).

[Mrs. Wood was born in Swan River, Manitoba and Lake Minniewanka is a large glacial lake in Alberta, near to Banff (Anonymous 2013)].

It was probably also Wood who, reflecting the increasing use of motor cars, added to the south east of the cottage a gabled garage, containing a sunken servicing and repair pit. Attached to the northern end of the garage was a single room containing a fireplace with a tall, corbelled chimney, that may have been for the use of a gardener or driver when Wood was in residence. The garage and the new south-facing entrance porch of the house would facilitate the development of a second frontage of the house on the southern side (compare the original north facing “Front elevation” (Figure 1) that looked onto the then Railway Crescent, and the later development of formal gardens there.

It is clear that, by means of those additions, the evolution of the house to something approaching the shape and size of the present house *Green Gables* was almost complete before the first World War. It was primarily the work, first, of Armstrong (and his unknown architect and builder), and then of Wood (and his architect, George Matcham Pitt and builder, William Noller). The net result was a very large, somewhat rambling, house of mixed architectural styles and having six steeply gabled roofs (Figure 8).

Frances Roberts Re-names the House and Makes Some Changes

By 1918 the house sat on a much reduced plot of just over three acres (*c.1.2 ha*), as a result of significant subdivisions effected by Wood that commenced with the sale in March 1912 of lots in the Gila Estate (Chapman and Faviell 1912; Goyder Bros. 1912).



Courtesy of Downer & Maher Real Estate, Leura, 2016.

Figure 8. An aerial view of *Green Gables* showing all six of the gables of the house and very nearly all of its roof area, as completed by c.1910, during the ownership of W.H. Wood.

The house name *Green Gables* appears on rate notices for the property for the first time in 1920 (Wentworth Falls Rates 1920-1922) and therefore probably owes its advent to the new owner, Mrs. Frances Roberts, who purchased it from Wood in 1918 (CoT 1918; Anonymous 1918). Until that purchase Mr. & Mrs. Roberts resided (perhaps on a part-time basis) in Hume Avenue, Wentworth Falls (Anonymous 1918).

Frances was the second wife of William Roberts of *The Maples*, Killara (Anonymous 1909). He was a prominent Sydney tea-merchant, turned grazier, Congregationalist lay-preacher, advocate of physical fitness (Brown 2008) and, fortunately for *Green Gables*, a “specialist in trees” (Redgum 1934). Frances Roberts was to own *Green Gables* until 1939.

In the period 1913 to 1922, her brother Carlyle Greenwell was a partner of the successful and important Sydney architect Henry Budden (Sherry 1982, p.2) and Greenwell later also became a noted Sydney architect (Wikipedia 2017a).

In 1922, presumably under the supervision of Carlyle Greenwell himself (Wikipedia 2017a), the firm of Budden and Greenwell drew up plans (C.G. 1922), for William Roberts that encompassed the final major modifications to the appearance of *Green Gables*. The

core structure of the house was unaltered but the modifications were as follows:

- Wood's entrance porch on the southern side of the house was replaced by an extension of Forster's dressing room, now finished with a front door and casement windows, both having lead-lighted and art nouveaux stained glass decoration;
- a new California bungalow style porch was added, with tessellated tiles and finished in pebbled stucco, to match the chimneys of the house;
- the installation of that porch, together with landscaped gardening undertaken by the Roberts, completed the re-orientation of the front of the house, so that it now faced onto Railway Crescent [later to become Railway Parade];
- the original, concave verandah roof of the old southern wing of *Gila* was replaced by a sloping, flat roof;
- the original rear entrance hall was blocked at its northern end by a cupboard and shelving, leaving alternative access to the cottage's original rear door through the kitchen;
- a bay window looking onto the western courtyard was constructed under a flat-roofed extension of the spare bed room that subsumed the original pantry;
- a large, built-in dresser was installed in the kitchen;
- a deep sandstone well was created in the courtyard under the bay window; and
- a septic tank and garden lattice-work were installed.

The result of those and earlier modifications was a modestly stylish, if, in part, rustically finished, house that displayed some of the asymmetrical features favoured by aspiring and innovative architects of the time, including Greenwell's colleague, Budden (Sherry 1982). The changes to the house were complemented by development of distinctive, formal gardens on the southern side of the house, matching those that had been laid down on the northern side by the Roberts' predecessors and that were significantly developed by the Roberts themselves.

Early Development of the Grounds and Gardens

It is evident from the 1882 sale notice for the property (Figure 4; Hardie & Gorman 1882a) that substantial clearing, preliminary landscaping work and irrigation work on its 17½ acres (c. 7.08 ha) had occurred by that

time. Armstrong's land clearing enabled him to lay down formal, separated vegetable and flower gardens and an orchard, in addition to a sizeable paddock, tennis court and surrounds, and swimming pool.

Given the reference to gardens in Jane Forster's 1909 advertisement (Goyder Bros. 1909), development of the substantial, formally bordered and separated flower, garden and fruit and vegetable growing areas, remnants of which survive today, probably accelerated under Forster's direction. Her influence on the design and character of the gardens of the house is likely to have been considerable because she was later remembered by the gardening correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald* as one by whom the gardens of *Gila* had been "carefully tended" and as one who came from "a great tree-loving family" (Redgum 1934).

In the formal garden area to the rear of the house, the extant, old trees that Forster may have planted or tended include maples, poplars, hollies, hawthorns, two strawberry trees, several species of *Prunus*, a pear, a lemon, two species of false cedar, dogwoods, a silver birch and a 30 metre-high Spanish fir (a rare *Abies pinsapo*, native to Andalusia and Morocco; National Herbarium of New South Wales 2015). An adjoining block, that was until the 1940s part of the Green Gables land, contains a substantial row of radiata pines and deodar cedars that may once have formed a windbreak and lined the original, northern approach to the house.

The Roberts reportedly inherited 'three acres of nicely laid out gardens' from William Wood when he sold the house to them in 1918 (Anonymous 1918). Wood was himself "an enthusiastic gardener," reputedly finding

"peace from the turmoils of Parliamentary life in a restful home in Wentworth Falls." (Anonymous 1912, p.8, col.2).

However, aspects of the present layout of gardens on both the southern and northern sides of *Green Gables*, may well have been the work of the Roberts. William Roberts was periodically a vice-president of the Horticultural and Industrial Society (Anonymous 1924b) formed in Wentworth Falls in 1918, at shows

of which both he and his wife, regularly exhibited championship daffodils (Anonymous 1922a,b; 1926).

Together with the formally designed planting of three maples in the front garden (mirrored in the rear garden by another two), at right angles to the east/west lie of the house, and together with numerous azalea bushes and evidence of what may once have been a ‘filbert’, or witch-hazel, plantation, they probably reflected the work and care in the 1920s and 1930s of the Roberts [As noted earlier, William owned a house called *The Maples* at Killara]. Redgum (1934) stated that William Roberts had “capable hands” and had been responsible “for a long time” (probably from the beginning of Frances’s ownership in 1918) for upkeep of the gardens of *Green Gables*.

While not mentioning the maples at *Green Gables*, Redgum (1934) noted with twee reticence, “a Chinese elm that has no need to be ashamed,” and “nearby, a droopy, yellow-leaved cypress, listed, I think, as *Pendula aurea*.” The elm, which could have owed its planting, perhaps in the 1880s, to Peter Mulheran, planter of an iconic Wentworth Falls elm in Station Street which is no longer extant. However, the cypress at *Green Gables*, a *Cupressus macrocarpa*, now (2017) has a circumference, at its base, of some six metres and has reached a height of some 20 metres so that it now towers over the front garden.

It appears likely that the Roberts may also have added significantly to the irrigation works of the property. An elaborate advertisement for the property, placed by the by the stock and station agents Winchcombe, Carson Limited (1933), referred to a 10,000 gallon (45,461 litres) reservoir (still standing in the south western corner of the property) and a residential version of the ‘Skinner system of irrigation’ (remnants are still extant) that were fed by ‘a ‘Rees Roturbo’ two-stage electric centrifugal pump’. The photos of the house accompanying the advertisement show that in 1933 there was a “Raspberry Plantation” to the north and a “Plantation of Charming English Trees” to the north east.



Photo: Jeff Warnock, 2013

Figure 9. Section of one of six cobbled ironstone paths, (pre 1914? and still extant in 2017 in variable condition). Also showing is a remnant piece of the Skinner system of irrigation installed in the grounds.

As with plantings, garden paths on the property show clear signs of historical development. The formal character of the gardens on the northern (original front) side of the house is evident in the most unusual series of extant parallel paths that were probably laid down before 1914 and that still grace the yard. An example is shown below (Figure 9).

The six surviving paths consist of thousands of carefully laid, closely fitted and perpendicularly placed ironstone cobbles, mostly of considerably smaller size than the ironstone slabs that have been used throughout the mountains for drystone walling and paving. In addition, each of these paths has a central vein of separate ironstone blocks running its entire length and the rear paths on the property are

immaculately cambered, presumably to promote run-off. Two of the paths have carefully crafted, semi-circular recesses at intervals along one side that may have supported trellis posts, as a 1930s pictorial advertisement for the house reveals, for the growing of grapes or berries (Anonymous 1933). Enquiries by the author revealed that the paths are probably unique in the locality.

Whereas it is likely that those ironstone paths and their associated garden beds were completed before 1914, the carefully designed and executed brick paving in the gardens, in the set of stairs between two levels and in the combination of straight and elegantly curved paths at the re-oriented 'front' of the house facing Railway Parade are characteristic of a later period of construction. They suggest the work of later owners – almost certainly that of the Roberts in the 1920s.

The Gardeners

The original extensive land clearing for the house, and later the tree planting and garden development, must have required substantial labour. Little is known of the gardeners and other labourers who worked for the early owners, but it is possible to identify three who were particularly significant.

Peter Mulheran, originally a resident of Hunters Hill, was a caretaker and labourer for the Wentworth Falls Reserve Trust, whom Armstrong also employed as a 'caretaker' at *Gila* from about 1880, was formerly a farmer in his native Ireland. At the time of his marriage in 1881, while he was employed by Armstrong, he gave his profession as 'gardener' (Smith 2012, pp.1-2) and it is likely that he began the development of formal gardens and tree and fern plantings on the property for Armstrong. Mulheran [his name in the *Sands* directories (1879, p.174; 1882, p.201) is spelled 'Mulherin'] moved on to his own property *Mount Allen*, in Wentworth Falls, after he bought the land for it in June 1882 (NSWOoEH 2000a).

Another gardener employed on the property in the period before the outbreak of war in 1914 was Pietro Canale, an Italian immigrant from Trusella in the Piedmont, Italy (Parkes 1888), who we know, as mentioned above, worked for Jane Forster. Canale

had been a resident of Hunters Hill in Sydney, before he moved to Wentworth Falls - from 1879, in the same street, Ferry Street, as Mulheran, to 1882, when he lived in Alexander Street (Sands 1879, p.174; Sands 1882, p.200). From 1881, Hunters Hill, where Armstrong had bought the house called *Paraza*, also seems to have been one of Armstrong's normal Sydney places of residence, and he may have met Canale there. He may well have persuaded Canale to move to Wentworth Falls, perhaps to take on roles as both caretaker and gardener at *Gila*, in place of Mulheran. Pietro died in 1905 (Dowling & Taylor 1905) and his wife Lugina in January 1908 (NSW BDM 1908; Anonymous 1908a).

It is also known, from his recollections recorded by McLaurin in 1951, that James King, son of a Wentworth Falls dairyman, was a gardener on the property for over twenty years (McLaurin 1947, p.5). It has been claimed (NSWOoEH 2004a) that he worked for Wood, who owned the property between 1909 and 1918 and the Roberts. As James King was born in 1875 (BMFHS 1992, p.168), it is also possible that he was the gardener during the latter part of Jane Forster's ownership of the property and during Wood's and that of the Roberts - say, between Pietro Canale's death in 1905 and c.1925.

Whoever designed and built the ironstone paths on the northern side of the house (Figure 9), must have been a master stone worker and builder of cobbled paths and, probably, roads. The labour and skill involved in the preparation of the paths would have been considerable and presumably exceptional for a domestic establishment. The methods of cobbling and bordering, similar to those observed by the author in villages in Andalucia, Spain, may be of European inspiration.

As his later track-making and stonewall construction in the falls area makes abundantly clear, Mulheran was a skilled worker of stone. Whether Armstrong's financial circumstances would have made it possible for him to have contracted Mulheran (Anonymous 1932) to undertake both the extensive stonework required for these paths and the significant landscaping and plantings reflected in the 1882

advertisement for the property seems doubtful. Construction of the paths by an individual, or a small team, under Jane Forster's direction between 1884 and 1909 seems rather more likely. As an Italian by birth, Canale, her gardener, may have influenced their southern European appearance.

Of course, it is possible that, in a manner now all but inscrutable, all three of Mulheran, Canale and King, together with gangs of men employed from time to time, may have been involved in the design and construction of the gardens and paths.

Comfortable Occupation of *Green Gables* by Later Owners

Work by the Roberts in the 1920s and 1930s on the layout of the gardens of *Green Gables*, together with the final stylistic changes they made to the appearance of the house, completed the process that gave the house and its immediate curtilage the distinctive appearances they retain today. Later owners have made few changes.

In 1939, the year William Roberts died (Anonymous 1939), his wife Frances sold *Green Gables*, its then 5 acre (2 ha) holding, together with three small lots she had also acquired in Taylor Avenue, to a Sydney Anglican clergyman, Reverend Frederick Hugh Hordern, and his wife, Iris Mary Hordern (CoT 1922). Frederick Hordern was the son of Edward Carr Hordern, a principal of the large Sydney retail firm, Hordern Brothers, and a nephew of John Lebbeus Hordern (Anonymous 2017), who had, before his death in 1910, owned nearly 500 acres on the King's Tableland, adjacent to Wentworth Falls (Anonymous 2017; NSWOOEH 2004c).

According to recollections of Marsden Hordern, one of the sons of Frederick and Iris Hordern, it seems likely that the Horderns actually occupied *Green Gables* considerably earlier than 1939

(Figure 10), perhaps on a leasing or short-term renting arrangement (Hordern 2010). He has also recorded the following fond and evocative recollection of the Horderns' life at *Green Gables*:

“Now we had a country retreat of our own where my mother could escape Sydney's midsummer humidity. From its wide verandah we had extensive views stretching away eastward to Sydney and at night the scene sparkled with thousands of tiny lights. The comfortable old bungalow, surrounded by pines, oaks, silver birches and other mature trees, had a large garden and a courtyard with a well of sweet water. The land sloped away steeply and a stream ran through it into a valley which at night was full of glow-worms. Even in the driest seasons the stream still ran strongly, and we dammed it to make a small swimming pool, but the water was too cold for comfort and we seldom swam in it.

Now, instead of spending school holidays at Wensleydale [his grandfather's home in the Southern Highlands], we went to ‘Green Gables’ and the house was usually full of friends and relations bent on pleasure; with them we arranged



Photograph courtesy of Marsden Hordern.

Figure 10. The young Hugh Hordern (brother of Marsden), in the 1930s, at the ‘front’ of *Green Gables*. In this aspect, the house faces north, away from Railway Parade. The post and rail fence, no longer extant, marked a right of way (also no longer extant) through the property that must have included telegraph poles, one of which was wired to the near gable of the house (faintly visible in the original of this photograph).



Photograph (c.1936?) courtesy of M. Hordern.

Figure 11. Marsden Hordern's elder brother, Hugh, riding a pallet of rocks downhill on a flying fox to line the pool the Horderns constructed at Green Gables, watched by his brother.

picnics, bonfires, excursions to the scenic spots in the Blue Mountains and long bush walks..." (Hordern 2005, p.44).

The enjoyably herculean efforts of the family in constructing the swimming pool mentioned in Marsden Hordern's reminiscences are reflected in the photo (Figure 11) of his elder brother riding a pile of stones down into the gully north of the house on a flying fox.

The Past 75 Years as a Fulltime Residence

The Horderns subdivided their land in 1951 and sold both *Green Gables* (on a plot of just over 1 acre (c.0.41 ha)) and some adjacent blocks. The house passed quickly through the hands of two buyers, until it was bought in 1953 by a Wentworth Falls widow and former librarian, Mrs. Eleanor Gertrude Mather (CoT 1952). Mrs. Mather moved to Wentworth Falls

from Darlinghurst, sometime in 1944 after the death of her husband (NSW BDM 1944) who had the resonantly American and literary name of Washington Henry James Mather. Before marrying Eleanor in 1937, he had been a one-time Western Australian wharf labourer and, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, President of the Australian Waterside Workers' Federation (Anonymous 1927; Beasley 1996). Mrs. Mather owned *Green Gables* until her death in 1975 at the age of 90 (NSW BDM 1975), and she lived there with her unmarried stepdaughter, Florence Evelyn Mather, Washington Mather's youngest child. At her death, Eleanor Gertrude Mather left *Green Gables*, and all her other assets to Florence (NSW State Records 1976) who became the registered owner in 1976 (CoT 1954).

Florence Evelyn Mather was a registered nurse, who had undertaken her training at Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. In her years living at Wentworth Falls, from some time before her step-mother's death, she was a nursing sister at the Eaton Children's Hospital in the village until its closure in the 1980s. The Hospital catered both for children with Down Syndrome and for severely ill children. By a quirk of coincidence, Eaton Children's Hospital was in *Lanark*, the house mentioned above that was originally owned, together with *Gila*, by Jane Forster.

Miss Mather owned and lived in *Green Gables*, together with her beloved dogs, until her own death, at the age of 77, in 2003. The large, rambling house was apparently too large for her and she lived in only a small part of it. Miss Mather is remembered by one of her former colleagues at Eaton Children's Hospital as a quiet, but persistent, advocate of better conditions and wages at Eaton - a reflection, perhaps, of Miss Mather's quiet adherence to her father's trade union precepts (Anonymous 2002; Smith *undated*).

Florence Evelyn Mather bequeathed *Green Gables* to the R.S.P.C.A, from whom, in 2004, the author and his partner acquired it (CoT 1954).

After the Roberts departed in 1939, subsequent owners settled into comfortable occupation of *Green Gables* and made few significant design and structural

changes to the house or its gardens. Painting, restoration work, and more intensive gardening between 2004 and 2017 have partially rescued them from what appears to have been genteel neglect in the later years of the twentieth century. Some minor internal modifications to the house were made in order to enhance its functionality and to preserve and restore some of its fixtures and furnishings. The integrity of the house, as it developed over more than 40 years from the early 1880s until the early 1920s, was fondly preserved, until the house was sold to a young family in May 2017.

Conclusion

Green Gables has never been a grand house on the scale, for example, of Premier Sir John See's *Yester Grange*, that overlooks the falls at Wentworth Falls, or of *Cherrywood*, the family residence of the Hordern retail magnates, that dominated the King's Tableland near the falls, until that house burned down in 1915, or of *Coorah*, built by Robert Matcham Pitt. Nevertheless, the core building that became *Green Gables*, referred to initially as a 'cottage' in contemporary guidebooks, has in fact always been a substantial house. It has served multiple functions, some of them simultaneously – the centre of something like a small working farm and orchard, a part boarding house, "a country retreat" (in the words of one of its inhabitants), a holiday house and, from the early 1950s until the present (2017), with substantially truncated grounds, a fulltime residence.

Study of previously unlocated and unanalysed architectural plans, recovery of past sale advertisements, attention to still extant structures, examination of relevant land titles and selection of relevant biographical information about owners, architects, builders and gardeners has made possible this account of the evolution of one Blue Mountains house. It affords an illustration of the development of the built environment and social and domestic life of a Blue Mountains township over almost one hundred and forty years.

Though sparsely documented, the evolution of formal gardens at the house provides a rare illustration of a

Blue Mountains – and perhaps typically hill-station - paradox. It shows how some late colonial and early twentieth century owners of large cottages in the Blue Mountains settlements sought to marry their appreciation of the vistas and foliage of native Australian bush and wilderness with more ordered, protected farmland domains, filled with trees and plants derived from the northern hemisphere.

The successive purchases and subdivisions of the land originally associated with the house, only briefly outlined here, reflect critical periods, such as the late 1870s to the early 1880s and the years immediately preceding the First World War, in the development of the township of Wentworth Falls. They also reflect the growing diversity of socio-economic status and aspirations of residents of Wentworth Falls, including as they did, provision for relatively small blocks at the northern and south-western ends of the original holding, as well as the retention of larger blocks surrounding the original house and those overlooking the western end of Water Nymphs Dell. The timing of Wood's original subdivision, together with contemporaneous subdivision and sale of other nearby estates, such as the Railway Station Estate and the Allen Estate, suggests that the period immediately prior to, and during, the First World War was formative in the residential development of Wentworth Falls.

The biographies of the owners of the house, while perhaps too few to afford much in the way of a comprehensive sociological slice, suggest a trajectory from a middle class professional 'on the make' and on the fringes of Sydney's elite, through a hey-day for the well-to-do in the late nineteenth century until the beginning of the Second World War, and a subsequent tapering back to owners of diverse backgrounds and more modest means in the years since.

Regrettably, little is known of architects and designers of the house or of working folk connected with it, such as builders, gardeners, caretakers, coach drivers, carpenters and other maintenance workers. However, as discussed and as revealed in the information regarding the few able to be identified here, the

character of the house and traces of design and maintenance in its gardens are mute testimony to their work and to their lives in Wentworth Falls.

APPENDIX

The oldest extant house in Wentworth Falls?

Although not so claiming, the author considers it highly likely that, as of 2017, the original core of *Green Gables* is **the** oldest extant domestic structure in Wentworth Falls.

Since the original cottage was sold for the first time in September 1882, it seems reasonable to assume that it was completed by no later than mid 1882. Furthermore, given that its owner, Walter Armstrong, owned his land from early 1877, it is possible that the cottage was built perhaps as early as 1879 or 1880.

The claim that Mulheran's guesthouse,

“Mount Allen is probably the oldest extant building in Wentworth Falls” (NSWOoEH 2000a)

is unlikely to be correct. Mulheran did not acquire the land on which he built *Mount Allen* until June 1882 (Smith 2012, p.2), only some three to four months before Armstrong sold the completed *Gila* to Palmer in September 1882. Similarly, the claim that *Glen Lodge* (now *Carramar*), another early Wentworth Falls cottage, was built in 1882 (NSWOoEH 2000b: Penlington 2013, p.28) also seems unlikely to be correct. Dr Alfred Perkins, the “well-to-do Sydney doctor” for whom it was built, was attending high school from 1879 to 1881 and did not graduate as a Doctor of Medicine, and, hence, presumably, start to earn income with which to buy a property, until 1888 (Anonymous 1899).

In the absence of newspaper references, municipal rating records or other compelling, cited evidence for other extant houses in Wentworth Falls, the datings of house completions there are risky exercises or often, at best, open questions. By contrast, the claim

that the original core of *Green Gables* is **the** oldest extant house in Wentworth Falls seems, on the evidence presented in the foregoing paper and in the apparent absence of convincing claims for other extant houses, highly probable.

Abbreviations

BMFHS	Blue Mountains Family History Society Inc.
BMHS	Blue Mountains Historical Society Inc.
CoT	Certificate of Title
HLRV	Historical Land Records Viewer
	https://online.lpi.nsw.gov.au/wps/portal/six/services/hlrw
NSW BDM	New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
NSWOoEH	Office of Environment and Heritage, New South Wales
SRL	NSW State Reference Library

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GEORGE KITCH (1843-1914): KATOOMBA PHOTOGRAPHER AND BUSINESSMAN (1889-1914) – PART 1

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Abstract

George Kitch, the first successful photographer in Katoomba, led a busy life as a businessman, local politician and magistrate to name but a few of his ‘side lines’, but there has been very little published about him. He was regarded as one of Katoomba’s early leading townsmen being there during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Centuries when it was developing into the major regional town of the Blue Mountains. Despite suffering from poor health he owned and ran a photographic, stationery and novelty business in Katoomba for about 25 years, he undertook civic duties as an alderman of the Katoomba Municipal Council (1900-1914) and during the year when he was Mayor (1905-1906).

In this first part of an account about George Kitch the focus is on his family and their public activities. An evaluation of his photographic achievements will come in Part 2.

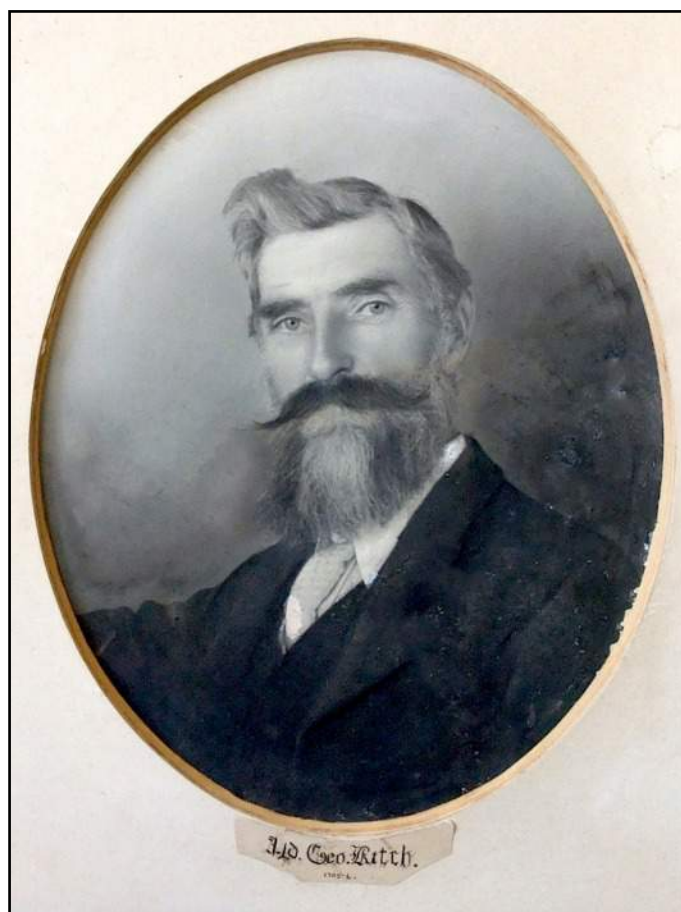
Key words: Kitch, photographer, Eclipse Photo Company, Mayor, Blue Mountains

INTRODUCTION

George Kitch ([Figure 1](#)) initially opened a photography business called The Eclipse Photo Company in Katoomba in 1889 which operated under the name ‘Kitch & Co’. It became a thriving business and diversified over the years into selling a variety of souvenirs, postcards, photographic viewbooks, stationery, newspapers, toys and other miscellaneous items while Kitch was still maintaining an active photography practice.

Apart from what was printed in the local newspapers during his lifetime, many of the published local

histories concerning the Blue Mountains region barely mention him or don’t mention him at all. A few provide no more than a paragraph or two about him (e.g. Armitage 1998, pp.47-49; Kay 1985, pp.15-17; Hamilton-Smith 2010, p.36; Day Fine Art 2014; Powys 1989, pp.9, 28, 39, 140 & 163) but most only



BMHS P0634

Figure 1. Photograph of George Kitch (date unknown).

[Better copy courtesy Blue Mountains Photographic Society. Black and White photograph hand touched-up with some degradation of the image evident on the right hand side. Photograph produced by the Kitch & Co. Studio c.1912. Large oval sized mount (48 cm H x 38.2cm W).]

mention him briefly as a local photographer (e.g. Rotary Club of Katoomba 1981, pp.35, 210, 291; Davies & Stanbury 1985; Snowden 1988, p.148; Powys 1989, pp.9, 28, 39, 140 & 163; Low 1991, p.60; Smith 2001, pp.21 & 94; Barrie c.2002; Smith 2012, pp.20, 26 & 88).

This paper will provide new insights into the activities of George Kitch both as a photographer and businessman in the Blue Mountains, especially about his early days in Sunny Corner (NSW), Katoomba and what is now considered to be the Greater Blue Mountains and includes the Jenolan Caves area.

The Early Years

[A confusing variety of second and third given names have been used in documents relating to this man. This matter will be explored in Part 2.]

George Kitch was born in Middleton, near Oldham, Lancashire, England and baptised on 14 May 1843 (Anonymous 1914e; FamilySearch 2014). At about 18 years of age he joined the Scots Fusilier Guards (Anonymous 1914e; England Census 1861) in September 1860 with a stated trade of Blacksmith, eventually serving in Canada for almost three years (20 Dec. 1861-10 Oct. 1864) but accruing a bad record. Yet it was a health issue that caused his discharge in June 1870 for “being unfit for further service” (British Army Service Records 1760-1915). Following his return to England he married Elizabeth (Eliza) Sarah Bosley (1849-1930) on 13 August 1867 (England Select Marriages) but nothing has been discovered about their life together in England.

Arrival in NSW

George and Eliza Kitch travelled as assisted immigrants aboard the the square rigged ship *Dunbar Castle* which arrived at Sydney on 4 July 1872 (NSW State Records 2014); his occupation was listed as a blacksmith but in August 1872 he was employed by the Police Department as a supernumery in Forbes NSW and became a Police Constable the following year (New South Wales Police Gazettes 1854-1930).

It appears that Kitch left the police service sometime prior to October 1875 when insolvency proceedings against him began in Sydney regarding his business

activity in Forbes (NSW State Records 1875; Anonymous 1875a,b; 1876a,b). At those hearings he was identified as a builder and in his 1914 obituary it is stated that he worked as a builder and contractor in both Sydney and Forbes (Anonymous 1914e).

George and Eliza Kitch’s movements and activities between 1876 and 1884 are vague and are largely based on their, and other peoples’, later recollections of events. Certainly after January 1876 there appear to be no public records of their location in Australia until 1886.

The birth of their son, Charles Edward Kitch, occurred in Newtown (Sydney) in 1876 (NSWBDM 1876) but it appears that the boy did not survive as there is no further record of him, not even a death certificate!

Some time around 1878 a daughter, Levinia (or Lavinia - *spelling varies*) Edith Kitch (1878?-1957) was born. Her birth certificate has not been found and the year of birth has been estimated from a number of varying sources including the records of her marriage to Walter Leaney (NSWBDM 1900; Anonymous 1900e,f), reports of her divorce proceedings (Anonymous 1914c) and a shipping passenger list (Out-going Passengers 1957).

Sunny Corner

After the birth of their daughter very little is known about the Kitch family until they appeared in Sunny Corner, NSW in about 1884 (Powys 1989, p.163; 2014).

There are also conflicting reports of when the Kitches were living in the Blue Mountains and surrounding regions. In his obituary it is stated that

“The family came to the Mountains about 30 years ago, and after a few years in Wallerawang settled in Katoomba, ...” (Anonymous 1914e)

suggesting that they were in the region from around 1884 or 1885. But Wallerawang is situated on the western side of the Blue Mountains near Lithgow and from the mid-1880s George Kitch was reported to be working as a photographer nearby in the silver mining town of Sunny Corner which for a short time was called Mitchell (Powys 1989, p.vi).

[Prior to its acknowledged name of Sunny Corner the township was called Mitchell by Government decision in 1885 but bowing to local wishes it was officially reverted to its older name of Sunny Corner (Powys 1989, pp.107-108).]

Davies and Stanbury (1985, p.187) wrote that Kitch was active in Sunny Corner from 1888 to 1891, and Powys (1989, p.163) stated that the Eclipse Photographic Company operated in Sunny Corner from 1884 to the 1890s (Figure 2). Evidence to support these observations is limited, e.g. George Kitch does not appear on electoral rolls in this period.

Kitch's photographic activity in Sunny Corner has been estimated to be from around the mid-1880s to 1889 when he appears in Katoomba. The State Library of NSW holds three photographs by Kitch & Co. from Sunny Corner which provide the date range c.1885 to 1891 (Kitch 1885-1891), and in her book *Sunny Corner* Powys (1989, p.9) reproduced a photograph taken by Kitch that is dated "late 1884". The Eclipse Photographic Co. advertisement for for the Sunny Hill Gallery (Figure 2; Kitch 1886) indicates that Kitch was the manager in 1886. Unfortunately only two editions of the *Sunny Corner*

Silver Press (20 March 1886 and 27 March 1886) have been located, both in the NSW State Reference Library [RAV/FM4/ 277].

Katoomba

Sometime in early 1889 the Kitch's moved to Katoomba and established a photographic business (Anonymous 1889a,b,d; 1911g). When introducing Kitch at a public meeting in 1896, Alderman Joseph Nimmo recalled that he had known him "for some 14 years" which places their first meeting around 1882 (Anonymous 1896a). But Nimmo came to Katoomba from Hartley in 1887 (Armitage 1998, p.28) so they could have met in the Hartley area as Kitch is known to have photographed the Hartley Vale Brass Band sometime between 1886 and 1891, most probably when Kitch was working not far away in Sunny Corner between about 1884 and 1889.

Community Groups

After establishing his photographic business in Katoomba, George Kitch became involved in various community activities and civic duties. Throughout his time in Katoomba Kitch became engaged in local community activities such as the Katoomba Rifle Club (Anonymous 1891a; 1895b; 1906; 1909b); the Katoomba Brass Band (Anonymous 1890b; 1896b); the Liberal League of N.S.W (Anonymous 1911a); the local Agricultural Society (Anonymous 1902a; 1910g); the Ratepayers Association (Anonymous 1891d); and the local Temperance Lodge (Anonymous 1895a). As well he supported numerous causes such as establishing town electricity (Anonymous 1912d); the building of the Technical School (Anonymous 1910a); and the establishment of a local Fire Brigade (Anonymous 1905e; 1909a).

The Rifle Club was a particular passion of Kitch and he got involved in the Club virtually on arrival at Katoomba. In 1890 he was elected Color Sergeant of the Katoomba Rifle Reserve Company (as it was called then) due to his military experience (Anonymous 1890a) and he retained this position in May 1891 (Anonymous 1891b). In 1906 he was Captain of the Katoomba Rifle Club (Anonymous 1906) and was an active shooter in competitions



Courtesy of the State Library NSW.

Figure 2. Advertisement for The Eclipse Photographic Co. (Kitch 1886).

against other rifle clubs and attended the Club's social events until about 1912 (Anonymous 1907b,c; 1912g).

Local Government

In his early years in Katoomba, Kitch was active in the Ratepayers Association (Anonymous 1891d; 1899b) and was associated with the Katoomba Municipal Council for a long time. He contested elections in 1891, 1896 and 1900 (BMCC Alderman n.d.) before being elected as an alderman; he served for a total period of ten years (1900-1914) and was Mayor in 1905-1906 (Anonymous 1914e). In 1896 Joseph Nimmo described Kitch as "an honest, straightforward man." and the author of the report wrote that Kitch "showed his earnestness and fearlessness in his campaign" for municipal office (Anonymous 1896a). Certainly over those years Kitch appeared to be a straight talker particularly in relation to his civic duties. He had strong views about Council spending, value for money for ratepayers and big projects and ideas such as electricity and lighting (Anonymous 1896a; 1900a), sewerage (Anonymous 1896a), roads (Anonymous 1896a; 1900a) and town water supply (Anonymous 1900a). On some of these matters he made special visits, e.g. for electricity he went to Tasmania and Victoria (Anonymous 1913a). Serving as a councillor he seems first to have run as an independent but in 1903 he became involved in the Katoomba Liberal Reform Association (Anonymous 1903b), an involvement that lasted until at least 1912 (Anonymous 1912a).

Kitch was often accompanied to many of the local community activities, and to functions related to his civic duties, by either his wife Eliza (Anonymous 1890c; 1905a) or his daughter Lavinia (Anonymous 1890c; 1901d; 1907d; 1911c).

Legal Service

George Kitch served as a magistrate in Katoomba for at least ten years from December 1901 (Anonymous 1901f) until the end of 1911 (Anonymous 1911f). During this time he was also a Justice of the Peace (Anonymous 1901c) and is recorded in the Sands Directories as a J.P. in Katoomba from 1908 (Sands 1908, p.102A) until 1914 (Sands 1914, p.103A). Over this period there were numerous and extensive reports

in Blue Mountains' newspapers of hearings involving magistrate Kitch at the Katoomba Police Court. Prior to this responsibility Kitch had served on community juries in the Katoomba area (Anonymous 1900c), and was also involved in local inquests (Anonymous 1899d) and inquiries (Anonymous 1896c).

Tourism

Another of George Kitch's passions was promoting the Blue Mountains both as a tourist destination and as a beautiful place to live and visit. At the Katoomba Improvement Association's first general meeting in 1898 Kitch requested that tree planting in Main Street, Katoomba be proposed to Council, and he seconded a motion, that the Association

"interview the shopkeepers in reference to keeping open their shops on holidays for the convenience of visitors ..." (Anonymous 1899c).

Kitch was involved promoting Katoomba and the Blue Mountains at the Commonwealth Celebrations in 1901 and he ended up serving on the committee handling the planning and advertising of the Mountains at this event Anonymous (1900f). When a new Katoomba Progress Association was formed in June 1903, Kitch was in attendance and said that he thought its rôle was different to the ratepayers' association in that it was about the advancement of the town and area which had many places to visit or picnic (Anonymous 1903a). He was still attending the Progress Association's meetings in 1913 and continued to support the advancement and beautification of the town (Anonymous 1913c).

However Kitch's most enduring legacy in relation to tourism in the Blue Mountains must be his part in the formation of The Katoomba and Leura Tourist Association when he was Mayor of Katoomba Council in 1905. On 26 July 1905 Kitch chaired a public meeting to consider advertising Katoomba and Leura in Sydney at the Tourist Bureau (then part of the NSW Intelligence Department) and a committee was formed with Kitch elected as President (Anonymous 1905b). A meeting was held between the Katoomba committee and the Leura Progress Association at which it was agreed to jointly form the The Katoomba and Leura Tourist Association; Kitch was elected President of that too. The aim was to promote the area through the

Tourist Bureau in Sydney and locally to produce a guide for distribution (Anonymous 1905c); the substantial *Blue Mountains Tourist Guide – Katoomba and Leura* was published in September 1905 (K<A 1905).

Benevolence

It appears that George Kitch was a generous person who regularly donated money or materials (presumably from his shop) to people in need and for various ‘worthy’ causes. Some examples of Kitch’s public monetary donations are: in aid of a Mr. William Clarke (Clarke 1891); the N.S.W. Patriotic Fund (Anonymous 1900b); and the Mount Kembla Disaster “Mountaineer” Fund (Anonymous 1902b). His generosity in other ways include: a prize to the Katoomba Rifle Club (Anonymous 1895b); donations for soldiers in South Africa (Stephen 1900); a collection list initiated for the treatment of an injured James Nelson (Anonymous 1910d); a collection started for a picnic day for children in Katoomba (Anonymous 1911d); donations for the opening of Olivia Park pleasure grounds at North Katoomba (Anonymous 1904a); and a trophy (Ald. Kitch’s rifle) for the Rifle Club (Anonymous 1912g). On one occasion, when Kitch judged an art exhibit at the Katoomba Spring Fair and Industrial Exhibition, Kitch personally presented a special prize to a youth as further encouragement as his painting had been awarded second place (Anonymous 1909e). While in 1913 Kitch gifted 40 panel mounted photographs of Blue Mountains views to the new vessel S.S. *Katoomba* for display in its saloon (Anonymous 1913d).

Health

George Kitch was in Sydney about the mid 1870s and was reported to have had a serious throat illness which appeared to have been successfully treated (Anonymous 1914e). However the exact date of this illness is unknown. In October 1899 he was reported to be recovering from another serious illness but again no details are available (Anonymous 1899e).

After 1900 Kitch had many bouts of illness and for up to a month at a time he took trips away from Katoomba, accompanied by his daughter Lavinia. No

doubt these were in part for pleasure and business but they were often undertaken in the winter months to the warmer climate in Northern NSW and Queensland so it would seem that there were health reasons as well (Anonymous 1904b; 1909c; 1910c; 1911b).

In 1909 Kitch was involved in an accident when a plate-glass case fell on him as he left his shop knocking him down to the footpath, causing cuts and shock, and resulting in him being confined to bed for a few days (Anonymous 1909f,g). A year later both Kitch and his wife were reported to be recuperating at the seaside after being seriously ill (Anonymous 1910e), and then George and his daughter went to “New Zealand and the South Sea Islands” (Anonymous 1910c).

George Kitch seemed to have suffered bouts of illness more often towards the latter part of his life in Katoomba. Thus in 1912 Kitch was reported to be slowly improving from an unstated severe illness (Anonymous 1912b,c), after which he was ordered by his doctor to go away for the winter (Anonymous 1912c). He sought permission from Council for three months leave and it was granted (Anonymous 1912d). Kitch and his wife went first to Manly (Anonymous 1912e) and then they toured Queensland for two months (Anonymous 1912f).

On 15 April 1914 George Kitch and his wife, accompanied by their recently divorced daughter Lavinia, sailed to London for a seven month visit (Anonymous 1914c). On the return trip to Sydney in November 1914 George Kitch fell ill and after arrival he died on 11 December 1914 (Anonymous 1914d) at a friend’s place in Annandale (Anonymous 1914e); he was 70 years old.

Aftermath

In his will dated 17 November 1911, he appointed his wife Eliza and daughter Lavinia as executors and bequeathed his estate to his wife, and on her death, to his daughter (Kitch 1911). Interestingly, in his will Kitch called himself a “stationer” while in his probate papers the Affidavit of Attesting Witness statement refers to him as a “Retired Stationer” (NSW State Records (1915b). No mention was made of him being

a photographer or having had a photographic business. Kitch left a substantial estate (three shops, two of which were in Main Street, Katoomba, a house *Oakhurst* in Merriwa Street and property of Lilianfels land in Katoomba) to his wife and daughter (NSW State Records 1915a). From the early 1900s the family had lived in *Oakhurst* (Anonymous 1911e), 21 (Katoomba Rates 1937) Merriwa Street, Katoomba; George Kitch bought it on 19 August 1911 and on his death the property passed to Mrs. Eliza Sarah Kitch (Anonymous 1915; Kitch, Mrs. 1915) and Lavinia Edith Kitch and they on-sold it on 11 May 1917 (CoT 1897).

After George Kitch's death (Anonymous 1914d), Eliza and Lavinia moved to a property called *Thatcham*, [now 56 Wells Street Annandale; (Anonymous 1915, 1930a,b; Kitch, Mrs. 1915; Sands 1916, p.1426; Sands 1930, pp.143 & 1600)] and Eliza died there on 7 June 1930 (Anonymous 1930a).

Mrs. Eliza Kitch and Lavinia Kitch

Both Kitch's wife Eliza and his daughter Lavinia were regularly mentioned in the local papers mainly for their involvement in community and social activities. Eliza was actively involved in the temperance movement from the outset of the the family coming to Katoomba, The International Order of Good Templars (Anonymous 1890c; 1895a), the Women's Christian Temperance Union (Anonymous 1909d) and in forming the Crystal Fountain Juvenile Temple (and being a Superintendent) in Katoomba (Anonymous 1889c; 1890d). [The Crystal Fountain Juvenile Temple appears to have been a lodge for junior members.] Both George Kitch (Anonymous 1890c; 1891c; 1893; 1894; 1895a) and his daughter Lavinia (Anonymous 1890c; 1893; 1895a; Clarke 1891) also participated in the movement with George being on the committee of the Orange Lodge (Loyal Standard) in Katoomba (Anonymous 1890d) but despite this involvement it appears that the lodge did not have its own hall in Katoomba and the Kitchs were not actively involved in the movement at the NSW level (Clark 1928). Eliza Kitch was also involved in the Katoomba Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) movement, being President in 1905 (Anonymous 1905c; 1909d) when she represented Katoomba at the annual

Conference of the WCTU held in Sydney (Anonymous 1905d). She continued to be involved in it's meetings until 1914 (Anonymous 1914a).

Eliza died in *Thatcham*, Annandale, on 7 June 1930 (Anonymous 1930a; NSWBDM 1930).

Lavinia too was often mentioned in the local newspapers for being involved in local charitable activities (Anonymous 1899a; 1901a; 1910b) and on many occasions she participated as a singer at some of the local musical soirées (Anonymous 1901b; 1907a, col.5; 1910f).

In December 1900 Lavinia married Walter H.S. Leaney (Anonymous 1900d,e) who became the manager of Kitch & Co. (Anonymous 1900g; 1911g). Leaney himself was musically active as a singer (Anonymous 1901e; 1910e, col.1; 1913b). Lavinia divorced him in 1914 (Anonymous 1914b,c) and married again in 1923, at Annandale, to Charles B. Segetin (NSWBDM 1923). Her death in 1957 was registered in Burwood (NSWBDM 1957).

Not much else is known about the life of the two Kitch ladies following George's death.

The Photographic Legacy of George Kitch

George Kitch maintained an involvement in photography as part of his business activities while competing with an increasing number of photographers (including both locals and others from outside the region) who worked or came to work in the Blue Mountains (Kay 1985, pp.15-17; Snowden 1988, p.137-156). By the 1900s the region (including the nearby Jenolan Caves area) had become a popular tourist destination.

During his 25 years at Katoomba, George Kitch and his company The Eclipse Photographic Company (and later Kitch & Co.), were very much involved in recording the various local and special events, the town's development and social occasions and promoting the tourist trade in the region.

Excluding postcards, over 130 of George Kitch's photographic images (and some of his studio) have

been located in Australia in various national, state, institutional and local studies collections as well as in various private collections. Kitch's photographic achievements and an evaluation of those images will be undertaken in Part 2 of this paper.

CONCLUSION

George Kitch established the first successful, viable, long term photography business in the Blue Mountains, and it lasted at Katoomba during his 25 years or so living there from the late 1880s to 1914. He was able to compete with all of the other photographers active in the Blue Mountains at the time, including important ones from Sydney and elsewhere. In the process he diversified his business to include the sale of stationery and novelties to become a successful businessman.

He suffered from poor health all his life but despite this he still managed to lead a very active and busy life. In addition to business interests Kitch participated in the local social and community events, he undertook civic duties during his more than 10 years as an alderman of the Katoomba Municipal Council (1900-1914) and during the year of demanding duties when he was Mayor (1905-6). He was a compassionate man who appeared to have had a strong sense of values and duty.

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Some of George Kitch's important achievements are his participation in the growth of Katoomba as a regional town in the Blue Mountains, his involvement in the growth of the upper Blue Mountains community and his strong support and development of tourism in the Blue Mountains. But perhaps one of his most enduring legacies is his photographic activities in the Blue Mountains region. George Kitch earned his accolade of "Townsmen", most certainly of Katoomba and probably of the broader Blue Mountains region as well.

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TUCK'S JENOLAN CAVES OILETTE POSTCARDS

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Abstract

Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd, one of the largest manufacturers of postcards in Europe in the early 1900s, in 1903 introduced sets of so-called Oilette postcards (Anonymous, n.d.) which featured full colour reproductions of paintings of scenes by artists such as A.H. Fullwood. One set featured scenes at and in Jenolan Caves and it is those six cards that are examined in this paper. Evidence from other images of the scenes available in the late 1880s to 1900 indicates that Fullwood prepared his postcard paintings with the help of such images.

A Fullwood watercolour painting of Jenolan, believed to have been prepared in the period 1884 to 1886 and possibly based on a sketch that Fullwood made on his visit in 1884, was discovered in 2017. It opens the possibility that further works by Fullwood from that period remain to be found.

Keywords: Raphael Tuck, Oilette postcard, watercolour, Albert Fullwood, Jenolan Caves, Blue Mountains

INTRODUCTION

Series 7355 and 7400 'Blue Mountains' Oilette* postcards, the work of the artist Albert Henry Fullwood, were issued by Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd (Tuck's), and were discussed and illustrated in an earlier paper (Halbert & Ellis 2015) together with details of the printing techniques used in their production.

[*The term 'Oilette' was used by Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd to refer to postcards with images that looked like oil paintings and had noticeable brush strokes. Due mainly to market dominance

the term Oilette was used almost exclusively by Tuck and Sons, although it was not a registered trade mark]

This paper relates to six postcards in Series No.7478, 'Jenolan Caves'. The images on those six cards are reproductions of different painted scenes, three in portrait format and three in landscape format, and form a collectible set of cave themed postcards. They were listed by Cook (1986, p.186) and photocopies of four were reproduced in black and white in the Australian speleological literature in 1987 (Anonymous 1987a,b,c,d). As with other Oilettes the original cards have subtle colours.

Figure 1 shows the envelope accompanying Series 7478; the titles of the cards being 'The Crystal City', 'The Willows', 'Imperial Cave', 'The Hotel', 'The Devil's Coach House' and 'Nellie's Grotto'.

Scenes

The most significant part of each postcard is the reproduction of a painting on the front face. A

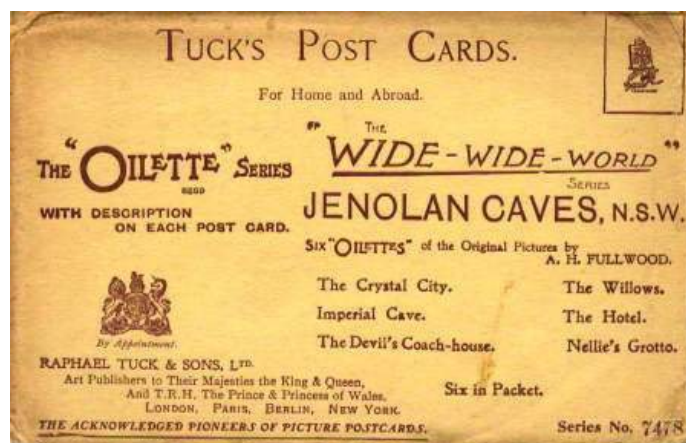


Figure 1. The envelope containing the Series 7478 'Jenolan Caves' postcards.

borderless format was used on cards of about 127 mm by 89 mm (5 inches by 3.5 inches). Scenes in which the content is predominantly vertical were printed in portrait format and the others in landscape. The rear layout of these cards is quite complex and has been described earlier (Halbert & Ellis 2015).

“Each Tuck postcard had an imprint of the British royal coat of arms (the Royal Warrant of Appointment to Her Majesty Queen Victoria had been obtained in 1893), and the Tuck trademark, an easel, palette, and brushes and the monogram R.T.&S. (usually printed in the box where a stamp would be affixed).” (Anonymous, n.d.).

In the 1980s the Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society brought out a facsimile set of these postcards together with an information sheet. Those cards have dimensions of 139 mm by 100 mm

but the colours are darker than in the originals so the effect of the delicate pastels is somewhat lost.

Titles on the front of each card

On the front of each card there is a two-part title painted in one of the lower corners by the artist whose name is also present. These ‘Fullwood titles’ consist of two lines, the first contains the word ‘Australia’ and beneath is an individual painting title such as ‘The Willows, Jenolan Caves N.S.W.’. Originally these titles may simply have been a method whereby the artist could keep track of his canvases, given the considerable number that he must have had stored and underway at any one time. The front also contains the word ‘Oilette’ and a representation of the Tuck’s double-easel trade mark.

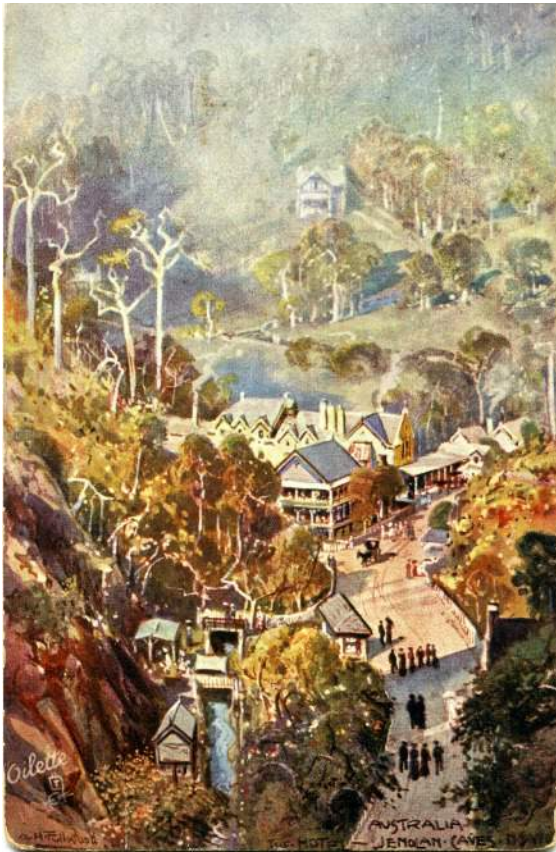


Figure 2. Postcard 1.

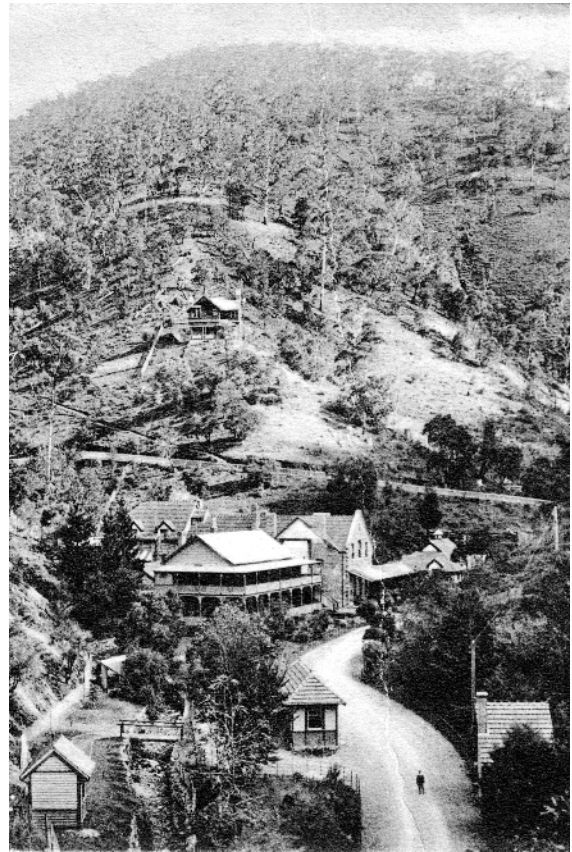


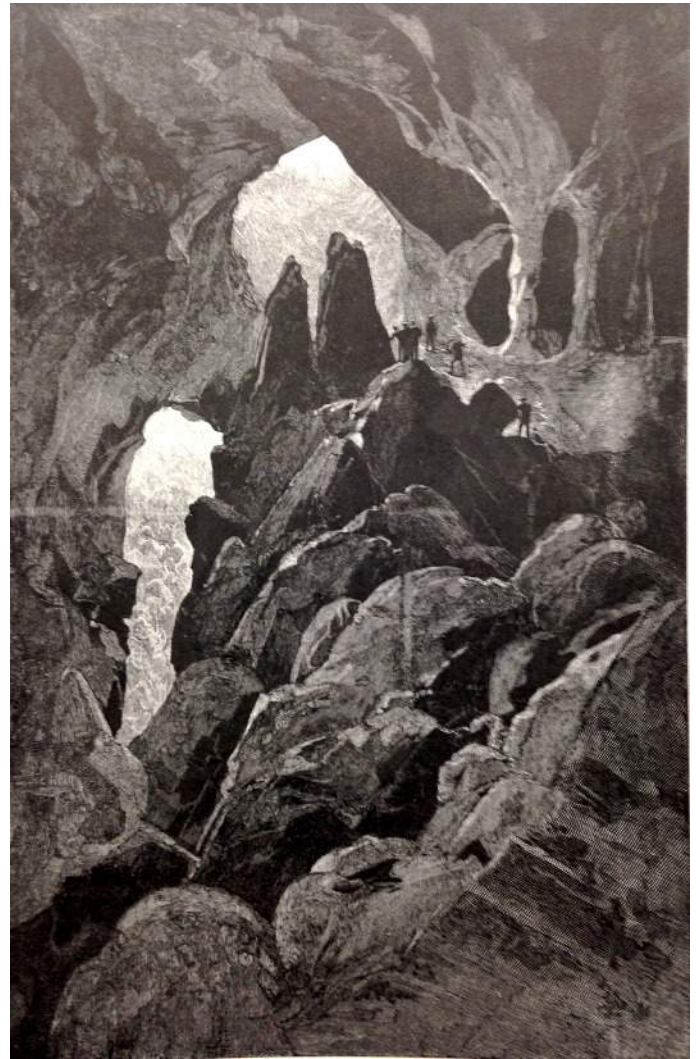
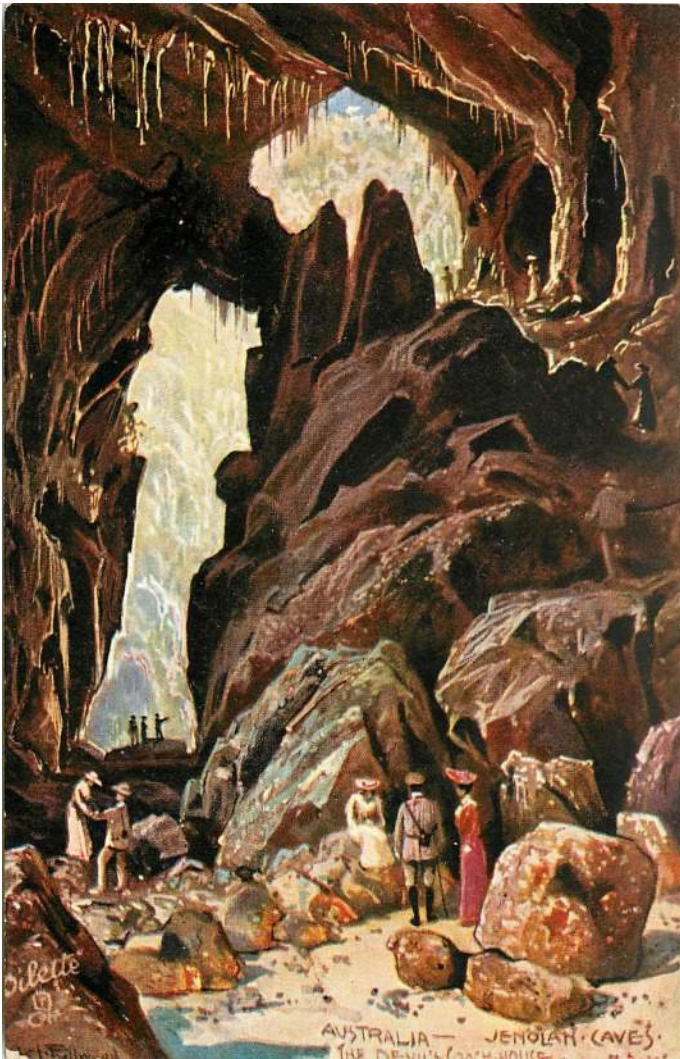
Photo: Charles Kerry (n.d).

Figure 3. Caves House Postcard.

Postcard 1

Front: AUSTRALIA. THE HOTEL – JENOLAN CAVES N.S.W.

Rear: The Jenolan Caves are situated about 90 miles from Sydney and are justly considered one of the wonders of the world. They were discovered by Mr. James Whalan in 1838, during a search after a bushranger, McKeown, who was hiding there from justice. **The caves are lighted by electricity and annually attract many visitors from all parts of the world.**



Artist: Frederic Schell, 1886.

Figure 4. Postcard 2.

Figure 5. The Devils Coach House.

Postcard 2.

Front: AUSTRALIA – JENOLAN CAVES. THE DEVIL’S COACH HOUSE, N.S.W.

Rear: Devil’s Coach House - The Jenolan Caves are situated about 90 miles from Sydney and are justly considered one of the wonders of the world. They were discovered by Mr. James Whalan in 1838, during a search after a bushranger, McKeown, who was hiding there from justice. **The Devil’s Coach-house is one of the outside caves, the highest point being 75 feet from the ground. The stalactites in this cave are often 20 feet in length, although owing to their proximity to the outside air, they lack the brilliancy of those found further from the opening.**

Scale of human figures in the postcards

Each of the six postcards contains one or more human figures.

In Postcards 1 to 3 (Figures 2, 4 & 6) the scales of the figures are approximately correct as is confirmed by contemporary images in which there are people (Figures 3, 5 & 7).

However, in Postcards 4 to 6 (Figures 8, 10 & 12) the figures are exaggerated in size by up to 200 percent.

Contemporary images available for these scenes are not known to contain people so they reveal detail but not scale.

[The first two sentences printed on the backs of the six cards are the same but they have been repeated below Figures 2 to 12 to ensure that the statements were transcribed completely. The words specifically relating to a particular postcard have been printed here in bold purely to draw attention to the differences between the six explanations.]



Figure 6. Postcard 3. Front.



Figure 7. The Willows, Jenolan Caves.

Photo: W. Lorck (n.d.)

NSWSL Government Printing Office I-06234

Postcard 3.

Front: AUSTRALIA – THE WILLOWS. JENOLAN CAVES, NSW. (*State with no full stops*)

Rear: The Willows - The Jenolan Caves are situated about 90 miles from Sydney and are justly considered one of the wonders of the world. They were discovered by Mr. James Whalan in 1838, during a search after a bushranger, McKeown, who was hiding there from justice. **‘The Willows’ are so named from their peculiar formation and colour. Steps are cut in the limestone to assist visitors in viewing these natural marvels.**



Figure 8. Postcard 4.

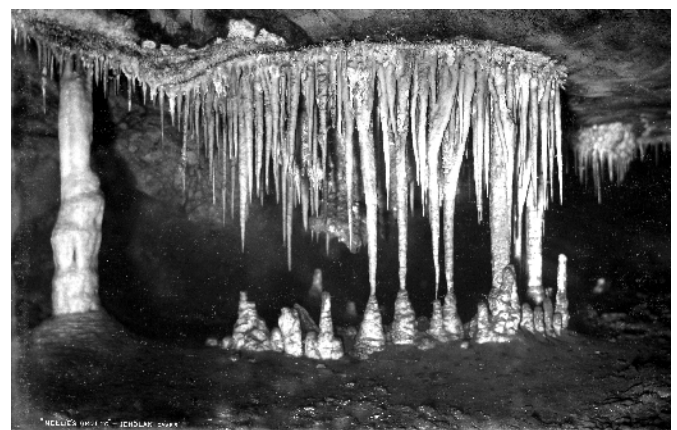


Figure 9. Nellie's Grotto.

Photo: Charles Smith Wilkinson, 1885-1890 (Anonymous 2017a).

Postcard 4.

Front: AUSTRALIA – NELLIE’S GROTTOS – JENOLAN CAVES N.S.W.

Rear: The Jenolan Caves are situated about 90 miles from Sydney and are justly considered one of the wonders of the world. They were discovered by Mr. James Whalan in 1838, during a search after a bushranger, McKeown, who was hiding there from justice. **In the grotto shown in this picture the formations are dazzlingly white, and one large stalagmite in the shape of a marble candlestick “gives the grotto the appearance of a temple of the fairies lit up for some terpsichorean rite”.**



Figure 10. Postcard 5.

Postcard 5.

Front: AUSTRALIA. THE CRYSTAL CITY – JENOLAN CAVES N.S.W.

Rear: The Jenolan Caves are situated about 90 miles from Sydney and are justly considered one of the wonders of the world. They were discovered by Mr. James Whalan in 1838, during a search after a bushranger, McKeown, who was hiding there from justice. **The Crystal Cities constitute one of the beauty spots of the caves, the peculiar formations of the rocks giving the appearance of an Oriental city as viewed from some lofty standpoint.**

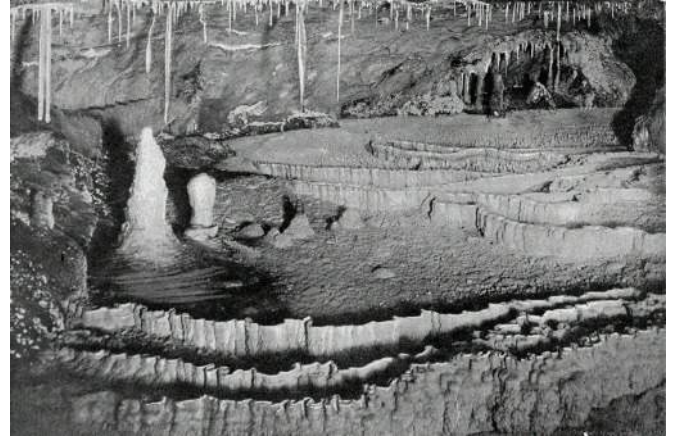


Photo: E.J. Cooke (n.d.).

Figure 11. Crystal Cities.



Figure 12. Postcard 6.

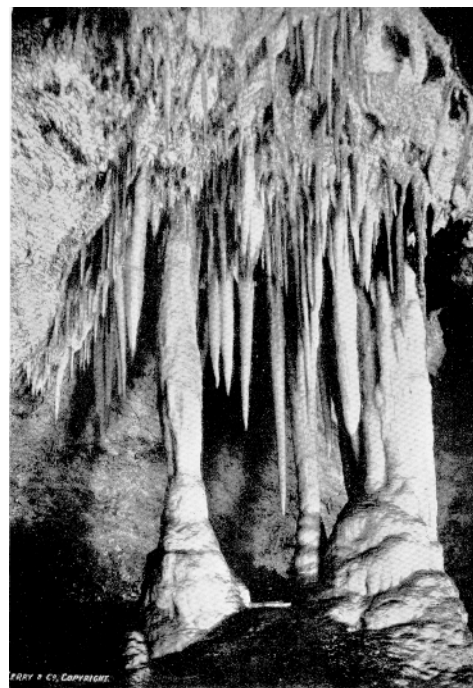


Photo: Kerry (n.d.)

Figure 13. The Grand Stalactites.

Postcard 6.

AUSTRALIA – IMPERIAL CAVE. JENOLAN N.S.W.

Rear: Imperial Cave – The Jenolan Caves are situated about 90 miles from Sydney and are justly considered one of the wonders of the world. They were discovered by Mr. James Whalan in 1838, during a search after a bushranger, McKeown, who was hiding there from justice. **The Right Imperial Cave is generally considered the gem of the collection, the wonderful variety of form and colour of the stalactites being simply marvellous.**

[The Imperial Cave was discovered in 1879 and originally comprised two sections known as the Left-hand branch (Left Imperial) and the Right-hand branch (Right Imperial). Those names prevailed until 1952 when the Left Imperial was renamed the Chifley Cave and the Right Imperial simply became the Imperial Cave (Hallinan, 2013, p.189).]

Discussion

When did Fullwood paint the scenes?

Fullwood came to Australia in 1883, returned to England in 1901, and then came back to Australia in 1920. It has been stated that Fullwood did the paintings for his postcards in England where

“he repainted many of the scenes which he had originally sketched for the *Picturesque Atlas*, updating and extending them.” Cook (1986, p.111).

Although the first statement may be true for many of the Fullwood postcards the Jenolan illustrations that appear in the *Picturesque Atlas* were not done by him but by the artistic editor Frederic B. Schell (Garran 1888) for whom Fullwood worked for some years. Fullwood had a copy of the *Picturesque Atlas* with him in London (Pers. Comm. Dr G. Werskey 2017.) and he produced seventeen sets of Australian views for Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd, that were issued in their ‘Wide, Wide, World’ series of ‘Oilettes’.

Irwin (1986) wrote:

“The Jenolan system of interconnected caves, protected by the State of Australia during the mid-19th century and open to public viewing since that time, produced photographic material in many forms prior to the general acceptance of the picture postcard. Stereo cards and photographic prints were widely sold of these caves published by Kerry, a large photographic company in Sydney.

Postcards date from c. 1903 and were published in a series of large sets, possibly up to 20 cards, progressively over a number of years. The earliest releases were vignette cards, their postal backs being undivided.

A recently discovered series by Edward J. Cooke has been found that may predate the Kerry cards. ... No postally used copies have been seen by the author.

Of all the Jenolan Caves postcards Tuck's Wide-Wide-[sic - World omitted]-Oilette series Number 7478, published c. 1904, is perhaps the most attractive set of 6 ever published of this cave. ... The Oilette cards are reproductions of paintings

published widely both in the United Kingdom and throughout the then British Empire” (Irwin 1986, pp. 19 & 21).

The Tuck database of postcards (Braun, Lowe & Moulton 2015) reported that the set of Jenolan Cards was listed in the 1908/9, 1911/12, 1913/14 and 1930 Postcard Catalogues.

How familiar was Fullwood with Jenolan Caves?

The Jenolan Caves were discovered in 1838 however, getting to Jenolan in those days was slow and convoluted and remained so until late in that century. After Tarana Railway Station opened on 22 August 1872, a common journey involved travel by train followed by buggy or coach to the caves themselves. As early as 1880 people were travelling to the caves and illustrating Caves House, the tracks and the caverns (Anonymous 1880).

A later method of access from Katoomba was via the ‘Six Foot Track’ which is about 45 km long and involves river crossings and an extremely steep ascent over the Black Range. The history of the evolution of this track, and accounts of the early travellers, have been well documented by Smith (c.1985; 2011). Fullwood arrived in Australia around 1883 and is known to have visited Jenolan via the Six Foot Track in November 1884 (Davis 2014), one of the earliest known uses of the track as it had only been surveyed in the previous April (Anonymous 1884b). Fullwood would have been 21 at the time and as he went along he made sketches which became part of a letter dated 15 November 1884. Subsequently those sketches were cut out of that letter and became part of a scrapbook kept by Albert Fullwood’s brother Walter before he (WF) emigrated to Australia in 1888. The original text of the letter has been lost but 15 of the sketches from this letter were recovered and we have used one of them in [Figure 14](#).

In the 1880s trips via the Six Foot Track were slow, involving several days of hard bush walking/riding with camping. We do not know whether Fullwood took painting equipment with him but it seems possible that his sketches and letter text were his only

physical records of the journey. In the absence of the text of Fullwood's journey we assume that he and his companions went from Katoomba to Jenolan which was the direction in which the track had been surveyed. But Fullwood was 21 at the time and assuming his companions were of similar age then a double trip would have been both feasible physically and sensible from an economic point of view. Also, we do not know whether his party had pack animals, walked or rode on horses and nor do we know whether Fullwood made subsequent trips to Jenolan.

In the mid to late 1880s photography was being carried out by keen amateur photographers, such as Alfred Allen. Some were even prepared to take cameras on the journey along the Six Foot Track so as to record their experiences (Allen 1886) but Allen had his camera delivered to Jenolan and only took photographs on the return trip. As the nineteenth century drew to a close the availability of photographs became widespread and Fullwood would have had access to many Jenolan photos to act as aide-mémoires for his visit(s) to the caves themselves.

How accurate are the depictions? Possible *aide-mémoires*.

In a general sense Fullwood's depictions are accurate, with the exception that the scale of the people shown on Postcards 4, 5 and 6 has been exaggerated. In the following section, single examples from the many contemporary images are shown for comparison with the postcards..

Postcard 1 – The Caves Hotel ([Figure 3](#)).

Many illustrations and photos of Caves House at Jenolan were available in the 1880s to 1900s. Early ones derive from accounts by Allen (1886) and Bellingham (1899) and another, dated 1908 is from the State Library of South Australia (Anonymous 1908). From these and other sources it is possible to create a visual time line and to estimate when various buildings were constructed or destroyed. For example, the original accommodation building was destroyed in 1895 and the new one built in 1898. This time line in turn enables us to suggest when Fullwood may have painted at Jenolan or what photographs he may have had at his disposal to use as guides. In the

case of The Caves Hotel, the closest photos that we have found are those from 1898 (Anonymous 1898), the early 1900s (Smith 2011, p.82) and an undated postcard by Charles Kerry. The correspondence between these photos and Fullwood's Postcard 1 is very clear; the number and structure of the buildings, the cottage on the hill, the roadway, sheds and the stream are all similar and the viewpoint is similar as well.

Postcard 2. – The Devil's Coach House ([Figure 4](#)).

The Devil's Coach House is one of the main attractions at Jenolan and has been used as a subject for illustrations and photos since the 1840s. Thus Albert Tissandier illustrated the scene in 1841 (Speirs 1981, p.50) as a wood engraving (Speirs 1981, p.191). However, not one of the other illustrations that the authors have seen resembles the image produced by either Fullwood ([Figure 4](#)) or Schell ([Figure 5](#)). One of the authors (RE) even doubts whether it is possible to see that view in the cave itself and that supports our view that one of the illustrations was used as the basis for the other. The correspondence between [Figures 4 and 5](#) is extremely high, note in particular the scale of the figures in the upper right of the pictures and the shape of the openings in the cave.

The drawing by Frederic Schell would have been well known to Fullwood since it formed part of the huge *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* that was published progressively from 1886 to 1888 (Garran 1888). Schell supervised the production of the more than 800 illustrations, of which Fullwood provided around 150, but not those depicting the Jenolan Caves.

Postcard 3. – The Willows ([Figure 7](#)).

This formation was photographed frequently in the early days and postcards and photos were widely available. Some were devoid of people whereas others had as many as five people situated on the steps at various heights. These latter pictures would have enabled a painter to get the scale of the figures correct.

Postcard 4 – Nellies Grotto ([Figure 9](#)).

This formation is located in The Imperial Cave and was photographed often from the 1890s, so there would have been many photos available to the public



Artist: A Fullwood. 1884

Figure 14. Sketch “Entrance to Jenolan Caves”

long before Fullwood left for England in 1901. The Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society shows one by King (Flickr 2017) and in his book Samuel Cook included a similar photo (Cook 1889, facing p.161) and he described Nellies Grotto as varying

“from one to five feet [0.3 m to 1.5 m] in height, and is about 20 [6.1 m] feet from end to end.”

An estimation of the height by the authors in August 2017 was 1.4 m.

This postcard was reproduced by Hallinan (2013, p.122), but the painting was mistakenly ascribed to Margaret Rutherford, however the discrepancy in size was noted and he wrote:

“In reality the formation depicted is about 1m tall” (Hallinan 2013, p.122).

Clearly Fullwood exaggerated the size of the formation as the people included in the drawing suggest that the formation is about 3 m high.

Postcard 5. - Crystal City (Figure 10).

Photographs of the Crystal City, located in the Imperial Cave, were available quite early. One taken by Charles Bayliss has been dated as around 1885 (Anonymous 2017b) and a very similar one is in State Archives collection (Anonymous 2017c). Another of similar age was published by Samuel Cook (1889, facing p.147) and the photographer E.J. Cooke took one that appeared in Trickett’s *Guide to Jenolan Caves* (1905, p.62).



Artist: A. Fullwood. n.d

Figure 15. Entrance to Jenolan Caves.

A - Carlotta Arch.

B - Daylight at *Caves House* end.

It is clear that Fullwood’s painting is a very accurate representation of the formation. However, as with some other paintings the scale of his human figures appears exaggerated. In August 2017 we estimated The Crystal City to be about 1.2 m from floor to ceiling whereas Fullwood’s painting depicts it as having a height of about 3 m.

Postcard 6 – Imperial Cave (Figure 12).

Fullwood did not give a name to this formation however it appears to be The Grand Stalactites in the Imperial Cave. That formation was frequently used as a subject for postcards (many examples are in the Ross Ellis Postcard Collection) but the photographers were often unrecorded.

Figure 13 is a photo by Charles Kerry (n.d.) (Trickett 1905, p.64) but a more recent photo by Frank Hurley (Hurley n.d.) allows one to estimate the formation as being about 2 to 3 m high, which reasonably accords with our measurement of about 1.7 m. in August 2017.

From Fullwood's postcard painting (Figure 12) the formation appears to be about 5 m high.

From the above examples it is clear that there was abundant material to aid Fullwood in generation of his postcard scenes. That he did use photos where necessary has been established and discussed in some detail (Hughes-D'Aeth 2001). Suffice to say that it appears as if the Jenolan Postcards were another example of this practice.

The Jenolan Caves Watercolour

Having shown earlier that there were many photos of Jenolan Caves available in Australia we must remember that Fullwood was in Australia for 18 years and although very busy he could well have worked up some of his Jenolan sketches during that time. We know that he visited Jenolan Caves in 1884 and that his letter contained sketches, one of which had the caption "Entrance to Jenolan Caves" (Figure 14). We now know that he completed at least one watercolour painting of the Grand Arch at Jenolan Caves during to the period 1884 to 1886; that is a framed painting also entitled "Entrance to Jenolan Caves" (Figure 15).

[The provenance of the watercolour painting prior to auction is unknown. In 2016 it was listed by Davidson Auctions (Anonymous 2017f) and the painting was purchased by Day Fine Art Gallery, Blackheath, and on-sold in 2017.]

One of the authors (EH) saw the original painting in June 2017, soon after its acquisition by the current owner. The Day Fine Art Gallery described it as:

"An original watercolour depicting the track towards the Grand Arch at the Jenolan Caves c. 1880." (Anonymous 2017d).

The delicately coloured "Entrance to Jenolan Caves" watercolour painting by Fullwood (Figure 15) may have been based on one of his 1884 sketches (Figure 14). The image shown in the catalogue of the sale is Figure 15 (Anonymous 2017d,e) and it was also in the auction house catalogue (Anonymous 2017f).

The watercolour (29.5 cm by 21 cm) shows a pair of figures carrying guns walking upstream towards the downstream entrance to the Grand Arch at Jenolan. The view represented is clearly an early one as neither the Blue Lake nor the Stone Bridge are present; the bridge and road through the Grand Archway were not completed until 1896 and the dam leading to the creation of the Blue Lake was finished in 1908 (Dunlop 1977). In Figure 15 the Carlotta Arch is near the top of the cliff line on the top right hand side of the painting (arrow A) as too the light at the hotel end of the Grand Arch can be seen (arrow B).

The Carlotta Arch may be viewed from the stream and was used in illustrations of early visits to the caves (Anonymous 1882).

"As you get nearer you see the Carlotta Arch, perched high up on the rock like a third-story window, whilst below it, and a little to the right, is the dark entrance to the Devil's Coach-house." (Anonymous 1889).

Figure 16 shows the writing on the painting:

"Entrance to Jenolan (Fish River) Caves. An (*sic*) Grand Arch."

The Fullwood monogram which is in the lower left hand corner of the painting (Figure 17) was used by



Figure 16. Writing on watercolour.



Figure 17. Monogram on watercolour.

[The contrast in Figures 16 and 17 has been digitally increased.]

[Go to Index](#)

Fullwood only between 1884 and 1886 (pers. comm. Dr G. Werskey, 2017).

Fullwood's Blue Mountains art

Before 1901

Around 1880, newspapers were publishing articles on visits to Jenolan Caves (Anonymous 1880, 1882). For several years after his arrival in Australia, Albert Henry Fullwood was an illustrator for the *Australian Town & Country Journal*. This newspaper published the account of a visit to the caves in 1882 (Anonymous 1882) and on 4 October 1884 the same publication printed unsigned illustrations of scenes on the Katoomba-Jenolan track (Anonymous 1884a). Given the clear willingness to print such material, it seems surprising that the paper did not publish Fullwood's sketches made in November of 1884.

Fullwood often visited the Blue Mountains before his departure from Australia in 1900 and sketched scenes between Wentworth Falls and Mount Victoria. While many of these were later the subjects of Tuck's two Blue Mountains Series of postcards (Series 7355 and 7400) others were individual paintings in their own right. Speirs (1981, p.23) reproduced "Ladies on a Pathway Looking across the Blue Mountains", a large (61 cm by 50.5 cm; Speirs 1981, p.188) oil painting of a group of women looking out from the "Best View of Falls" lookout on the northern side of Jamison Creek (Smith, 2012, p.15) over Wentworth Falls with Mount Solitary in the distance on the right. The painting is dated 1888 and that scene was also featured as part of Fullwood's cover for the *Sydney Mail's* Illustrated Xmas Supplement (Anonymous 1888a, p.i) but as "Glen near Wentworth Falls".

Other of his paintings include "Kanimbla Valley, ca. 1890"; an oil on board, signed lower left with initials: AHF, (13.5 cm by 24 cm) (Anonymous 2017e).

[Provenance: Sotheby's, Melbourne, 18 November 1996, lot 313 Private collection, Sydney.]

Another is titled "Over the Hills and Far Away (Blue Mountains)" (Anonymous 2017e); an oil on canvas painting on board, signed "AF." lower left (18.5 cm by 26 cm). The colours and structure of the painting bear a strong resemblance to the Fullwood postcard

"The Blue Mountains N.S.W. Govett's Leap" in Tuck's Blue Mountains Oilette Postcards Series 7400 (Halbert & Ellis, 2015, Fig. 10).

In 1888 Fullwood produced an unsigned illustration of a cave at Jenolan in the NSW section of the Melbourne International Exhibition (Anonymous 1888b, p.291) as well as a two-page spread of Blue Mountains illustrations for the *Sydney Mail* (Anonymous 1888c). In 1890 he visited Nellie's Glen, at the start of the Six Foot Track near Katoomba, and produced a detailed signed illustration for *The Sydney Mail* (Anonymous 1890).

After 1920

At least two Blue Mountains paintings are known from the years after 1920 when Fullwood returned to Australia. One is "The Orphan Rock, Katoomba" 1921; a watercolour on paper etching [Signed with initials and dated lower left: AF/ 21, signed, dated and inscribed on backing *verso*: The Orphan Rock/ Katoomba/ A. Henry Fullwood/ AF/ 1921; edition: 1/50; signed, dated, titled and numbered below image, (35.5 cm by 26.5 cm); (17.5 cm by 12.5 cm) (Anonymous 2017e)].

The second is an original etching titled "Echo Point, Katoomba, Blue Mountains, NSW" which has been dated to 1922 (Anonymous 2017e).

Acknowledgements

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- Braun et al. (2015) for maintaining the TuckDB database from which the images on the faces of the postcards were obtained.
- Members of Jenolan Caves Historical & Preservation Society for the opportunity to visit the Imperial Cave in August 2017.

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PLAYGROUND ‘ROCKETS’ REFLECT THE SPACE RACE ERA

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Abstract

The Space Race was a product of the Cold War, both of which were transformative on how the world viewed technology. These geo-political events extended into raising education standards and caused international ramifications in the arts and popular culture, including playground climbing frames. The most famous was shaped as a ‘rocket’. In NSW most disappeared in the late 1990s but a few survive including three of the 32 ‘rockets’ fabricated by Dick West of Blackheath. This paper summarises a history of play, the international socio-political influences of the 1960s, followed by a heritage assessment of ‘rockets’ made by Dick West. The Moree community seeks to ensure that its original West fabricated rocket is conserved for future generations.

Key Words: playground equipment, rocket climbing frame, Dick West, Blackheath, Blue Mountains, Moree, Chatswood, Broken Hill

Introduction

The Cold War and the Space Race were epoch-changing events. Many repercussions beyond science and technology saw social tenets of this era reflected in seemingly inconsequential places. Not only did these events transform education curricula, this occurred at the same time as the philosophy of how children play was evolving. Playgrounds and public park installations encapsulated not just what was occurring in a society but how and why; views and assumptions were manifested in a physical form. An international tangible outcome of these events was imaginary play in the form of the rocket climbing frames.

One seemingly frivolous connection was marked by the death of David Bowie in 2016 and memorialised by his iconic song “Space Oddity” (Bowie 1969) and its opening lyrics.

“... Ground Control to Major Tom

Take your protein pills and put your helmet on
Ground Control to Major Tom (ten, nine, eight,
seven, six)

Commencing countdown, engines on (five, four,
three)

Check ignition and may God's love be with you
(two, one, lift-off) ..”

Reputedly the lyrics refer to the ‘Golden Dawn’ order of magicians, a lifelong mystical philosophy held by Bowie and demonstrated repeatedly throughout his songs (Anonymous 2003). Bowie wrote it after seeing the 1968 Stanley Kubrick science fiction film *2001 A Space Odyssey*, and it was released five days before the Apollo 11 launch on 11 July 1969. Bowie’s timing was no coincidence as it marked a high point of the Space Race and the Cold War power struggle between ideologies of the then two super-powers. With Bowie’s consent, the song was sung in space by Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield in 2013 (Debnath 2013).

The Education Race

The Space Race sought to show the world which country had the best science, technology, and economic supremacy. In the 1930s and 1940s Germany lead research into rocket propulsion but at the end of World War Two this research was divided between the USA and the Soviet Union, as both realised how rocket research had a military application. The Soviet launch of Sputnik I shook the Americans and the 1962 speech by President Kennedy mobilised scientists and became a catalyst for many innovations and changes to bridge the technological gap. And so the Space Race also became an education race. About this time the NSW secondary education curriculum was revamped as the Wyndham Scheme

which sought to raise education standards, especially in the sciences and mathematics. A leading exponent was Professor Harry Messel, a physicist, who campaigned for an integrated science syllabus that was introduced in 1963, along with his iconic blue science books (Green 2015).

Wider Cultural references

The Space Race triggered

“profound reflections on humanity's relationship with the cosmos” (V&A 2008)

and growing preoccupation with, and dependence on, technology. Some cultural manifestations of technology influences were less obvious. American cars displayed rocket motifs along their sides. Architects designed ‘houses of the future’ with interiors and furniture using moulded plastics. New materials changed fashions from the ‘haute couture’ of Pierre Cardin’s ‘Space Age Collection’ in 1964 to mass market ‘ready to go’ by Mary Quant to the home sewing patterns, all of which featured one piece suits, sleek moulding, hat as helmet in white and metal segments as if protective armour.

The scholar Dave Hickey wrote that the ice-white cube that

“... became the standard ascetic interior in museums and galleries by the '60s, had its roots with NASA: ‘I remember thinking at the time that, all of a sudden, we were looking at art in clean rooms like those where the astronauts suit up’ ”. (Kennedy 2007).

His article details further popular culture links with NASA.

“... At Bell Laboratories, which was tied up with NASA in its earliest years, Billy Klüver, an engineer, organised collaborations with artists, including Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol, to inject space-age technology into artworks ...”. (Kennedy 2007).

According to David Schwartz, the chief curator of the Museum of the Moving Image in New York,

“The space race that began with Sputnik not only influenced education but American pop culture as

a whole. ... the phenomenon was pushed by an unlikely person - Walt Disney”.

“What Disney did that was really important was he teamed up with the [Nazi German rocket] scientist Wernher von Braun, who was [then] the most prominent scientist of the United States and was trying to promote the idea of space travel. Disney had something to promote himself, he was trying to build Disneyland theme park in California. And so in 1955, they teamed up and created a TV show called "Man in Space”.

“[Another] TV show named "Lost in Space", actually preceded "Star Trek" by a few years.”

“Stanley Kubrick took it somewhere interesting with "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968) which was really the most ambitious space travel movie to come out of the 1960s. And Kubrick himself was really in a space race with NASA. He worked on this film for years. And it was very important to him to get his movie into the theaters before we actually landed on the moon [in 1969]” (Schwartz 2007)

In 1962 Hanna-Barbera produced the iconic *The Jetsons*, an American sitcom cartoon that had

“a profound impact on the way that Americans [thought] and talk[ed] about the future” (Novak 2012).

Space related toys became must-have presents in both Western and Soviet countries and shopping malls introduced space-related children rides.

“Building on the opportunity, before long Woolworth replaced traditional horseback and motorbike kiddy ride machines with space rockets. For sixpence (2½p) little boys and girls could be transported to another universe.” (Woolworths Museum)

When marketing children's toys, commercials on TV too were quick to sell the space and rocket dream.

Playground philosophy

The evolution of playgrounds and play equipment is connected to the nineteenth century embryonic attitudes as to what constituted ‘childhood’, and to social reforms to lift the ‘moral tone’ of the working classes, the majority of whom lived in inner city

tenements. In parallel, also evolving were various sciences, including psychology, and social movements advocating promotion of nature, fresh air and even gardening, as an escape from the ills of the industrial revolution cities.

How children were regarded changed drastically with the rise of the industrial age. Prior to that time, children in Europe were often simply considered to be small adults owned by their guardians. British industrialists sought to retain world trade dominance while the government viewed the more highly educated Prussian military as a potential threat. This triggered the introduction of the British Elementary Education Act in 1870 that established basic schooling for children between 5 and 12. Even so, many children continued to work in factories, down mines or on farms. Social reformers sought to alleviate appalling city living conditions and socio-economic disadvantage via regulation of unsanitary and overcrowded housing, coupled with demands for access to clean water, fresh air and natural light. Physical deformities, such as rickets, and infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, not only affected Victorian era productivity but were considered to have threatened national military defence.

Former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt stated in 1907:

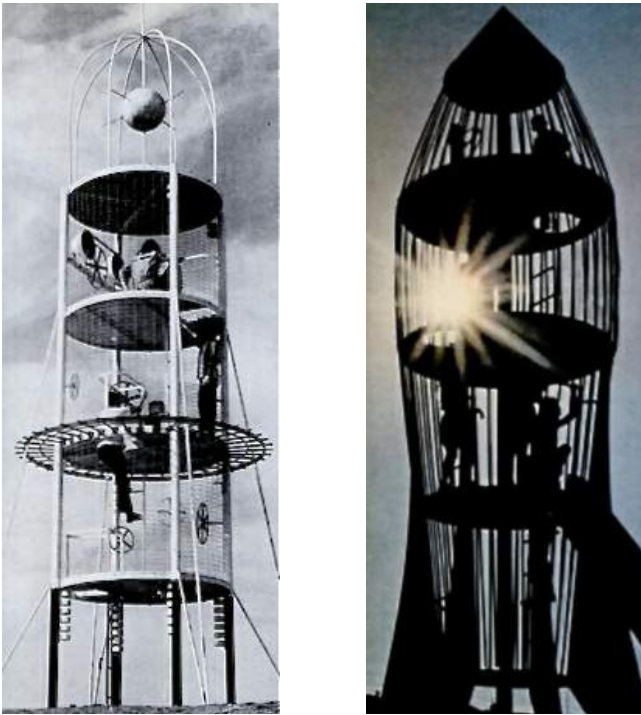
“City streets are unsatisfactory playgrounds for children because of the danger, because most good games are against the law, because they are too hot in summer, and because in crowded sections of the city they are apt to be schools of crime. Neither do small back yards nor ornamental grass plots meet the needs of any but the very small children. Older children who would play vigorous games must have places especially set aside for them; and, since play is a fundamental need, playgrounds should be provided for every child as much as schools. This means that they must be distributed over the cities in such a way as to be within walking distance of every boy and girl, as most children can not afford to pay car fare” (Wikipedia 2015b).

Within the then evolving sciences was the emergence of a specific discipline of psychology based around human thought and behaviour. In the 1870-1880s theorists arose, such as Piaget, who postulated children as progressing through various stages of mental, emotional and social phases. Swedish writer Ellen Key (1849-1926) was a highly influential early proponent of a child-centred approach to education and parenting.

According to Joseph H. Maiden, Director of the Sydney Botanical Gardens, in his 1902 *Parks of Sydney* paper (p.39), colonial attitudes echoed those from overseas and sought to erect gymnasia with an emphasis on acquisition of physical skills. Maiden recorded the first installation of equipment in public parks specifically for child play; it was the ‘juvenile gymnasia’ in the Sydney Domain and Centennial Park in 1902 (Van den Broek and Morris 1997, Chapter 2). Following the implementation of ‘zones’ under the NSW Local Government Act 1919, the number of playgrounds increased when they became a town planning and land use issue.

The Playground and Recreation Association was formed in 1913 to promote the value of play and to increase play developmental opportunities for children. This became the Playgrounds Association and its Secretary in the 1920s was the social and education reformer Maybanke Anderson (née Selfe) (1845-1927). Anderson had previously founded the Kindergarten Union of NSW in 1895 which first set up premises in the then poverty ridden Woolloomooloo, followed by another in the equally disadvantaged Sydney Rocks. Such movements sought to improve the health of working class children via physical exercise. Middle class reformers saw playgrounds as a vehicle for helping the poor and to ‘lift the tone of the community’.

The Parks and Play Grounds Movement was formed during the 1930s Depression out of a number of small bodies. Its values merged a form of nationalism and a belief that the right environment had a great effect on a person’s character. As a legacy of the First World War, together with gathering political unease at that



A *ex Anonymous (1959)* *ex Anonymous (1963)* B
Figure 1. Early playground rockets in the USA.

time, such nationalistic tendencies paralleled overseas movements where the general fitness of the community reflected the ability of a country to defend itself in the event of war.

Between the World Wars to circa 1960s, children's playground equipment changed little, with an emphasis remaining on physical skills, usually via some sort of climbing apparatus. But from the 1960s onwards equipment began to evolve with the introduction of generic commercial products that had limited appeal to older children. Occurring about this time too was the next stage in the evolution of insights into childhood concurrent with a liberalisation of the NSW education system. As educators sought to foster children's curiosity, playground equipment was introduced to cause creative play, the theory being that "physical active play allows children to test and develop all types of motor skills. It promotes significant health and wellbeing benefits" (Barblett 2010).

The Cold War 'Space Race' leading to rocket shaped equipment

The revolution in playground equipment, education and child psychology functioned within the wider

milieu of the Cold War. This was a state of geopolitical tension between the superpowers of the Eastern Block, being the Soviet Union and countries under its control, and Western Block of USA and NATO allies. To prove superiority of technology, military power and, by extension, political economic ideological ascendancy, was to be the first to launch a man into space.

The Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, in 1957 and followed this with a dog, named Laika, that was put into orbit. The first human into space was Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin in 1961 and three weeks later astronaut Alan Shepherd became the first American to go into space. The technological expertise needed to get Shepherd into, and down from, space was a theme of the 2017 movie *Hidden Figures*. The Space Race peaked in July 1969 when the USA landed the first human on the Moon with the Apollo 11 mission.

The Rocket climbing frame was thus a symbol of active Cold War propaganda and societal fascination with the Space Race. In 1959 *Popular Mechanics* magazine published a photograph of a 40 feet (12.2 m) high, three level, play rocket ship that had been erected in California (Figure 1a; Anonymous 1959) with a caption that included the claim of being "in tune with the times". Another was erected in Philadelphia in 1963 (Figure 1b) and the magazine *Life* featured an article on space-related play equipment (Anonymous



ex Richter 2013

Figure 2. A Soviet era playground rocket.

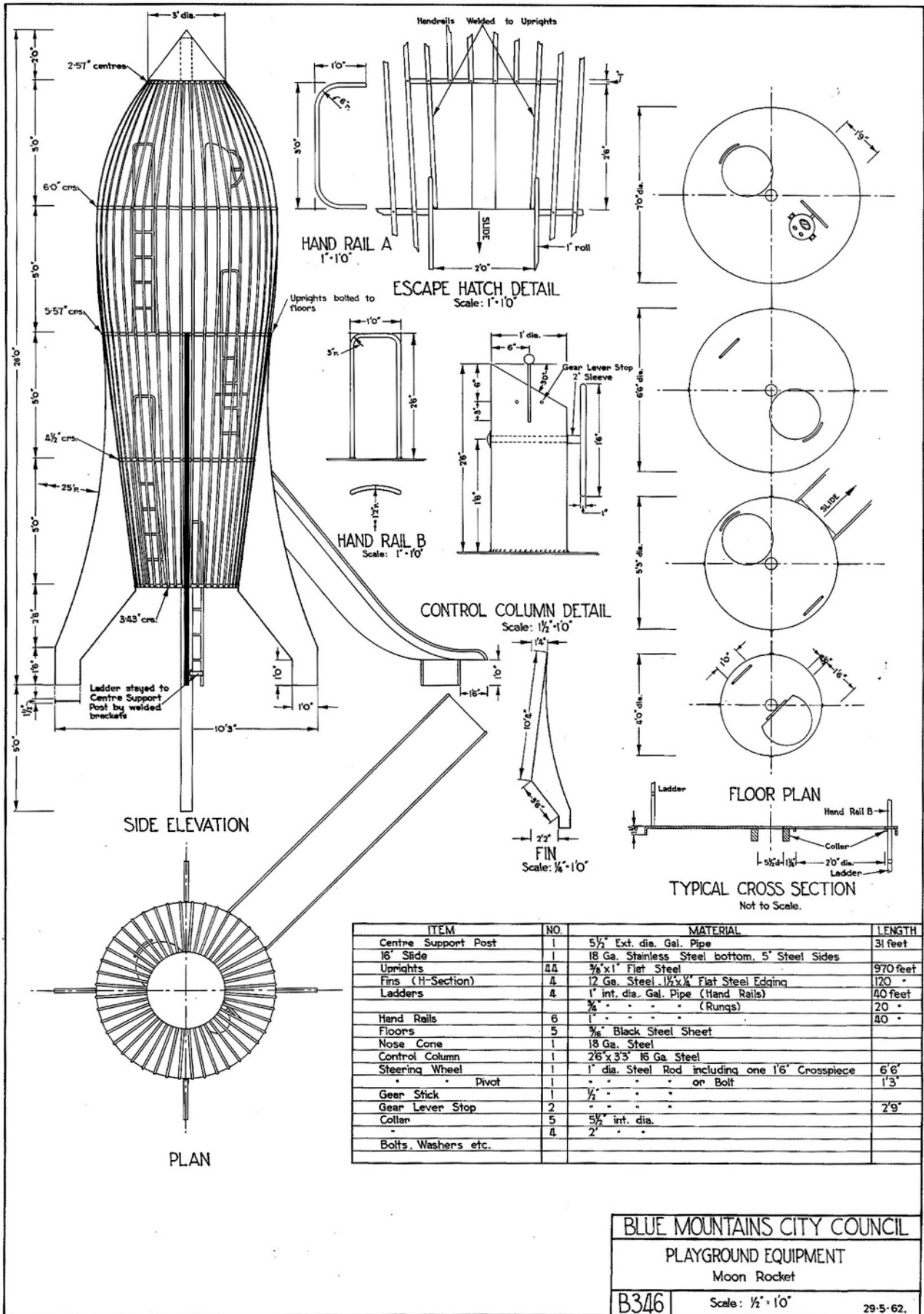


Figure 3. The Yeaman-built 'rocket' plans for the Blue Mountains City Council Engineering Dept, dated 1962.

1963); the close link with the Cuba Missile Crisis is

conveyed in the magazine cover, while the story by-line is “playgrounds take a space-race spin”.

In October 1962 the USA mounted a naval blockade of Cuba which had agreed to host Soviet nuclear missiles pointed towards the USA.

“What followed was probably the most tense 13 days in world history” (Meacham 2017, p.28).

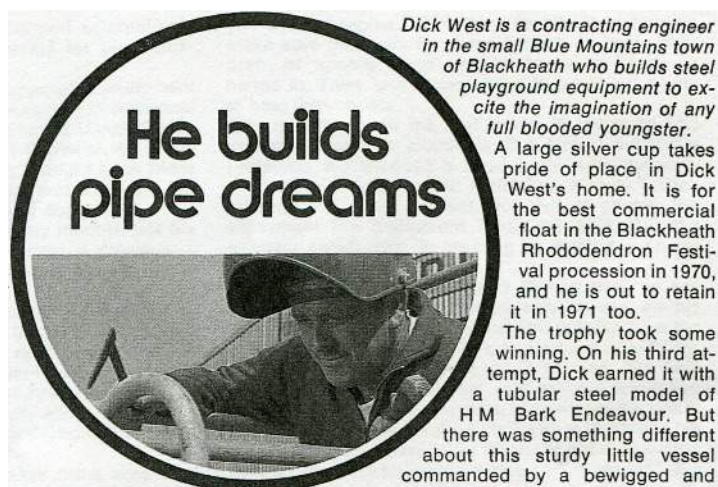
Author Fraser MacDonald wrote:

"nuclear weapons were made intelligible, and transposable, to a domestic context through children's toys and playground equipment featuring Cold War symbols" (Wikipedia 2015a).

To climb was to be an aspiring astronaut or cosmonaut: in the USA an astronaut was to be a ‘star sailor’ while the Soviet cosmonauts were referred to as ‘sailors of the universe’. Playgrounds in the Soviet Union (Figure 2) also sought to stimulate children's excitement about space following the successful space orbit by Yuri Gagarin. However, as with most Soviet-era play equipment, its play rockets were mass produced resulting in identical equipment being installed throughout the Eastern Block (Richter 2013; Wikipedia 2015a).

The Rocket launch in the Blue Mountains

Australian children too were caught by the ramifications of the Cold War and the Space Race. The Chief Engineer of Sydney City Council visited



ex Anonymous {1971}

Figure 4. Dick West welding a play climbing frame.

the USA and Europe in the late 1950s, and returned with plans for a playground rocket. Subsequently a plan was prepared in 1965 for the Knight Street/Flora Street Park in Erskineville; it shows two new structures to be built of pipe and intended to stimulate imaginative play – a jet plane and a rocket (Van den Broek and Morris, 1997, Fig.13).

In 1961 the then Blue Mountains City Council Engineer, Mr. John Yeaman, flew to the USA on a Super Constellation jet plane, then a very expensive flight (West 2016), and he returned with plans (Figure 3) for a play rocket (Anonymous 1997b; Anonymous 2001a, West 2016). The first rocket (20 feet (6.1 m) high) was fabricated under Yeaman’s supervision in the Council’s Albion Street blacksmith works and was welded by Ray McLaughlin (Anonymous 1971), subsequently being installed in Blackheath Soldiers’ Memorial Park (photos: Blue Mountains Historical Society Inc. nos. P7160 & P7161; Yeaman 1976, p.271; Archaeological & Heritage Management Solutions Pty Ltd. 2007).

Over subsequent years, the Yeaman rocket was supplemented by other fantasy pieces designed and fabricated by Dick West (Figure 4). These included a Gemini Space Capsule, a Tiger Moth Plane, an Old Woman’s Shoe, a Stage Coach (reinstalled in 2002), an Elephant Slide, a Vintage Car, an Endeavour Boat, a Submarine, a 15 foot (4.6 m) high Dinosaur (Figure 5) and a 12 foot (3.6 m) high Gulliver Clown. In 2017 all that remains are the low level pieces – the Tiger Moth Plane, the Old Woman’s Shoe, the Stage Coach and the Vintage Car (Figure 6).

Richard (Dick) West (b.1932 Carlingford; d. 2017 Lithgow)

Dick West was a blacksmith, welder, and fabricator who, according to his son Ross, had no formal training in metal fabrication nor undertook any apprenticeship.

“He just went and learnt that skill. He made timber wheels and put a steel band around them in a similar way as making barrels, he learnt to weave for chair seats. A fabricators skill is to work out how to build things themselves.” (West 2016).



photo: Ron Morrison (1973)

Figure 5. Dick West’s ‘brontosaurus / dinosaur’ in Blackheath Memorial Park.

In 1950 Dick started as a fettler when the British firm BRCC won the contract to electrify the Blue Mountains railway line to Lithgow. Dick and Betty (née Blome) went to live in Blackheath in 1956 (Anonymous 2001a) and he started his own business in 1959 trading as R.J. West Engineering in a building on the corner of Railway and Station Streets, Blackheath, initially making boat and car trailers, and decorative welding. Ross West said there are still many wrought iron gates and scroll works around Blackheath and throughout the Blue Mountains made by his father. Dick was friends with Frank Lindstrom (1890-1982), who founded the Franklins’ Supermarket chain, and Dick fabricated several pieces on the Lindstrom property (7-13 Belvidere Avenue, Blackheath).

John Yeaman was great friends with Dick West and gave him the USA rocket plans so Dick commenced making ‘moon rockets’ in 1963. By 1971 he had made 20 rockets, and went on to build about 32 rockets according to his son, Ross (Anonymous 1997a, p.1, col.2; 2001a, p.17, col.2; West 2016), although another oral history claimed 38 moon rockets (Daley 2009). West rockets were installed all over Australia, but mostly in NSW, often financially supported by community and service clubs, such as the Rotary and Lions clubs.



photo: S. Jackson-Stepowski (2016).

Figure 7. The original Blackheath ‘H.M. Endeavour’ at the West family property

In 1970 Dick built the *H.M. Endeavour* ship climbing frame (Figure 7) for the annual Blackheath Rhododendron Festival parade (Anonymous 1970) and mounted it onto a spring loaded Ford Prefect car chassis so it looked as if it was ‘rocking on the waves’.

This won the trophy for the Best Commercial Float and its procession along the streets is recorded in a family video (West 2016). West is reported as saying “It is a tremendously satisfying activity. You get a great kick out of seeing the enjoyment the equipment gives the kids. The greatest satisfaction is creating something – something different” (Anonymous 1971, p.25, col.2).



photo: Peter Rickwood (July 2017)

Figure 6. Dick West’s climbing frames in Blackheath Memorial Park in mid 2017.

year	specific name	location / park name	current LGA	extant	proof by Dick West	LEP item	use	CMP/ PoM	LG Act class	
1..	1961	Moon Rocket	Blackheath Soldiers' Memorial Park built by Blue Mts City Council under supervision of Chief Engineer, John Yeaman. 1997 move to Bates Lakeside Holiday Park into back block but rusted out and was crushed. <u>see also</u> Woodford & Muston Park Chatswood	Blue Mts	no	no built by Blue Mts Council	n/a	n/a	Crown Land	
3	1972	The Rocket	Kirby Park West video of its installation	Moree Plains	yes	yes	SHR nom	as a park sculpture	in DCP park yes + in MPSC Parks Plan	CL
4a	?	rocket	Woodford Children Home bought by G. Bates in c1997, sold to Willoughby Cncl in 2014 restored into Muston Park East Chatswood still with West plaque	Blue Mts	yes as relocated to Muston Park Chatswood	Yes + via oral recall	no	no	park yes but not in PoM pending update	n/a
4b		rocket	Muston Park East Chatswood	Willoughby	yes but relocated	yes original - see above	no	in use modified	pending	?
2		Deni rocket	Scott's Park	Deniliquin	no	no	no	in use modified ?	no	?
5		rocket	Space Arcade, John St Salisbury	Salisbury SA	no	yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6		rocket	Duke of Cornwall Park (reputedly returned to Blue Mts Cncl depot)	Broken Hill	relocated unknown?	no	n/a	n/a	n/a	?
7		rocket	formerly in AJ Keast Park at Clarentown West family	Broken Hill	yes relocated	no	n/a	n/a	n/a	private
8		rocket	Enmore Park	Marrickville	yes	no	no	Yes sculpt	?	?
9		rocket	Johnston Park	Marrickville	yes	no	no	No	?	?
10		rocket	Waverley Park	Waverley	yes	yes	no	Yes sculpt	?	?

Table 1. A sample of the data from the 2015 e-survey.

The rockets and other fantasy climbing frames fabricated by West demonstrated a creative imagination combined with an exceptional technical skill, more so for the time when they were built without the aid of today's machinery. Metal was sourced from the BPH Steelworks Group in Wollongong: Stewarts & Lloyds manufactured the steel tubing and Commonwealth Steel Co., Ltd produce the stainless steel sheeting (Anonymous 1971).

Dick designed and welded items for his own children, such as a metal framed rocking horse, chairs and go-carts, and family furniture. All his family worked with horses and hence Dick learnt blacksmith and wheelwright skills and he retained a love of Clydesdale horses into his retirement on a property in the Megalong Valley (Daley 2009).

Dick West rockets that have survived

A survey in 1997 of 240 playgrounds, in 26 Sydney council areas, located 862 pieces of playground equipment, of which only two were 'rockets', both having been modified and closed to use (Van den Broek and Morris 1997, Table 4). The author of a later article inferred:

“Some [rockets] still survive in rural areas untouched by urban angst” (Guilliatt 2000, p.27, col.3).

An e-based survey in 2015 (Table 1) located 33 'rockets' that had been installed - 29 in NSW, two in Victoria and one in each of South Australia and Queensland (Jackson-Stepowski 2015). Of these, 14 appear to be extant and all bar one reside in public open spaces, but none are recorded on a heritage list. One is located in a heritage scheduled park yet is not identified specifically as a contributory element of that park. Three parks possessing playground rockets have



photo: S. Jackson-Stepowski (2016).

Figure 8. The former Broken Hill Rocket at the West family property at Clarence where there are also the original ‘Elephant’ and ‘The Endeavour’ (Figure 7).

a Plan of Management, and one is managed under a Development Control Plan, thereby possibly affording some heritage conservation measures. Of those 14 extant rockets with proven provenance of being fabricated by Dick West, two have been relocated - the former Broken Hill (Figure 8) and the former Woodford Children’s Home (Figure 9) rockets. *In situ* is one at Kirkby Park, Moree, (Figure 10) that was definitely made by Dick West and reputedly another in Waverley Park (Figure 11) was made by him (pers. comm. Ross West) but this lacks a manufacturer's plaque to give certainty.



A

photos: Jason Baker (2016)

B

Figure 9. A The former reconditioned Woodford Children’s Home rocket and B the West plaque removed prior to its installation in Muston Park, East Chatswood (Glooloo 2015).

Ross West recalled

“When the rocket was being installed at the Woodford Children’s Home, they had hired a crane 3 times the size needed, so Dick lifted the rocket as high as possible up into the air as if his rocket was off to the moon” (West 2016).

Dick West “had a great sense of sadness” (Anonymous 1997a) when his structures in Blackheath Memorial Park were removed on 1 May 1997, because they did not conform to revised Australian Safety Standards. While four fantasy pieces were eventually re-installed back there in May 2001, the iconic Yeaman built Blackheath rocket remained nearby in the ‘bottom block’ of the Lakeview Holiday Park and Cabins at 63 Prince Edwards Street, Blackheath, operated by Geoff Bates (Anonymous 1999, Bates 2015). It was Geoff Bates who lead the ‘Rescue our Rocket’ campaign, with the Blackheath Chamber of Commerce, later in 1997 (see also the West family video of this rocket and campaign in the annual Blackheath Rhododendron Festival parade).

When the Yeaman rocket “rusted out it was crushed” (Bates 2015), and Geoff Bates obtained another rocket for his caravan park from the Woodford Children’s Homes (Anonymous 1999), this one had been built by Dick West, but installed as a static sculpture. When insurance premiums rose, Bates on-sold that Woodford rocket in 2012 to Willoughby Council which sought a rocket to comply with a park masterplan wherein the local community had indicated



that it “wanted their rocket back” (pers. comm. Willoughby Parks Officer), the previous one having been removed in 1994. The Woodford Children’s Home Rocket (Figure 9), via a caravan park, was reconditioned, and re-configured to 2016 standards at a cost of \$90,000, then re-installed in Muston Park, East Chatswood (Gladstone 2015; Glooploop 2015).

Dick West made two rockets for Broken Hill but in the late 1990s, when the safety of playground climbing frames was questioned, Broken Hill Council contacted Blue Mountains Council to ask if it wanted them back. Blue Mountains Council then asked Dick to help with their relocation, which he said he would do provided he could keep one of the rockets. He retained the Broken Hill Main Street / Duke of Cornwall Park rocket which now lies on its side in the front yard of his older son’s house at Clarence (Figure 8). Conflicting accounts infer that the other rocket was taken to the Blue Mountains Council depot while Broken Hill records indicate that the rocket from A.J. Keats Park was moved to Mr. Hennessy’s back yard, near Rocky Point, Broken Hill (pers. comm. Broken Hill Librarian 2015).



photo: Waverley Council (2017)

Figure 11. The playground rocket in Waverley Park, Spring St, Bondi Junction, Waverley.



A *photo: S. Jackson-Stepowski (2015)*



photo: S. Jackson-Stepowski (2017) **B**

Figure 10. **A.** The West-made Rocket in Kirkby Park, Moree and behind it is the 2009 Big Rocket
B. The plaque ‘MANUFACTURED BY R.J. WEST ENGNRG BLACKHEATH N.S.W.’ on the central column of the Moree Rocket.



A photo: S. Jackson-Stepowski



photo: S. Jackson-Stepowski (2017) B

Figure 12. The Marrickville Council rockets made by ‘Cyclone’.

A. In Enmore Park, Enmore Road, Marrickville.

B. In Johnson Park, Constitution Road, Dulwich Hill.

The Moree Rocket in Kirby Park (Figure 10) was purchased in 1972 to commemorate the Centenary of Education in NSW and was specifically “for the children of Moree to play on” (Anonymous 2017a). The project was instigated by local resident June McKinnon and most funds were generated from a community ‘Centenary of Education’ Ball. Ross West has a video of the Moree rocket installation, being rare evidence that validates its relationship to Dick West, as well as the brass West Engineering plaque on its central pipe. The 1990s safety concerns forced cessation of active use, but the Moree rocket remains as an imaginary installation in its original park setting.

The Kirkby Park link with aspiring technology needed for space research persisted when, alongside the West original, a 15 metre high ‘Big Rocket’ (Figure 10a) was installed in 2009 to coincide with the International Year of Astronomy and the 40th Anniversary of the

Moon Landing; it was ‘launched’ on 1 July 2009 by Astronomer-in-Charge, Dr Fred Watson.

The Moree rocket is a rare surviving example of the work of its fabricator Dick West, and it has an added layer of space-related association with the The Australian Overseas Telecommunications Commission (OTC) Moree Earth Tracking Station which opened in 1968. That Station played a vital role in the development of the telecommunications industry in Australia, and relayed signals for the first Moon landing. Hence with the building of the OTC Moree Station, it was unsurprising that the Moree community was thoroughly aware of the technological implications and the role of rockets in the race to take command of space, and sought a ‘rocket’ of its own.

The playground rockets that are in Enmore Park and Johnson Park (Dulwich Hill) were made by Cyclone

(confirmed by a plaque on a fin) for Marrickville Council and the key aesthetic and fabrication difference to the Dick West products is their more chunky shape due to the use of square section metal (e.g. on the edge of the fins) and the welding joints are more obvious. The Enmore rocket (Figure 12a) has been modified such that only the lowest level is accessible for small children so it has small plastic slides; the Johnson Park rocket (Figure 12b) is now closed off making it a static aesthetic feature.

The Demise of the Playground Rockets

The Blue Mountains Council dismantling of the Blackheath metal play equipment in April 1997 caused community uproar that lasted many months and was featured in local and Sydney media and press articles (e.g. Anonymous 1997a,b,d,e; Borschmann 1997).

What prompted such risk adverse local government reactions was a Supreme Court (Guilliatt 2000, pp.26-27) ruling about a child's fall in an adventure playground in the Victorian seaside town of Warrnambool and subsequently Standards Australia changed its guidelines that triggered reviews of tubular steel play equipment. That led to the demise of most iconic play devices, including climbing frames, swings, see-saws, and elevated structures. Despite the rise of 'adventure playgrounds' made popular in the USA and Europe, the play experience dramatically changed when 'offending' playground equipment was replaced by homogeneous, uniform, height restricted and catalogue plastic constructions. A further standardisation came with commissioning of specialist designers and landscape architects (Van Den Broek 2000, p.21).

"The purge has been nowhere near as zealous in Melbourne, largely because the State government-funded Playgrounds and Recreation Association acted as an intermediary between councils and communities [in that state]. 'I suspect we've had greater community [anti risk] involvement' says Barbara Champion, executive officer of the association ..." and "a lot of antique playground rides might have been saved had council engineers considered a few modifications" (Guilliatt 2000, p.27, col.3 and p.28, col.1).

Ironically the demise of playground rockets occurred as the United National General Assembly declared an annual Space Week in 1999. The week chosen marked the launch of the first human made satellite, Sputnik 1 on 4 October 1957, and the signing of the Outer Space Treaty on 10 October 1967.

Social significance

A rocket installation often caused popular (and often unofficial) renaming of a local open space as 'the rocket park'. Indeed, many residents referred to 'the rocket park' (e.g. Anonymous 2001b) rather than the official place name, whilst some were actually formally renamed as such, e.g. Apollo Park in Grafton.

The Sydney Morning Herald headline "Rocket rescue mission blasts off" (Borschmann 1997; also see Skelsey 2000) records community protest at the removal of rockets, such as from Willoughby and Blackheath parks. Broadcaster, Richard Glover on morning ABC 2BL radio was quoted as saying he had "... received calls from people in Sydney and as far as Central Coast (with) ... stories about the Rockets in their local parks"; (Anonymous 1997e, p.24, col.1).

The Blackheath Memorial Park and Pool Committee, Chamber of Commerce and others campaigned under the banner "RoR" (Anonymous 1998) – Rescue our Rocket – to unite the community and interested parties to reinstate the playground frames resulting in the Blue Mountains Council reversing its decision on some structures in 1996. Five Dick West original frames were modified by him in 1999-2001 under Federation Funding of \$20,000 (Anonymous 1999).

"However the icon of the collection, the rocket, is beyond repair. Fortunately Broken Hill Council has generously donated two similar rockets to us ... A specially commissioned Federation piece, to be made by Dick West, will later join the collection" (Hamilton 2001; also see Anonymous 2001a).

The fate of the Yeaman Rocket was for it to remain on private land in a caravan park until it was crushed, while Gulliver's Head only survived by being taken to Ross West's workshop! But the dilapidated Rocket

was put on a lorry and participated in the 1997 Rhododendron Festival parade (Anonymous 1997c).

The pull of the rocket imagery remains. In 1994 the residents of Willoughby were outraged at the removal of the rocket which had been a popular attraction in the park for over 25 years. This was the sentiment echoed multiple times by many communities that had lost their rockets and in 2009 the Blue Mountains City Council flagged “re-introduction of rocket to Park” as an aim for Blackheath (Blue Mountains City Council 2009, 5.6B, p.55). The reconditioning and re-installation of the ‘Woodford Children’s Home Rocket’ in Muston Park, Chatswood, (Figure 9) was to accompany the still *in situ* original West made ‘plane’.

A more recent example of community sentiment was the campaign in Blackheath to have constructed a new rocket (Curtin 2016; 2017) based on rockets previously made by Dick West but modified to comply with modern safety requirements. Raising the money to enable that was the 2016-2017 project of Rotary Club of Blackheath and appropriately it was lead by Andrew Hancock - a grandson of the late John Yeaman who initiated the construction of rockets in Australia. The new rocket was duly constructed and loaded on a lorry in November 2017 for display in the Blackheath Rhododendron Festival parade (Figure 13) and it was intended to have it installed in Blackheath Soldiers Memorial Park (Anonymous 2017b) in time



ex Anonymous (2017b)

Figure 13. The new rocket that was to be installed in Blackheath Memorial Park in December 2017.



photo: Merinda Campbell, August 1973

Figure 14. The former Earlwood Park rocket on a 1973 35mm slide in the Hallam collection held by the Mitchell Library of NSW. It was back-lit for display in the Richard Aitken exhibition ‘Planting Dreams’ in 2016 (Aitken 2016).

for Christmas 2017 but geotechnical problems caused that to be delayed until 2018.

Playground rockets were a popular attraction from the 1960s until their demise in the late 1990s. But they have persisted to be of interest to people other than those of the local communities for which they were provided. These sentiments were demonstrated by the Earlwood Park rocket being the lead feature for a Mitchell Library exhibition in 2016 entitled “Planting Dreams” (Figure 14) and by a photograph of the Johnson Park Rocket that was The Marrickville Urban Photography Competition winner in 2015 (Maharaj 2015).

Conclusion

Playground rockets are a tangible product of the Cold War and its ‘race’ to launch man into space and land man on the moon. Climbing frames were considered an ideal device to build physical fitness, a necessity in case of military conflict. The societal pre-occupation with ‘moon rockets’ occurred at a time

when educators sought to encourage more imaginative play, and when governments devised specific programmes both to encourage the study of the sciences and to raise secondary achievement standards for economic as well as military reasons. The Rocket Climbing Frame thus not only demonstrates the changing educational philosophy about childhood and the importance of child-centred and imaginary play, it also encapsulates what was occurring in the developed world in the post World War Two era. The Rocket is a physical consequence of, and a reflection of, socio-political views and values of this era. The Rocket frames had, and for the few that survive continue to have, considerable visual aesthetics due to their iconic shape and height. A rocket remains a popular tourist attraction and continues to evoke an emotional response and memories for multiple generations, and to inspire the young and old. Their social significance also caused many public parks to be informally renamed and continue to be known as a 'rocket park'.

Postscript

This paper came about because a regional town community sought to ensure that the heritage significance of their 'rocket' was recognised and that its legacy continues on for future generations. As part of a comparative analysis, an e-survey was undertaken to ascertain what 'rockets' remained in NSW

(Jackson-Stepowski 2015). Heritage assessments also require a thematic history and biographical information about persons associated with a 'place'. Hence the reason for the research into what was occurring around the time that the 'rockets' were fabricated, and about the leading NSW fabricator, Dick West.

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Cumulative List of Contents

Issue 1 - 2010

Page

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|
| 1 | North Springwood in the Nineteenth Century:
the site of St Columba's Seminary and High School. | Ian Jack |
| 12 | Joseph Hay: One of Lawson's Pioneers. | Brian Fox |
| 22 | Dr William Bell (1815-1871): Experiences of a
19th Century Doctor on either side of the Blue Mountains. | Lois Sabine |
| 36 | Aboriginal Prehistory of the Blue Mountains. | Eugene Stockton |

Issue 2 - 2011

Page

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Martindale Family and the Sketchbook of
Mary Elizabeth Martindale | John Low |
| 15 | Over a Century of Worship at Medlow Bath
Rickwood | Clair Isbister, Robert King & Peter |
| 37 | A History of the Postal and Telephone Services
of Mount Wilson. | Mary Reynolds |
| 51 | A Secret Army in the Blue Mountains? | Pamela Smith |

Issue 3 - 2012

Page

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------|
| 1 | The Blue Mountains: where are they? | Andy Macqueen |
| 26 | The Mystery of Linden's Lonely Gravestone:
who was John Donohoe? | John Low |
| 35 | Forensic history: Professor Childe's Death near
Govetts Leap - revisited. | Peter Rickwood |

Issue 4 - 2013

Page

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | The Imaginary Passage: George Caley's Unrequited
Blue Mountains Obsession. | Andy Macqueen |
| 19 | Hills, Pots and Gills: George Caley's Blue Mountains and
Yorkshire Place Connections. | Andy Macqueen |
| 33 | Osborne Ladies College, Blackheath and the Life and Times of
its Principal and Owner Miss Violet Gibbins. | Ron Brasier |
| 51 | A Long-Time Resident of Medlow Bath:
Cornwallis Wade-Browne (1837-1922). | Peter Rickwood &
Howard Browne |
| 68 | Benjamin Roberts: One of Lawson's Pioneers. | Brian Fox |
| 84 | Crossing the Nepean River at Penrith. | Patsy Moppett |
| 102 | Postscript: Professor Childe's Death. | Christine Cramer |

Issue 5 - 2014

Page

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | The Paragon Café, Katoomba. | R. Ian Jack |
| 13 | Blackheath's Victory Theatre. | John Lanser |

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|
| 31 | A Meticulous Draftsman and Enigmatic Character:
Victor E. Coleman (1911-1976). | Peter C. Rickwood &
Brian K. Fox |
| 43 | An Appreciation of John Kenneth Leary OAM
(1 September 1934 – 10 July 2014). | Jan Koperberg |

Issue 6 - 2015

Page

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Assistant Surveyor Robert Hoddle’s 1823 Excursion
in the Gardens of Stone – and a Dark Secret? | Andy Macqueen |
| 12 | Woodford Academy, a Rare Treasure. | Ken Goodlet |
| 23 | T.R. Rodriguez (1860-1929) – “Blackheath’s Father”. | Peter C. Rickwood &
Joan E. Steele |
| 55 | Tuck’s Blue Mountains Oilette Postcards | Erik Halbert & Ross Ellis |
| 68 | Watering the Gee-Gees: A Survey of Blue Mountains’
Horse Troughs, Part 1. | John Low |

Issue 7 - 2017

Page

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------|
| 1 | John Jingery, Gundungura man, and Robert J. O’Reilly,
grazier, in the Burragorang Valley. | Diana Levy |
| 11 | The Boulton Family of <i>Verna</i> , Wentworth Falls. | Louise Wilson |
| 21 | <i>Whispering Pines</i> – an H.P. Oser house with a
Paul Sorensen garden at Blackheath. | Chris Betteridge |
| 35 | Soldiers Pinch, Blackheath:
The history of its naming and development. | Peter C. Rickwood |
| 49 | Watering the Gee-gees: A Survey of Blue Mountains’
Horse Troughs, Part 2. | John Low |
| 65 | Sandstone Caves in the Blue Mountains:
their European Cultural Heritage. | John R. Dunkley |



