BLUE MOUNTAINS HISTORY JOURNAL

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Blue Mountains History Journal

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Editorial

Issue 11 contains five papers; two of which concern large areas of the Blue Mountains and three which focus on widely differing aspects of specific villages.

The first relates to the 19th Century explorers, the second involves the naming of features on Narrow Neck, Katoomba, the third deals in part with the late 19th and early 20th Century development of the southern side of Wentworth Falls and of Tamarama, the fourth concerns the convoluted history of supplying electricity to the Blue Mountains and the final paper is about a lesser known private school that existed in Blackheath throughout WW2.

In the opening paper Andy Macqueen has expounded his thoughts on the often unstated companions of the early explorers of the Blue Mountains. He bravely rebuffs some commonly expressed views that Europeans could not have found a way across the Blue Mountains without the aid of indigenous men to guide them along "an established Aboriginal trading route".

The well known bushwalker Brian Fox was a co-author of a book detailing the adventurous routes off the Narrow Neck peninsula. Katoomba. His paper for Issue-11 of this journal deals with the history of surveying Narrow Neck, and the naming of its geographical features.

David Fletcher was a 19th century man who overcame any disadvantages caused by the stigma of his criminal past in England and subsequent deportation and imprisonment in Australia. Jeff Warnock has written about Fletcher's association with the development of the Brasfort Estate at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains and of the Waverley district of Sydney and his being the first Mayor of Waverley Council. The name of this remarkable man has been preserved by being assigned to streets in both Wentworth Falls and Tamarama.

Electricity comes into our houses but few of us know how and where it is generated nor is it commonly known how those facilities have changed over the years. Paper 4 by George Wilkenfeld deals not only with the practicalities of electricity generation using fuels that currently are being frowned upon, but also with the convoluted business transactions and the organisations that were involved.

Blackheath is known to have supported ten private schools (at least) and one called Rowan Brae School is the topic of the last paper in Issue-11. There are some puzzling aspects of this school ranging from the number of pupils, to which buildings were used for teaching and which as residences, and even to the year in which teaching ceased. The ladies that ran that school seem not to have had formal teaching qualifications, and what they taught is far from clear, yet the school existed for over a decade which included the duration of WW2.

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 10.

From the first issue of the Journal in August 2010 through to this eleventh issue, as well as for two publications of Occasional Papers, the design and layout work has been undertaken by Mr. Peter Hughes. In doing this work he has learned to master three different professional software packages with an increasing number of attributes to bewilder the user. His extreme patience with a finicky Editor has been amazing and he has even coped with historians who wished for inserts to be made at a late stage in his layout work. On behalf of BMACHO I express our thanks for, and formally acknowledge, Peter's contributions.

Dr Peter C. Rickwood,
Editor

"A logical, fairly even route"
Who or what guided Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth ?

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Abstract
Before 1813, some explorers of the Sydney and Blue Mountains region took Aboriginal companions with them to worthwhile affect, though their potential as guides was limited when travelling beyond their own country.

Examination of all available information concerning the famous 1813 expedition by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth indicates that they were guided as far as Springwood, but no further. Their guide was probably the kangaroo hunter later acknowledged by Blaxland. The suggestion that they were guided across the mountains by an Aboriginal person or by an established Aboriginal track is rejected. The explorers were guided by prior advice, a sound strategy, a natural "handrail" and good judgement.

James Byrnes (various spellings) undertook the whole journey with them as one of their four "servants". Judging from his role in Surveyor-General George Evans' subsequent party, Byrnes was clearly a useful bushman, but he was not the kangaroo hunter and he was not familiar with the route prior to accompanying Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth.

K**ey Words**: Aborigines, indigenous guides, crossings, explorers, Blue Mountains

INTRODUCTION

The exploratory journeys discussed in this paper took place on country variously of the Dharug, Gundungurra, Wiradjuri, Darkinjung and Wonnarua First Nations peoples. The country had been their home for millennia before the European explorers entered it uninvited. It was then, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Nearly a decade has passed since the bicentenary of the 1813 crossing of the Blue Mountains by Gregory Blaxland, William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth. Historians and the general public have moved on and the subject has been largely forgotten again, except for a brief outbreak of controversy when the Marked Tree at Pulpit Hill finally met its demise in 2021. It is timely to reflect dispassionately on aspects of the story that came to the fore at the time of the bicentenary.

Compared with previous major commemorations of the crossing, the 2013 events were quite measured. There were none of the extraordinary re-enactment scenes of the past, for instance involving fictitious attacks on the party by Aboriginal people. New monuments appeared but they were much less extravagant. Well-considered addresses were presented to historical societies and the like. A range of thoughtful publications appeared, most notably Siobhan Lavelle's exposition on the historiography of the crossing (Lavelle 2012, 2013). Christine Yeats (2013) revealed that one of the previously unidentified men who accompanied the explorers was Samuel Fairs, a servant of Wentworth. John Low (2012) wrote of the explorers' four horses. Macqueen (2012) analysed how the extent of the Blue Mountains, as perceived, had changed with time, and the light that throws on the semantic question as to whether Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth were the first Europeans to cross the Mountains. Well-researched publications from the past were also cited (Richards, 1979; Cunningham, 1996).

More broadly, there was a disconnect. The general public, tuned to newspapers, talkback radio or speeches by poorly informed

public figures, heard little of the above. While there was often an acknowledgement that the crossing furthered the dispossession of First Nations people, the hero myth also persisted. For instance, on ABC television news an explorer descendant made the extravagant assertion that Blaxland and friends had saved the colony from starvation by finally finding a way across the mountain barrier (Anonymous 2013b). Meanwhile, a descendant of James Byrnes repeated the long-discredited claim that the party came across a cairn built by George Caley (Krone 2013).

As in the past, the facts of the expedition proved to be expendable. As Lavelle (2013) might say, "the tale kept growing in the telling". Actor Jack Thompson, who attended the commencement of the 2013 re-enactment, was reported to have made the baseless claim that the explorers found cattle on the western side (Anonymous 2013a, p.2) and he also stated that the explorers had two Aboriginal guides (Thompson 2013). But Thompson was not alone. Prominent ABC radio host Richard Glover proclaimed during a talk-back session that the explorers must have had Aboriginal guides: no contrary view was heard during the program (Glover 2013).

More recently, it was stated in the Environmental Impact Statement for the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall that the explorers crossed the mountains by "navigating an established Aboriginal trading route" (SMEC 2021. p.41).

There is no basis for such claims, yet they have not been effectively challenged by informed historians, who perhaps have wished to avoid being engulfed by the sometimes emotional atmosphere that surrounds the whole topic, particularly at the time of anniversaries. The notion of Aboriginal involvement in the expedition sat nicely in a climate where society is searching for reconciliation and the myth of the heroic "dauntless three" was falling from favour. It served to diminish the explorers' achievement in making their crossing. The idea that cattle had already found their way across — a fiction which probably had its origin in the story of the Cowpastures cattle (Karskens 2009, pp.285-287) — carried the same implication.

It is not necessary, however, to denigrate the explorers' physical undertaking in order to accept that it inherently involved invasion and led to dispossession of the First Nations people. The motives and outcomes of the expedition should be judged separately from the achievement itself. Historians will continue to hold legitimate debate about the whys and wherefores of the expedition. The old question about whether they were "the first" will be perpetually mired in matters of interpretation, perspective and semantics unless some gem of an earlier account materialises. However, it is suggested that the historical record is sufficient to reliably address the question of guides.

The guiding question

Regardless of the robustness of any evidence indicating that Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth were not guided, there will always be a temptation to suggest that they could only have done it with guides. This emerges from various perceptions. How else, it might be argued, could the explorers have suddenly hit on a viable route when that quest had apparently defied everyone who had gone before ? Further, some might suggest that because the Europeans were supposedly ignorant of the landscape it was only Aboriginal people, who could have known the way. Such assertions are complicated by cultural debates and perspectives.

Some might also argue that reference to Aboriginal guides never entered the records for cultural reasons: not only did the three Europeans want to claim all credit for themselves, but they considered Aboriginal people not worthy of recognition. And further, some might suggest, any mention of those guides in the oral accounts could soon have disappeared for the same reasons.

Guides on previous expeditions.

To place the subject in context, it is useful to consider the employment of Aboriginal guides on some known expeditions to the inland prior to 1813.

In April 1791 Governor Phillip took Colbee and Boladeree, men from the Sydney and

Parramatta areas, on an unsuccessful expedition designed to determine whether the Nepean and Hawkesbury were the same river. It was assumed that they would know all the country involved but, as Watkin Tench observed,

> "[at] a very short distance from Rose Hill, we found that they were in a country unknown to them" (Tench in Flannery 1996, p.187).

Moreover, they did not understand the point of it all, presumably not appreciating that the colony would inevitably wish to further invade the country. The 'guides' could not comprehend the curiosity which induced the Europeans to encounter

> "labour, fatigue and pain, when they might remain in repose at home, with a sufficiency of food." (Tench in Flannery 1996, p.188)

As the expedition went on they grew impatient to return to the settlement. Those two men made themselves even more unpopular when they made light of the Europeans' difficulties in carrying heavy loads through the bush.

> "Our perplexities afforded them an inexhaustible fund of merriment and derision"

, Tench wrote (Tench in Flannery 1996, p.190).

It is perhaps no wonder then that Aboriginal people were not often taken on as guides after that. Nevertheless, during the expedition Colbee and Boladeree were of great service as intermediaries: they brought about a very constructive meeting with some local Hawkesbury people, including Yellomundee (Tench in Flannery 1996, pp.193-197).

In 1798 John Wilson, the outlaw-turned-guide, was sent out to prove to rebellious Irish convicts that an idyllic Chinese settlement was not located just over the hills (Price 1798; Brownscombe 2004, pp.59-81). The convicts soon turned back, with their guard, but Wilson pressed on regardless with his approved entourage. Having traversed the rugged sandstone country beyond Picton — then regarded as part of the Blue Mountains — he reached the Berrima area. On a second expedition, soon afterwards, he went further and almost reached the site of Goulburn (Macqueen 2012, p.4; Cunningham 1996, pp.79-85)

.There was an unidentified Aboriginal person on the first expedition, whose only mention in the account was that he or she was unable to understand the language of a girl who was detained from a group of people who had otherwise fled. A participant named Collins was mentioned several times in the account of the second expedition. It has been presumed by some that he was the Eora man Gnung-a Gnung-a Murremorgan, who had the nickname Collins; and further, he was the Aboriginal person on the first expedition(Cobley 1986, p.205; Smith 2010, pp.94-96). Unfortunately, those presumptions cannot be proved: there is no implication in the account that Collins was an Aboriginal person and no other hint of Aboriginal involvement in the second expedition. The Collins concerned could have been one of several former convicts in the colony with that surname.

Regardless of where the truth lies, the Aboriginal person or people involved in the first expedition, and the second expedition if there were any at all, apparently played no crucial role as guides or intermediaries. It is significant that Wilson had been living in the bush with Hawkesbury Aboriginal people and perhaps to some extent identified with them. By virtue of his acquired skills, Wilson was essentially his own guide.

Francis Barrallier thought it would be worthwhile to have Aboriginal guides for his 1802 expedition in the Gundungurra country of the southern Blue Mountains. To that end he engaged the Dharawal speaking Gogy (Kogy, Goguey, Koggie and Cogye), whom he thought

> "would be useful to me when I advanced further inland" (Bladen et al. 1892, p.749).

Gogy had accompanied Barrallier on a reconnaissance trip, during which he guided the party to the Nattai River. On the subsequent main expedition, he guided the first of the three excursions into the mountains and proved his value as an intermediary, but due to events in his past he fell out with a Gundungurra group headed by Goondel, whom they encountered in the Burragorang Valley. In fear of his life, Gogy insisted on retreating, causing a setback to the expedition.

Gogy was by no means the only Aboriginal person involved. A large number came and went, or were encountered. The friendly communications which often transpired seem to have been to Barrallier's advantage. In his journal he identified nine of the people by their name and nicknamed a tenth "Le Tonsuré". This is remarkable because he only identified one of the ten or more Europeans involved.

Two young Aboriginal men accompanied Barrallier on his second and main excursion, which terminated at a waterfall southwest of Kanangra Walls. One was Le Tonsuré, apparently a Gundungurra youth. The other was Badbury (Budbury, Boodbury), a young acquaintance of Gogy's, aged only about fourteen. Badbury is usually considered to have been of the Dharawal, but he may have been Gundungurra or even Dharug (Smith 2017, p.126). The names of both Gogy and Badbury reappeared later in the records, including in connection with the 1816 massacre at Appin (Liston 1988, p.54;).

While Le Tonsuré and Badbury proved to be of service as intermediaries in another encounter with Goondel, there is no evidence that they helped with showing or finding the way or had any interest in doing so. If they had the requisite knowledge of the country they didn't share it. Barrallier's route decisions were clearly based on finding what appeared to him to be the line of least resistance as he pursued a westward course. The strategy failed him.

Barrallier's contemporary George Caley also had good relations with Aboriginal people. During his early explorations in the Nepean country he successfully sought directional advice from locals he met. However, on his well-known expedition to Mount Banks in 1804 he took no guide, his only companions being three convict men (Else-Mitchell 1939, p.496; Macqueen 2013, pp.3 & 7).

Subsequent to that expedition Caley befriended the Parramatta-born Aboriginal youth Moowat'tin (also known as Dan or Daniel), who accompanied him on many of his later trips. Caley wrote that he

> "is the most civilised of any one that I know who may still be called a savage, and the best interpreter of the more inland natives language of any that I have met with — I can place that confidence in him which I cannot in any other — All except him are afraid to go beyond the limits of the space which they inhabit, with me (or indeed any other) and I know this one would stand by me until I fell, if attacked by strangers." (Caley 1808, p.289).

This is possibly unique in its praise of an Aboriginal assistant in the early years of the colony, and it is particularly poignant that in 1816 Moowat'tin was to be the first Aboriginal person to be legally executed, having been found guilty of the rape and robbery of Hannah Russell (Smith 2005).

That Moowat'tin was prepared to go beyond his own country is perhaps of special significance in the light of comments by Frenchman François Peron, who wrote following his 1802 visit that the Aboriginal people of the Sydney area had a "sort of religious terror" of the Blue Mountains, believing they were the home of "a kind of evil spirit" (Peron 1809, p.291).

There is no evidence that Moowat'tin was of any benefit as a guide in the sense that he was able to find or show the way. He may have been the "young native" who, along with three other men, accompanied Caley on his 1806 expedition in Barrallier's footsteps to the Kanangra country, but that area was very remote from his own country (Caley 1806). Caley probably had a guide who had been with Barrallier and it has generally been assumed that that person was the bushman John Warby,

> "who was with Caley on his last Expedition, and accompanied Mr. Barrellier also" (King 1806).

However, current research by the author suggests that Warby was not on Barrallier's journey.

A case can be made that Caley's "young native" in 1806 was not Moowat'tin, but Badbury. Badbury certainly did accompany Barrallier, and — with Warby — is known to have guided Governor Macquarie along Barrallier's route as far as the Nattai River in 1815 (Macquarie 1815, 5th Octr.). If Badbury did guide Caley in 1806, he would be

the only Aboriginal person recorded to have guided a party far into the Blue Mountains in pre-Macquarie times — though he had gained his knowledge of the route from having accompanied Barrallier, not by prior familiarity with the country. He would also have acted as an intermediary, had they encountered any people in the Burragorang or elsewhere.

The emancipated convict David Dickinson Mann attempted to cross the mountains in 1807 (Mann 1811, pp.31-32.). Aside from a European companion, he reportedly took three Aboriginal people with him, none of whom he named. Evidently they were of no help, for he gave up after negotiating five rugged "stupendous acclivities" in what appears to have been a fruitless exercise involving a direct course across the ridges, in the manner of William Dawes' failed effort back in 1789. Apparently he had learnt nothing from the various failures and successes of Dawes, Wilson, Barrallier and Caley (Paish 1989).

Mann proclaimed that the mountains were so daunting that no man of "common perseverance" would be able to cross them, and suggested that if there was indeed a viable way across then curious settlers "at the very base of the mountains" would have found it. Like all the early account writers he was writing for an English audience so dramatic stories and tales of impassable barriers made good reading. Who is to say that Hawkesbury settlers had not been across ? At the time of Mann's foray the Hawkesbury had been settled for thirteen years. Many personal relationships had been formed with the local Dharug people who were familiar with at least part of the mountains and may have served as useful guides to a degree. As proposed by many past authors, countless ventures had probably been made into the mountains, with or without Aboriginal companions, and there is a reasonable chance that one or two achieved a complete crossing. But the settlers concerned were mostly former convicts, and it may not have been to their advantage to trumpet any achievement at a time when the colony was still very much in containment mode.

Later expeditions

In the years after 1813 it became more common for Aboriginal people to be constructively involved in expeditions. Some of the explorers were more comfortable with some Aboriginal people, and vice versa. For instance, the enlightened settler Charles Throsby conducted numerous expeditions with Aboriginal guides and companions, most notably his 1819 expedition to Bathurst via Moss Vale and Taralga. On that trip he had a Gundungurra man Coocoogong as guide, as well as two Aboriginal interpreters Dual and Bian (Cambage 1921, p.239).

In the period 1817-1920, Benjamin Singleton, William Parr and John Howe made a series of explorations across the northern Blue Mountains between the Hawkesbury and the Hunter. When it comes to the question of whom should be credited with the eventual discovery of a viable route, some credit is due to the Dharug man Myles (Mioram), who was sent by Howe on his own expedition in 1819 to find a practical route beyond Howes Valley, and who himself took advantage of a local Darkinjung guide named Whirle. That expedition being successful, the next year Myles guided Howe and a large party of his friends along the new route. The Europeans were rewarded with land, and Myles with a breastplate. Whirle received no known reward (Macqueen 2004, p.116).

It is perhaps significant that on an earlier 1819 attempt, which reached the Hunter River by an impractical route, Howe was obliged to turn back prematurely because his Dharug and Darkinjung companions feared for their lives. They were possibly on Wonnarua country, uninvited. Myles' own expedition terminated before reaching the river, probably for the same reason.

Almost seven decades after those expeditions, children and acquaintances of the white protagonists argued via letters in the *Maitland Mercury* about whom should be credited with the first journey to Singleton, without once mentioning the essential involvement of Myles and the local guides. Aboriginal people were mentioned in their letters, but never with the significance that was deserved. For instance, Benjamin Singleton's daughter Elizabeth Yeomans claimed that Aboriginal people were only

taken along to help find water. Either the correspondents' fathers chose not to mention the Aboriginal factor, or the children deliberately overlooked or forgot it (Macqueen 2021, p.9).

For all that, the written record itself — which includes journals and letters — certainly does not cover up the Aboriginal involvement. We are told not only about Myles' expedition, but about the involvement of a range of Aboriginal people either accompanying or encountered during the various expeditions. The European protagonists themselves apparently did not strive to cover anything up at the time.

In 1823 Archibald Bell crossed the Blue Mountains along part of what became known as Bells Line of Road. He too did not hide the involvement of Aboriginal people, though his account is ambiguous about their role. He blamed them for his failure to pass Mount Tomah on his first attempt, and he never mentioned their names (Bell 1823; Macqueen 2015, p.1, 2022); In 1904 Samuel Boughton, with the nom-de-plume Cooramill, related that it was an Aboriginal woman who indicated to Bell that there was a route across from Kurrajong, having just returned that way herself after being abducted (Cooramill 1904). In 1910 Alfred Smith amplified the story when he wrote that Bell's Aboriginal guides were Cocky and Emery (Farlow 1910, col.2). The sources of Boughton's and Smith's stories are unknown, and they are certainly incorrect in at least some respects. They should be regarded with circumspection.

Aboriginal guides in 1813 ?

According to his 1816 letter to Joseph Banks, written some time in 1810, Gregory Blaxland explored part of the Nepean River, heading upstream towards Camden (Blaxland 1816). With him were three European servants and two Aboriginal people. The journey terminated prematurely because one of his servants was sick, but not before he decided that it would be useless to cross the mountains to the westward by starting from the Cowpastures area. Many others including Wilson, Barrallier, Caley and Warby could have told him that: they had successfully explored all that country, and beyond, before Blaxland arrived in the Colony in 1806. There was a disconnect related to the lost years between King and Macquarie — and perhaps little communication between the upper-class Blaxland and the knowledgeable bushmen of the Colony.

Blaxland mentioned his Cowpastures expedition again in his published 1823 journal of the 1813 expedition, but in doing so he thought to mention another matter:

> "The natives proved but of little use; which determined me not to take them again on my more distant expedition. Very little information can be obtained from any tribe out of their own district, which is seldom more than about thirty miles square." (Blaxland 1823a, p.7).

As pointed out by Lavelle, by that stage Blaxland had been in the business of

> "reworking the sequence of events to construct his own narrative …" (Lavelle 2013, p.33).

Is it possible that the above statement was a fabrication, made to cover up some actual participation by Aboriginal people in 1813 ?

Nowhere in the records of the time is there the slightest hint that non-Europeans were involved in 1813. Blaxland's and Wentworth's journals indicate that the three explorers were accompanied by "four servants" (Blaxland 1823a, p.11; Wentworth 1813, p.1). Lawson's journal states that the companions were "four men" (Lawson 1813, p.1). The first sentence of Wentworth's journal clearly indicates that the four remained with the expedition for its entirety:

> "On the Eleventh of May our party consisting of Mr. Gregory Blaxland, Lieutenant Lawson and myself with four servants quitted Mr. Gregory Blaxlands farm on the South Creek and on the 29th of the same Month, descended from the Mountain into the forest …" (Wentworth 1813, p.1).

The identity of two of the four is known, and they certainly weren't Aboriginal. It is very unlikely that either of the other two were Aboriginal. In early accounts Aboriginal participants were generally referred to as "natives", being separate from the "men" (who in turn were separate from "gentlemen").

While it is conceivable that Blaxland's and Wentworth's accounts, being written after the event, might have omitted other participants, Lawson's account was evidently written along the way, without later embellishment. It may be considered the most trustworthy and factual. For instance, he made no claim in his journal to have crossed all the mountains. He recognised that the river near their terminus (Coxs River) flowed to the "Western River" (Warragamba River), and stated his view that if one travelled further along the "Ridge of Mountains" which they had come on, it

> "will lead some distance into the Interior of the Country" (Lawson 1813, p.23).

Given the experiences of pre-1813 explorers, there was some basis in Blaxland's expressed view concerning the value of Aboriginal people as guides. Gogy and Badbury's roles in Barrallier's and Caley's expeditions were exceptions, but Blaxland was probably not aware of them. Perhaps Blaxland was simply too aloof to tolerate Aboriginal companions in a friendly and constructive way. He was in a different social class to Caley and Barrallier.

According to Blaxland, during the 1813 expedition there was close encounter with a local Aboriginal person near Katoomba and possibly another near Bullaburra. In the Hartley valley a "camp of natives moved before them" (Blaxland 1823a, p.32). Wentworth described a near encounter "[t]owards the latter end of our track on this range" which may in fact have been the Katoomba encounter mentioned by Blaxland (Wentworth 1813, p.12). Had the explorers taken Aboriginal companions with them as potential intermediaries, these close encounters may have turned into constructive meetings. There would certainly have been some sort of reaction from those Aboriginal companions, ranging from attempted communication to an expression of fear, and this would surely have been reflected in the explorers' accounts.

If the three explorers took an Aboriginal guide with them it must have been a very closely guarded secret, verging on conspiracy. Even supposing there was such a secret, it is unlikely that an Aboriginal person could or would have guided them along the route actually taken: that matter will be mentioned later in this paper.

James Byrnes and the kangaroo hunter

If the Byrnes expedition had a guide at all, he or she must have been European. Could it have been one of the four accompanying men ?

Nothing is known of two of those four except, as already indicated, they were almost certainly not Aboriginal. The third was Samuel Fairs, a "sober, honest and industrious" convict servant of Wentworth (Wentworth 1817). The fourth was James Byrnes (Byrne, Burns or Burne), who received £10

> "in remuneration for his services as a guide to the Party who lately crossed the Western Mountains" (Police Fund 1813).

Byrnes accompanied Surveyor-General George Evans as a guide on his expedition following in the first party's footsteps, and far beyond (Evans 1814, p.29).

In the foreword to his 1823 journal, addressed to his friend John Oxley Parker, Blaxland wrote:

> "On inquiry, I found a person who had been accustomed to hunt the kangaroo on the mountains, in the direction I wished to go; who undertook to take the horses to the top of the first ridge." (Blaxland 1823b).

Who was this kangaroo hunter ? Was it James Byrnes, or someone else ? What was the "first ridge" ? Did the hunter only guide them up that first ridge ? In attempting to answer such questions, the following are pertinent:

1) Of the party's progress at "the foot of the first ridge" (Emu Plains), on 11 May 1813, Blaxland wrote that

> "Thus far they were accompanied by two other gentlemen." (Blaxland 1823a, p.12).

This seems to imply that the gentlemen concerned then left the party. There can be no certainty of that, but there is no further mention of these "gentlemen".

2) Apart from the encountered scrub, the party had a remarkably easy time navigating the "very crooked and intricate" ridge from Glenbrook to Springwood, which

they reached on 13 May (Blaxland 1823a, p.13).

3) On the way to Springwood they did not mark their track (Blaxland 1823a, p.38).

4) At Springwood, in the grassy forest on the fertile Wianamatta shales, they came across "native huts" and a track blazed by Europeans (Blaxland 1823a, p.14). It is likely that the track referred to came from the Castlereagh area via Hawkesbury Ridge, but wherever it came from it is clear that the Springwood area was already known to Europeans.

5) It was beyond Springwood that the explorers were first uncertain of the way forward, taking the correct ridgeline up through Faulconbridge only after some false probes. For much of the way they were obliged to cut a track for the horses, and they blazed their route as they went (Blaxland 1823a, pp.15-16). At Kings Tableland they strayed from the main ridge and only corrected themselves when they found they could not descend to the west from there (Blaxland 1823a, pp.26-27; Lawson 1813, p.14).

6) On the return journey, their course from Springwood back to the Nepean.

> "was the most unpleasant and fatiguing they had experienced. The track not being marked, they had great difficulty in finding their way back to the river, which they did not reach till four o'clock." (Blaxland 1823a, p.39).

7) Aside from Blaxland's reference to the kangaroo hunter, there is no mention or hint in the records that the party was guided.

From the above evidence it may be concluded that the party was confidently guided to Springwood, but no further. The guide left the party at Springwood, possibly never having been further than that himself. This accounts for the fact that the explorers only started to mark their own track after Springwood. It also accounts for their route-finding difficulties further on, and their difficulty finding their way back from Springwood three weeks later.

On the way to Springwood, the guide may have moved too quickly for the party to blaze the way as they went; or they fully expected the guide would still be with them on the return but he instead left them after reaching Springwood; or they underestimated the difficulty of retracing their steps along the winding, branching ridgetop.

The obvious candidate for guiding the party to Springwood — but evidently no further — would be Blaxland's "kangaroo hunter". He was almost certainly not Aboriginal (in view of Blaxland's views on the matter) and, if he was one of the "gentlemen" mentioned at Emu Plains, he may have had a companion.

A potential problem with this analysis is that Blaxland suggested that the hunter only took the horses "to the top of the first ridge". We might imagine that the "first ridge" would be the crest of the Lapstone Structural Complex, crossed between Lapstone and Glenbrook, and this seems to be confirmed by Lawson's journal, which states that they "ascended the First Ridge of Hills" and then

> "fell in with a Leggoon full of Large Rushes [Glenbrook Lagoon]" (Lawson 1813, p.2).

Springwood is a lot further along the way than Glenbrook.

A possible explanation is that Blaxland, in raising the matter in 1823, wished to play down the role of any guide in the expedition. His tale was perhaps growing in the telling.

In Blaxland's account of 19 May, however, we find that the party "now began to ascend the second ridge of the mountains" when proceeding from Linden to Hazelbrook (Blaxland 1823a, p.20). Three days later the climb up Boddington Hill to Kings Tableland is referred to as "the third and highest ridge" (Blaxland 1823a, p.24). The implication is that he regarded the whole ridgeline up through Springwood to Linden as the "first" ridge. If that is the case, then Blaxland's indication that the hunter took them as far as the first ridge is not inconsistent with him having gone as far as Springwood.

It is unlikely that James Byrnes was this kangaroo hunter. A £10 reward would be generous for taking the party only to Springwood

and then abandoning it. Moreover, when Byrnes was guiding George Evans on his first day in the mountains, Evans complained that Byrnes had "several times mistaken his former track" (Evans 1814, p.165). The original party had been guided over the same ground with apparent ease, which would suggest a different guide was involved. Once past Springwood, when guiding Evans, Byrnes was able to rely on the original party's blazes.

Why then, was Byrnes referred to as a guide to the Blaxland expedition when rewarded later that year ? The answer is presumably that he served as a guide in the sense of being an experienced and competent bushman, with an ability to interpret the landscape before him, rather than someone who led the way because he had been there before.

An Aboriginal track ?

Considering the trouble that George Caley had following ridges and "midfitters" (saddles) on the way to Mount Banks, despite his knowing that they would offer the best path, it might be asked how the three explorers managed to find their way along the ridge from Glenbrook to Mount York, with its many branching ridges and spurs, without a proper guide. It is sometimes suggested that there would have been an Aboriginal track to follow, given that it was, as suggested by Proudfoot (1992, p.67), "a logical, fairly even route".

The fact that the explorers had to cut a pass through "extreem (*sic*) thick scrub" (Lawson 1813, p.3) and "thick brush" (Lawson 1813, p.4) for the horses possibly does not of itself rule out the presence of a physical track. Horses with saddlebags are much wider than an unburdened human. However, no track is mentioned in the accounts except where Blaxland referred to the blazed one at Springwood and the "small broken rugged track in the centre" of an otherwise vertical cliff which they had to ascend at Linden. Here the word "track" is probably meant in the sense of a negotiable route rather than a made or worn path, for they had to remove "some large stones" in order to use it. Lawson, for his part, did not refer to a track at this point, but a "very narrow pass" (Blaxland 1823a, p.19-20, Lawson 1813, p.8).

Moreover, the explorers clearly spent a lot of time route-finding. The relatively short distances covered each day probably hid a great number of short exploratory probes searching for the correct line. As already mentioned, the party was certainly confused by branching spurs beyond Springwood, and also went temporarily astray at Kings Tableland.

There has been a long-standing notion that the explorers' route — more or less today's highway as far as Mount Victoria — was also the highway for Aboriginal people. This may have arisen from the culturally ignorant perspective that if the explorers could only find one good crossing route, then that must have been the prime traditional Aboriginal route too. The notion was reinforced by the apparent concentration of Aboriginal sites along or near the route.

Archaeological investigations in recent decades have presented a different view. Sites can be found virtually everywhere in the mountains. Between 1993 and 2009 for instance, the number of recorded rock art sites in the Greater Blue Mountains increased five-fold (Kelleher 2009, p.73). The people clearly had a vast and complex network of routes for movement. Almost every ridge and spur provided a pathway. The valleys also provided pathways: even where bounded by sheer cliffs, there was always a way in and out of them. The location of many sites shows conclusively that parts of rivers like the Grose and the Colo, thought by colonists to be hopelessly rugged, were highways to First Nations people.

Historian Jim Smith has written that

> "[T]he daily, weekly and seasonal journeys of the Gundungurra would have involved a combination of ridge and river routes selected to optimise time and access to resources" (Smith 2009, p.140).

Many such routes would have made little sense to European explorers bent on finding a way across the mountains. Moreover, significant Aboriginal routes were defined not by physical tracks, but by ritual and song, by memory, and by natural landmarks and cultural sites. Unless a party had very recently passed ahead, such routes would be indecipherable to non-Aboriginal people.

While people certainly lived at, or visited, sites on the sandstone ridge that Blaxland and friends traversed, the frequency and purpose of visits and the number of people involved is largely unknown. In 1896 Gundungurra man Billy Lynch stated that

> "There never were a very large number of aboriginals on the mountains" (Smith 2017, p.119).

Jim Smith interprets "on the mountains" to mean the sandstone plateau which Blaxland and friends crossed.

Archaeologist Val Attenbrow pointed out that the early observations of Aboriginal people on the mountains

> "are too few to form a basis for any seasonal patterning in land use or mobility" (Attenbrow 2009. p. 110).

While tracks may have formed here and there,

> "there is no evidence to indicate that defined 'well-worn' paths going from the Cumberland Plain to the western slopes existed along either [Blaxland's route or Bell's route]" (Attenbrow 2009. p.115).

While trade certainly occurred between the coast and the inland, Attenbrow believes that trade was more often conducted via networks than by long-distance travel (Attenbrow 2009, p.114). To trade directly from the coast to the inland (or vice versa) would have involved encounters with multiple language groups, raising complications of a cultural nature.

It is perhaps relevant that the only well-documented Aboriginal story concerning a journey in the Blue Mountains area, the Gundungurra story of Gurangatch and Mirragan, follows an extremely circuitous path across Gundungurra country, far removed from what modern travellers would describe as an efficient route from A to B (Smith 1992, pp.7-10).

Added to the above is the probability that Blaxland's "logical, fairly even route" was *not* a logical one for Aboriginal people who may have crossed the mountains. Most of today's inland-bound travellers along the Great Western Highway are unaware that the ridge takes a decided northward turn just past Katoomba, in the vicinity of Pulpit Hill and the former Marked Tree.

[In fact, for a short distance before Blackheath it trends east of north.]

If, instead of taking the main ridge, one turns off along Pulpit Hill Road and continues the generally westward trajectory that prevailed prior to reaching Katoomba, one finds oneself on Radiata Plateau — now partly Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park.

The Coxs River region, including such areas as the Kanimbla, Megalong, Kedumba and Burragorang Valleys, lies to the immediate west and south of the sandstone plateau. It was prime living country for the Gundungurra people, and they used many routes to negotiate the escarpment between that country and the plateau. One of these routes is the Blacks Ladder pass at Radiata Plateau (Figure 1), which appeared on a European map as early as 1832 (Smith 2009, p.141; Fox et al. 2018, p.93.). Before there were roads, it would have provided foot travellers with a most efficient means of crossing the sandstone plateau and reaching the relatively resource-rich Megalong and Coxs valleys. Unless they wanted particularly to reach the Hartley area, further up the Coxs River valley, there would have been little point in persisting with a ridgetop march of over twenty kilometres to Mount York.

[As an aside, while the Marked Tree may or may not have been blazed by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, the fact that its location is at the turnoff to that route may be significant. Could it be that it was originally blazed with the initials "BL" for "Blacks Ladder" ?]

All this, incidentally, raises another argument against the notion that the explorers had an Aboriginal guide: it is very unlikely that any available guide would have been familiar with the "logical, fairly even route" taken by the 1813 party.

In short, traditional movement on the sandstone plateau of the Blue Mountains probably had more to do with occupation or visitation of sites, for various purposes, than with simply travelling head-down along the "logical, fairly even route" from Emu Plains to Hartley in the manner of every inland-bound person since 1813. It was their country, in the most meaningful sense, not a no-man's land to be crossed with maximum expediency. They were not fixated on getting to Hartley or Lithgow or Bathurst, or extensive

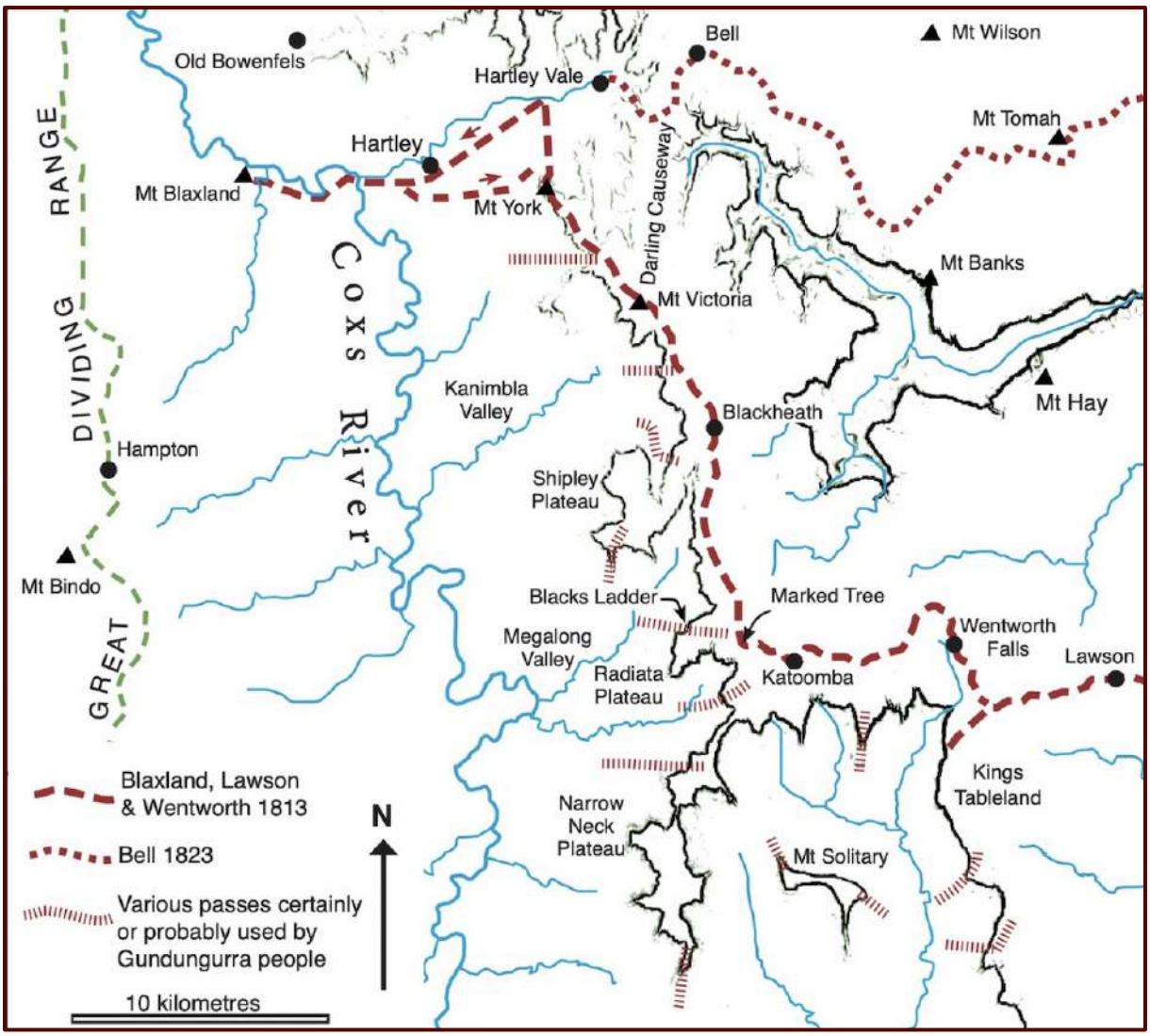

Figure 1. Aboriginal and European routes on the upper Blue Mountains.
[This map of the western portion of the Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth route illustrates the significance of the sandstone escarpment in the explorer's route choice, and the availability of traditional routes through that escarpment.]

potential cattle-grazing country: they had multiple possible destinations depending on the reasons for their travel.

The "logical, fairly even route" made sense for horses and carts. On the whole it also makes sense for today's railway and roads. However, it was not necessarily logical for Aboriginal people. If they did wish to make a convenient crossing of the plateau starting from Emu Plains, they probably would not have taken the northward leg from Katoomba to Mount York, but instead headed into the Megalong or Kanimbla Valleys by one of several available passes down through the escarpment. They might not even have taken the famous ridge route to reach Katoomba. The Bunburang Trail, a cultural walk established in 2013 by the Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association to celebrate crossings of the mountains, follows traditional routes from Katoomba to the Nepean near Emu Plains without once taking to the main ridge (Jackson 2013). An equivalent experience could no doubt be devised in Dharug country to the north of the ridge, or indeed further north in Darkinjung and Wiradjuri country.

How did they find their way then ?

Aside from the need for track-cutting and some false leads, Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth seemingly made straightforward progress to Mount York. This is largely because they had a clear overall strategy. Blax-

land wrote that they were trying to follow a route

> "on what they considered as the main ridge of the mountain, between the Western River and the River Grose; keeping the heads of the gulleys, which were supposed to empty themselves into the Western River on their left hand, and into the River Grose on the right." (Blaxland 1823a, p.16).

Similarly, Lawson wrote that they were trying to keep

> "on what we judged the main Ridge between the Groce [*sic*] and Western River." (Lawson 1813, p.4).

The Western River, in their minds, was the Warragamba River, which was (correctly) presumed to drain the land to the west, even though the course of the relevant major tributary, Coxs River, was not properly understood. The Warragamba River itself had been "discovered" by George Evans in 1804, and revisited by him in 1810 in the company of Governor Macquarie and others, but on both occasions they were unable to penetrate far through the gorge because they were travelling by boat. It was an Aboriginal companion on the 1810 trip who told them of the name of the river, and it is possible that he indicated that it drained from the west (Anonymous 1804; Macquarie 1810, 29 Nov 1810).

Barrallier and Caley had been to the Wollondilly and Kowmung Rivers, which also fed the Warragamba River, but it was presumed that the Kowmung flowed straight into the Wollondilly or Warragamba. The course of Coxs River was quite unknown to them.

In Caley's mind the Western River was the one he himself had seen entering the Nepean downstream from the Warragamba River: Erskine Creek (Macqueen 2013, p.9). Be that as it may, the 1813 party's strategy may well have derived directly or indirectly from Caley's idea. In 1804 he sat on Mount Banks and mused that the ridge on the far side of the Grose Gorge — the ridge that Blaxland and friends followed some nine years later — "might be easily travelled over". Ironically, he could have taken a north-west route from Mount Banks and reached the Hartley Valley with less effort than was required of Blaxland to get there "easily" from Katoomba. However, he was worried about running out of rations, and the hardships he had endured in getting to Mount Banks made him wary of encountering more "Ha Ha!"s (unexpected canyons and ravines) (Caley 1804, p.81 in Andrews 1984).

There is evidence that Caley met Lawson in the period 1810 to 1812 and

> "frequently discussed with him the practicability of a mountain pass ..." (X.Y.Z. 1827, col.2; Webb 1995, p.75).

Caley would have talked about the ridge he had seen — today's "Blue Mountains Range" — and his notion of the river on the far side of it. His own idea by that stage appears to have been that success would be found by following his Western River (Erskine Creek) rather than the ridge, but his advice would have helped the three explorers get the general picture — even if, as Ross Brownscombe has pointed out, they must have ignored his view that horses were a hindrance and should not be taken (Macqueen 2013, p.10; Brownscombe, 2004 p.223). Since they had the possible development of the inland in mind, the newcomers perhaps considered that there was no point in finding a crossing route if it could not be negotiated by horses and cattle.

Irrespective of whether it was Blaxland or Lawson who decided on their strategy, and how the idea originated, the fact remains that it was a sound strategy for their purpose. It is a thing more easily said than done, however. It is one thing to trace a ridge on a map, but another to manage it on the ground with no map, in the face of a multiplicity of twists and turns, saddles and branches, and with views obscured by forest and scrub. Traditional Blue Mountains bushwalkers — those not armed with GPS devices — will attest to the fact that it can be hard enough even with map and compass.

The question arises as to how they were successful while Caley's effort on the Bell Range was not, given that Caley knew full well, and stated as much, that it was best to follow the ridges. The answer lies in the terrain itself. The Blue Mountains Range is less contorted and obstructed by high hills and deep saddles than the Bell Range, as Caley

had indeed surmised when he observed that it "might be easily travelled over". After the three explorers left Kings Tableland and had made their way westward to Katoomba they were essentially aided by a "handrail" in the form of the sheer escarpment on their left side, albeit interrupted by the branching peninsular of Narrow Neck and by Radiata and Shipley Plateaus. In contrast, the portions of the Bell Range that would have made Caley's journey to Mount Banks much easier had no such obvious handrail.

The fact that the 1813 explorers swung north to Blackheath after passing Katoomba is a matter of particular interest, though it has not attracted attention in past analyses of the expedition. As already mentioned, that northward turn was made at Pulpit Hill, just above the site of the former Marked Tree. The forest on that hill probably prevented any worthwhile view, and there is no mention of a view in the early records. When Major Antill visited the hill with Governor Macquarie in 1815, he recorded that Macquarie named it after the large rock resembling a pulpit on its summit, but he made no reference to a view despite doing so at earlier and later stages of their journey (Antill 1815, p.78.).
Consequently, on surmounting Pulpit Hill it would not have been clear to the explorers which way their main ridge went. Their first inclination must surely have been to investigate whether it continued westward. Most likely they ventured onto Radiata Plateau far enough — perhaps two kilometres — to have a view to the west (Figure 2). Alternatively, they may have gone out along the north-west trending spur now defined by Saywell Road. Either way, they would have perceived that their Western (Coxs) River now had a north-south course and that the branch of the ridge which lay to their west (Radiata Plateau and its various spurs) would soon terminate. Beyond the Coxs River valley they would have seen a range (the Great Dividing Range) that was even more elevated than the ridge they were on. They presumably decided that their best hope, if the ridge allowed it, was to proceed northwards to circumvent the valley.

While the journals do not mention such a reconnaissance on Radiata Plateau, they certainly had time to undertake it. According to Lawson's journal, on 25 May, after making camp apparently in the headwaters of Cascade Creek at 2pm, they "proceeded on to Examine and mark our Road" until 5pm (Lawson 1813, p.17). They would not have penetrated far enough to find the Blacks Ladder Gundungurra route, and even if they had it would have been totally impassable to their horses. According to Blaxland's journal, it

Photo: A. Macqueen (2021)

Figure 2. The westward view from above Blacks Ladder, Radiata Plateau.
[The open farmlands of the Megalong and Coxs Valleys can be seen in the medium distance. It was all good living country for the Gundungurra. The horizon is mostly the Great Dividing Range. The high ground on the left of the photo is another part of Radiata Plateau, while the high ground on the right is Hargraves Lookout, an extremity of Shipley Plateau. The high point in the centre of the horizon is Mount Bindo, southwest of Hampton.]

was the next day that the land to the westward appeared "sandy and barren", and they saw "the fires of some natives below" (Blaxland 1823a, pp.30). By then they were somewhere near Medlow Bath, but looking into much the same landscape they would have viewed from Radiata Plateau the previous afternoon.

Blaxland's remark is curious, for the land he was viewing does not, and never would have, looked sandy and barren. More likely it was the formidable appearance of the landscape that was so off-putting. It was far removed from the extensive plain which the explorers were anticipating, and the land in the distance appeared even more elevated than the plateau on which they stood — and indeed it was.

Heading northwards, they had the escarpment as a handrail as they passed Medlow Bath and went on to Blackheath and Mount Victoria. En route they possibly investigated the turnoff to Shipley Plateau but would quickly have discovered that it had a southwesterly trajectory and realised that it would only lead them to the terminating ridge which they would have seen from Radiata Plateau.

It was at Mount Victoria that they finally departed from their strategy of following the ridge between their Western (Coxs) River and the Grose, perhaps unknowingly at first. That strategy would have seen them continuing northward along Darling Causeway to Bell, and perhaps that is what Lawson had in mind when (as we have seen) he reflected in his journal that if one travelled further along the "Ridge of Mountains" which they had come on, it

> "will lead some distance into the Interiour (*sic*) of the Country" (Lawson 1813, p.23).

From Bell, leaving the Grose behind, they might in theory have followed the watershed between the Coxs and Colo River catchments and ended up beyond Lithgow.

Instead, they kept handrailing the escarpment on their left until their ridge ended abruptly at Mount York. After making their descent they proceeded westward to Mount Blaxland, by the far bank of Coxs River. As already noted, Lawson acknowledged that they were still in the drainage of the Western (Coxs) River.

Much has been written about the exaggerated nature of the descriptions that Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth gave of the landscape they encountered at that stage, but they must surely have been disappointed that, having crossed the inhospitable sandstone plateau, they had not encountered an endless vista of grazing land. That privilege was reserved for Surveyor George Evans.

Conclusion

Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth found their way across the sandstone plateau of the Blue Mountains thanks to a practical strategy that happened to involve topography which, in part, provided them with clear guidance free of major obstacles. Almost certainly they had no guide beyond Springwood, and there was no obvious physical Aboriginal path to follow.

Had they taken Aboriginal companions they may have benefitted from their ability to interpret the landscape and communicate with people along the way, but such companions may also have been a hindrance arising from fear of going beyond their own country and a poor understanding of the explorers' mission.

While the route taken by the explorers is a logical one in terms of horses and wheeled vehicles, it cannot be presumed that it constituted a well-used traditional route. First Nations people used many pathways in the mountains consistent with their complex patterns of occupation and cultural practices.

There is increasing acceptance of the perspective that sees the explorers not as heroes but as invaders. It is ironic that the unsupportable claim that they had an Aboriginal guide perhaps arises from that acceptance: from a desire to see the Europeans as incompetents who needed to be shown the way. Along the road to reconciliation and truth-telling, new myths are unfortunately thus raised.

Irrespective of how one views the motives behind the expedition, and its outcomes, the substantial achievement of the party in navigating the ridge deserves acknowledgment.

It is not necessary to ignore the facts of the expedition to accept that it amounted to one of invasion and eventual dispossession of First Nations people west of the Mountains.

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Footsteps on Narrow Neck

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Abstract
Narrow Neck is located within the Blue Mountains National Park and is primarily accessed via Katoomba. An unsealed road, Glenraphael Drive (Anonymous 1964) extends from Cliff Drive along the spine of Narrow Neck to the southern end; it is very popular with bike riders and bushwalkers.

Most of the locality names along Narrow Neck (35 of them; Appendix 1) have been attributed to bushwalkers from late 1910 to the present day. This paper concerns the history of the surveying and mapping of Narrow Neck, European influence and the geographical features first named by Europeans.

Key Words: Blue Mountains, Narrow Neck, Aboriginal, maps, surveyors.

INTRODUCTION

Narrow Neck is part of the Blue Mountains Range escarpment that extends generally south from Narrow Neck Lookout, Cliff Drive, Katoomba to Medlow Gap, the northern end of the Wild Dog Mountains. This narrow, sinuous cliff lined peninsula divides the Megalong, Jamison and Cedar Valleys. The Katoomba and Jamison 1:25,000 topographical maps (8930-1S & 8930-2N) show the locality of Narrow Neck (MGA 491 648 to 471 556) and some of the passes.

Narrow Neck is a descriptive name for this land area, which has two constrictions along its length, often referred to as First (Figure 1) and Second Narrow Necks. The peninsula is about 12 kilometres in length and varies in width from 60 metres to 2 kilometres. There are 10 recognised passes, or 'ways of route' off Narrow Neck (Keats & Fox 2008), discovered and used by surveyors, prospectors and miners and later by bushwalkers.

History of Mapping and Naming

Before Narrow Neck was explored it was deemed to be just a very unusual extension of the Blue Mountain plateau that could be seen rising above the valleys and has dramatic cliff lines on all sides. As it was not on the western route to the greener pastures of Bathurst it was just added as an adjunct to the periphery of the first maps of the main Blue Mountain Range. Thus a small section of Narrow Neck is denoted by dash lines on a Blue Mountains map dated 28 January 1832, and drawn at a Scale 2 miles to 1 inch (Butler & Davidson 1832).
[Notation on the map reads; Compiled from original plans by Govett, Dixon, Darcy *(sic)* and drawn by H.C. Butler. (Assistant Surveyor Henry Cavendish Butler) commenced from 1829.]

Surveyor General, Sir Thomas Mitchell appointed a number of his assistant surveyors to map the surrounding areas of the upper Blue Mountains, including, William Romaine Govett (Figure 2), Robert Dixon, Francis Rusden, Henry Butler, Frederick D'Arcy and Granville Stapylton. This initiative was to complete Mitchells 1834 Map of the Nineteen Counties (Mitchell 1834). One of the missing links in initial versions of Mitchells' Map of the Colony was the territory from the Mountain Road (Great Western Highway) in a southerly direction from the vicinity of what is now Katoomba to the Coxs River. Mitchell assigned the task of surveying that area to Assistant Surveyor William Romaine Govett and in one of his last written reports to Surveyor General Mitchell, Govett wrote.

> *"25 November 1833. Camp Mt Clarence*
>
> *I have the honor to inform you that I have returned to Mt Clarence having surveyed certain portions of the county pointed out to me in your instructions dated Aug^{t} 19th 1833 –*

Photo: Brian Fox collection

Figure 1. Land & Property Information aerial view of Narrow Neck showing the First Narrow Neck. [North is at the top of the image.]

1st the continuation of my former survey of Ranges & Creeks South of the Mountain Road to the great bend of the Cox, as denoted in your sketch by the letter - C

2ndly the Kowmung River upwards from its junction with the Cox for about twenty miles - and also a portion of the Konanguroo Creek a branch of w^{h} runs Westerly round the 'Highest land' as marked in your sketch called by the Blacks (if the word can be written as they pronounced it) Kuo-uo-gang.

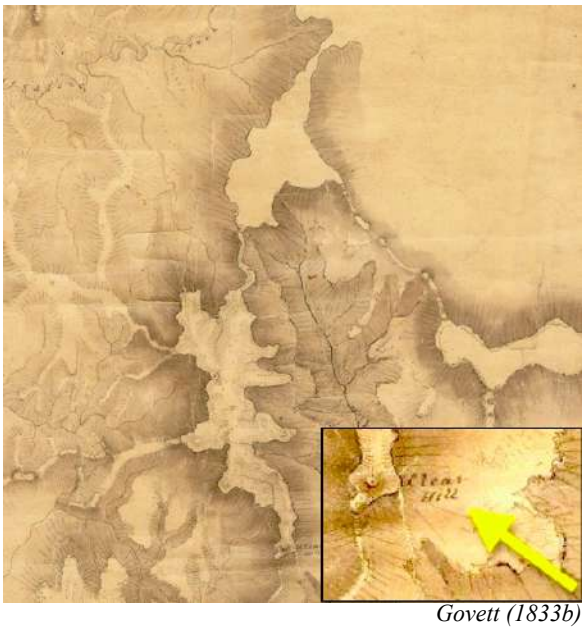
The travelling however in the bed of these Creeks I found much worse than the bed of the Cox - which River is in some places rendered tolerable by wide flat stones.

Frontispiece of Govett (1977)

Figure 2. William Romaine Govett (1807-1848).

> *The Native name of the three conical Hills; intersected from Jellore, w^h^ also you requested me to get, is "Mouin" but they were not named separately - I heard part of the country, where the Cascade Ck from the Weatherboard Inn joins the Cox, is called Godoomba, "the isolated mountain" Munmie, and the One Tree Hill Gundingbla.*
>
> *I have to request that you will send me by return of messenger two sheets of drawing paper, and also a plan of the bed of Cox's River from "Cedar Ck" upwards to the termination of a Range traced by Mr Rusden & myself immediately South from Black Heath on the mountain Road, where the River makes a particular narrow bend –*
>
> *I have the honor to be Sir Your Obedient Servant William Romaine Govett."* (Govett 1833a).

The first section surveyed by Govett (Figure 3) and his survey party was a north south traverse of Narrow Neck and in doing so it is highly likely that they were the first Europeans to make that journey. Close to the southern terminus of Narrow Neck is the first



Govett (1833b)

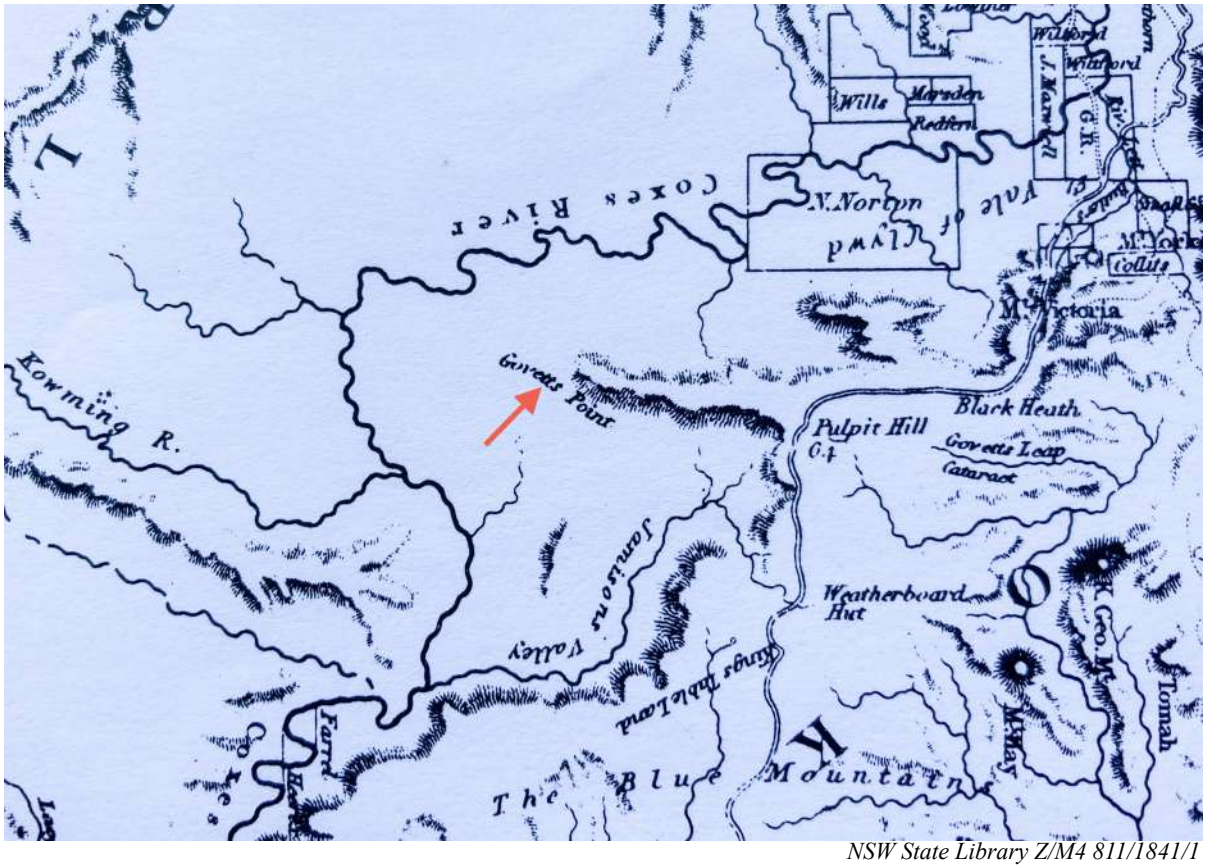
Figure 3. A section of Govetts surveyed map showing the full extent of Narrow Neck, with his text, Clear Hill on the southern extremity.

feature on the peninsula that Govett recorded, the small rise which Govett named Clear Hill (Figure 4). It is from there that there is a 360-degree clear view to the back waters of what is now Lake Burragorang.

Photo: Brian Fox

Figure 4. This is the same perspective that Govett would have first seen of Clear Hill as he walked south along Narrow Neck. Apart from the present road the view would have been much the same in 1833.

On his map, Robert Dixon (1837) labelled the southern end of Narrow Neck with the name Govetts Point (Figure 5) to acknowledge the surveyor rather than preserve the simple 'Clear Hill' that Govett had allocated and which subsequently became the established name.



NSW State Library Z/M4 811/1841/1

Figure 5. A section of Assistant Surveyor Robert Dixon's1837 map, showing his text, Govetts Point.

The gist of Govett's 1833 report to Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell suggests that Govett interacted with the local Aboriginal people in the area. So, it is highly likely that Govett followed, or was shown, an Aboriginal pathway along Narrow Neck, and on return to his English homeland Govett published his observations of the Australian Aboriginal people (Govett 1977) .
[*Mouin* now known as Mount Mouin is part of the Wild Dog Mountains and *Godoomba,* is the first reference to the name Katoomba. Both names recorded by Govett.]

During bushwalks along Narrow Neck evidence has been found of water wells, significant grinding grooves (Figure 6) and artifacts (Figure 7) (pers. comm. M. Keats).

The protruding headland south of the Second Narrow Neck overlooking the Megalong Valley is Black Billy Head. It is not known exactly when or who named the headland after William (Billy) Lynch (c.1840-1913) (Figure 8), the Aboriginal leader who had lived in Megalong Valley who used this headland as one of his walking access points between Katoomba and Coxs River (Dunphy 1919).

After Govett it was not for another 30 years before Narrow Neck was again walked by Europeans, this time for the pursuit of mineral wealth. With an Aboriginal guide, Billy Lynch (Anonymous 1896), Campbell Mitchell (Figure 9) (son of Surveyor General Sir Thomas Mitchell) had found outcrops of kerosene shale in the area below the Second Narrow Neck, within the vicinity of Mitchells Creek, so named in c.1888 (Harris 1890). Mitchell and his business partner George King applied for a mineral lease in 1866, a 329 acre area which was surveyed by his close friend, Licensed Surveyor Francis George Finley (Figure 10) on 22 December 1866 (Finley 1866).

Of that survey Finley (1916) wrote,

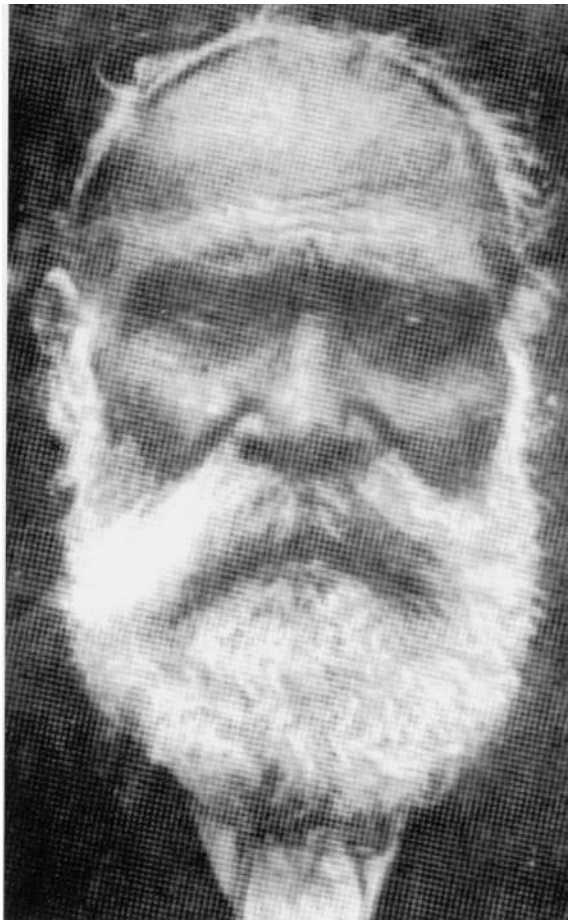
> *"It was at Hartley that I made or secured the friendship of two very staunch and enduring friends – Messrs Campbell Mitchell (son of Sir Thomas Mitchell, the*

Photo: John Fox

Figure 6. At least six grinding grooves were noticed in this one water hole. This is clear evidence that Narrow Neck had been frequently used by our First Australians.

Photo: Brian Fox

Figure 7. Aboriginal artifacts within a large overhang, this is just three of dozens noticed.(Location withheld.)



p,54 in Keats & Fox (2008)

Figure 8. William (Billy) Lynch (c.1839-1913) who helped guide Campbell Mitchell.

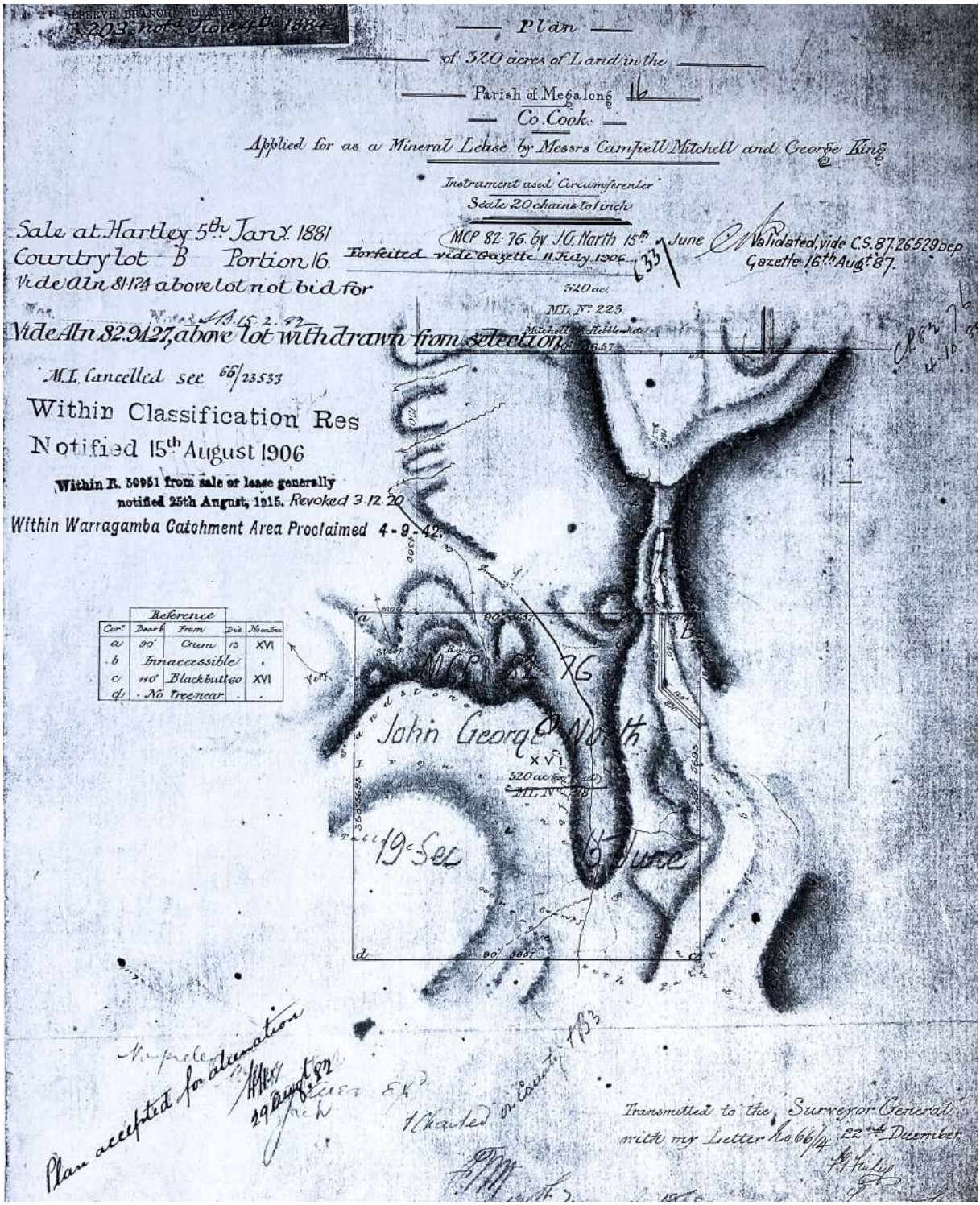
Keats & Fox (2008, p,82); Pells & Hammon (2009, p.21)

Figure 9. Campbell Mitchell (1831-1883)

first Surveyor General) and Mr. Jack." (Finley could not recall Jack's last name) On Finley's survey plan dated December 1866 (Figure 11), we have one of the first descriptions of the geology and vegetation of Narrow Neck.

"Very steep rocky spurs…sandstone cliff" …the top of Narrow Neck recorded as, *"covered with patches of scrub"* (and the headwaters of Mitchells Creek as,) *"swampy"* (Finley 1866).

It was not until the 1880s that this narrow projecting land acquired the name 'The Neck

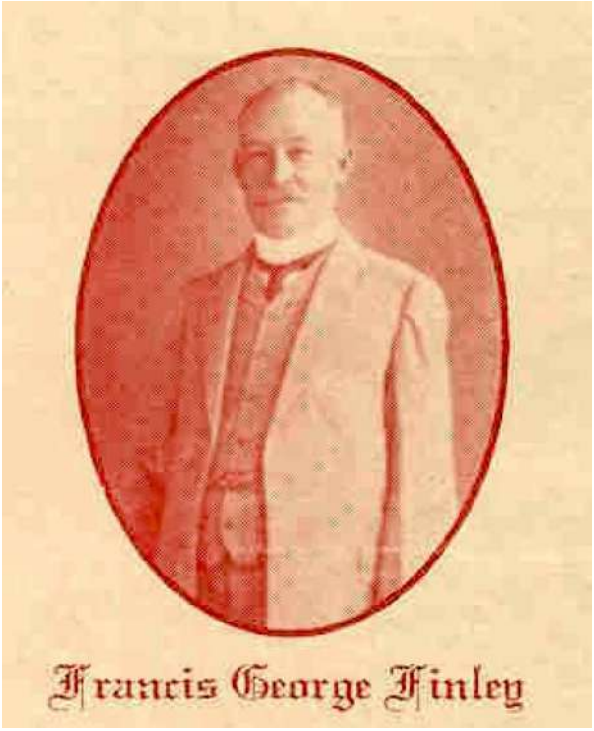


NSW State Records, Kingswood

Figure 11. Surveyor Finley's 1866 Survey Plan C324.1507, as applied for by Campbell Mitchell and George King,

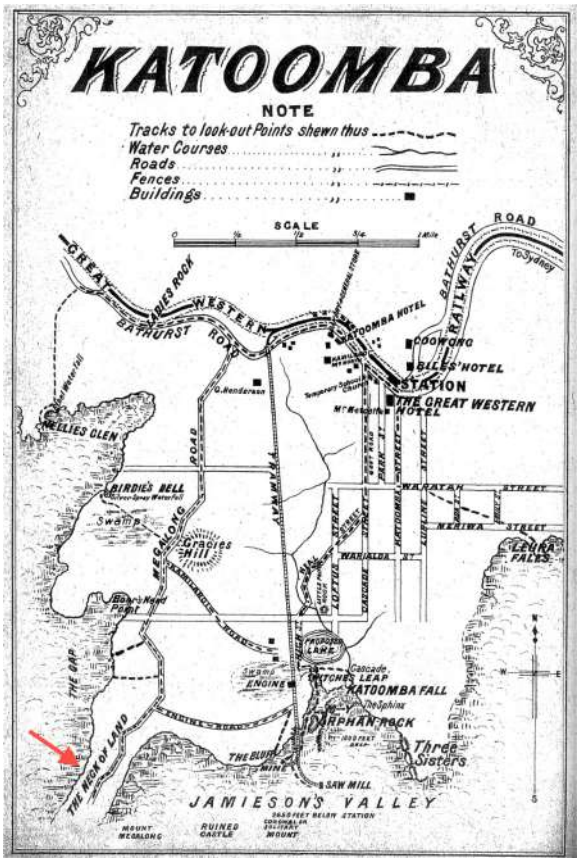
of Land', which was printed on a map drawn by John Edmund Miller Russell (Figure 12), a lithographic draftsman with the Lands Department in 1880 (Russell 1882, p.34). But the more explicit name Narrow Neck was first used in 1884 in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* viz.,

> *"to two adits or tunnels for shale on T.S. Mort's selection at the foot of Katoomba Cliffs, 1700 feet above the Cox River, and*



McCloskey & Moore (2006)

Figure 10. Surveyor Francis George Finley (1845-1931)



Russell (1882, p.34)

Figure 12. Russell's Map of Katoomba, drawn 1882 showing his text, The Neck of Land.

known as the "Narrow Neck " (of land).” (Anonymous 1884a).

A month later the author of another article in that newspaper wrote,

> *“At last we succeeded in getting on to the Narrow Neck. The Narrow Neck is a curious strip of land which unites the two ranges* (Blue Mountains and Wild Dog Mountains). *Here we found a narrow track, and followed it up about five miles.”* (Excursionist 1884).

In March 1886, a reserved road 100 links wide (20 metres) was surveyed along Narrow Neck by Peter Vilhelm Tuxen (Figure 13)(Tuxen 1887).

[Although referred to as a road it would not have been not much more than a rough track. And it remained so until the fire trail (or Glenraphael Drive as we know it today) was constructed in 1961 with the collaboration of the Blue Mountains Bushfire Prevention Association and the Blue Mountains City Council (Gibson 1993).]

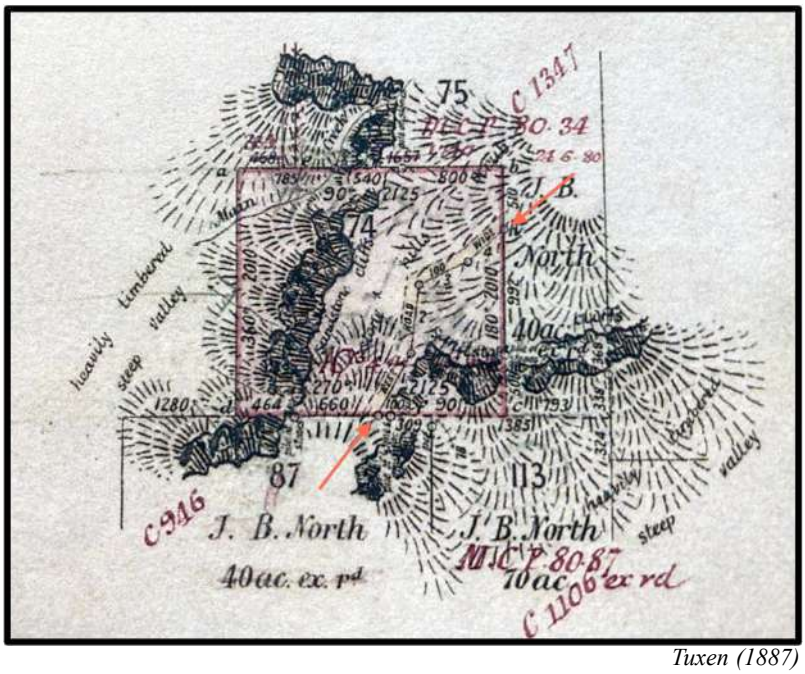
Apart from the name Clear Hill, no other place names were assigned to Narrow Neck until 1886, when Mount Megalong was named (Railways of New South Wales 1886) after the valley in which it over looks. Mount Megalong is the highest point south of the First Narrow Neck, where the present Kure Trig Station was erected in 1979 (Anonymous 1979).

By the late 1880s, Narrow Neck was being promoted as a tourist destination and Harry Peckman advertised it as one of the points of interest to which his Katoomba based coaching service could convey visitors (Anonymous 1888a). He was not the only person to do so as another proclaimed,

> *“daily trips to the Narrow Neck of Land ...”* (Anonymous 1888b).

What appears to have been the first track named on Narrow Neck was Parkers Track.

> *“Mr. Parker has completed the horse track known as “Parker's Track,” leading which will prove of great advantage not only to the workmen employed at the mine, but also to visitors who are anxious to view the beauties of the mountains. This track has opened up some of the grandest scenery ever beheld. Up to this time the views could not be seen, as there was no access to them.”* (Anonymous 1889a).



Tuxen (1887)

Figure 13. Tuxen's 1886 Survey Plan C1348.1507 showing the traverse for a reserved road on Narrow Neck.

This track on the eastern side linked the top of Narrow Neck to below the cliff line to allow easy access to the Ruined Castle mines (Anonymous 1889a). But Parkers Track was a short-lived name as a few years later it was referred to as the Golden Stairs (Figure 14) (Anonymous 1893).

By 1889 Narrow Neck was still a hazardous location to negotiate. A newspaper article described an inspection of the shale mines made by trying to ride a horse along the top of Narrow Neck to Clear Hill and then on foot making the descent to the base of the cliff line:

"*and for this purpose eight or nine rather tame specimens of Pegasus were engaged….At many places it was deemed advisable to dismount and walk over some of the most dangerous parts of the journey….After a two hours' ride the party reached the camp….one half of the party going to the western and the other half to the eastern side of the promontory, where it was arranged they should descend and examine the portions of the mine which are being worked on either side……The journey to the base of the rocks is made by the aid of roughly improvised ladders constructed from the branches of trees"* (Anonymous 1889b).

Photo: Brian Fox

Figure 14. The very well-worn steps of the Golden Stairs.

Of a walk along Narrow Neck in January 1892 Morton Frederic (Fred) Eden described

"very few people going further than the Narrow Neck (First Narrow Neck) *so I had it all to myself…..In places the top was pretty broad forming little landscapes of swamp and wood….Then the top would contract and become quite narrow* (Second Narrow Neck) *so that in one place the path followed along a sharp ridge…..I continued along the faint trail…I continued thus for a couple of miles or more…. Now you are on the open slopes covered with course tussock grass that rose from the edge of the precipice, than you would enter a little wood….a good sized swamp* (Glenraphael Swamp) *surrounded by*

timber and on the edge of it were the remains of an old deserted camp…..I soon found that I was very close to the end…..I had noticed blaze marks on some of the trees leading out here so I climbed on down this point to see whether it was possible to descend by this route and soon discovered that it was, for lower down where it got steep and rough, ladders were fixed and steps cut in the rock. These, although old and decaying, were still practicable with care so I continued down to where a rotten old ladder and rope led over a perpendicular descent of considerable height and here I turned back. I found out later on that the Coal Company at Katoomba had prospectors camped out here and searching for shale and it was they who had made these ladders to descend to the foot of the walls where there was a shale seam." (Barrett 1996, pp.80-81).

Conclusion

A number of Aboriginal occupation sites, water wells, grinding grooves and artifacts have been seen along different sections of Narrow Neck, indicating that the area was well used by our first Australians to traverse to and from the Burragorang and Megalong Valleys.

The lure of mineral wealth in a rugged cliff lined environment would have tested the hardiest of prospectors and miners as was best summed up by the manager of the mine below Clear Hill.

"Captain Symonds, averred that during the whole course of his mining experience he had never made such a rough journey…One cannot help wondering what ever caused man to trace his footsteps to such a place for coal." (Anonymous 1889b).

The surveyors who followed had to abide by the strict square or rectangular shaped surveying procedures specified by English guidelines which made the work all the harder (Anonymous 1866). Even today apart from the constructed road down the spine of the peninsula, walking off track should only be attempted by the experienced bushwalker.

Acknowledgments

I thank Michael Keats for proof reading and as always Peter Rickwood for his perseverance in polishing the article and formatting my references.

Appendix 1. Locality names along Narrow Neck.

[ex Fox, Keats and. Fox (2018)]

B Black Billy Hollow, Bushwalkers Hill
C C.M.W. Head, Camp Cave, Carlon Head, Cedar Head Swamp, Corral Creek, Corral Swamp
D Duncans Pass, Dunphys Pass
F Fools Paradise
G Gibsons Grotto, Glenalan Creek, Glenraphael Creek, Glenraphael Falls, Glenraphael Head, Glenraphael Swamp
H Harmil Ledge, Hell Point, Hogs Back Ridge
K Kangaroo Parade, Killie-bin-bin
L Liams Cave
M Manson Ladders, Mitchells Creek Falls, Mitchells Creek Swamp, Mukku Baluru Bluff
O Oh Hell Point
R Rhubarb Cave, Rhubarb Rock
S Sun in the Eye Sphinx
T Tarros Ladder, The Rice Terrace, The Wallaby Parade
W Walls Pass

N.B. Apostrophes are no longer used by the NSW Geographical Names Board.

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"Mr. Parker has completed the horse track known as "Parker's Track," leading from Narrow Neck to the shale mine, which will prove of great advantage not only to the workmen employed at the mine, but also to visitors who are anxious to view the beauties of the mountains. This track has opened up some of the grandest scenery ever beheld. Up to this time the views could not be seen, as there was no access to them."

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Sir Henry Parkes' Dentist, David Fletcher: An Emancipist's Odyssey from Dublin to the Hunter, the City of Sydney, Tamarama and the Blue Mountains.

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Abstract
This brief life history of an Irish convict transported for fourteen years to New South Wales recounts a remarkable, hitherto unknown, colonial story. It traces David Fletcher's assignment followed by a pardon in Port Stephens, his somewhat mysterious emergence as a jeweller and dentist in Maitland, his establishment of a successful career as a surgeon dentist in Sydney and his activities as a land speculator, landowner and public figure in Tamarama and the Blue Mountains. It places him in a network of relationships that included long friendships with, among others, Henry Parkes and the Director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. This emancipist's activities are portrayed in the contexts of the late nineteenth century expansion of eastern Sydney and the beginning of closer settlement in the Blue Mountains, with attention to some of the perceived environmental consequences of those developments.

Key Words: Emancipist, dentists, Wentworth Falls, land transactions, Waverley, Tamarama, Blue Mountains, Fletcher, Henry Parkes.

INTRODUCTION

Accounts of Henry Parkes' associations with people in the Blue Mountains, after he had built a family home in Faulconbridge, have focussed on his relations with his political colleague the former Chief Justice, Sir James Martin, with another former Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, and also with their mutual friend and classicist, Professor Charles Badham (Stephen 1945, p.259).

However, Parkes had other associates in his various activities while he was in the Mountains. One of the most interesting was longtime friend and the Parkes family's dentist, David Fletcher, a former convict. Fletcher's life was a remarkable personal and entrepreneurial odyssey that included significant Blue Mountains components.

Fletcher and Henry Parkes had an enduring friendship over some forty years, that may have originated as early as 1850 when both had business premises in Hunter Street, Sydney (Fletcher 1851a) and that was to last until Fletcher's death in 1890 (Anonymous 1890a; Parkes 1890; Martin 1974). (It is possible, though probably not provable, that they may have met even earlier, in 1848 or 1849 when, as is recounted below, Fletcher was temporarily a resident in Maitland and when Parkes was trying unsuccessfully to establish a branch of his business there (Martin 1974)).

At an unknown date, but perhaps as early as the 1850s, after he had remarkably established himself in an unregulated profession that was not to require registration of practitioners in New South Wales until 1900, Fletcher became the Parkes family's dentist (Parkes, L.F. 1880; Parkes, H. 1881; Halliday 1977, pp.59-67). As will be shown, Fletcher bought property in the Blue Mountains, as did Parkes, was associated with Parkes in public business in the Mountains and visited Parkes at the latter's residence at Faulconbridge (Parkes, L.F. 1880). Although press reports of Parkes' political meetings do not reveal Fletcher as a conspicuous supporter, Fletcher's co-option onto committees honouring Parkes indicate that his connection with Parkes was well known (Anonymous 1882a). Upon Fletcher's sudden death, Parkes was to describe Fletcher to Fletcher's widow, Ellen, as "a man of rare qualities", who had been

"a friend in whom I could place implicit confidence" (Parkes, H. 1890).

The following account of Fletcher's life reveals it as an extraordinary emancipist 'success story' that, apart from its intrinsic interest as a biography, tells us much about the fluidity of professional and social norms and about land hunger in colonial New South Wales.

From Dublin to Port Stephens and the Hunter River area.

At the age of seventeen, the Dublin metal gilder David Fletcher, son of a gold and silversmith, was in 1836 transported to New South Wales for fourteen years for receiving stolen plate (NSW State Records (a)). He arrived with 216 other male convicts on the ship *Heber* in July 1837, and was assigned to the Australian Agricultural Company (AAC) at Port Stephens (NSW State Records (b)). In 1843 he was granted a ticket of leave (NSW State Records (a)) and at Stroud later that year he married a free immigrant Englishwoman, Ellen Hilder, who was acting as housekeeper for the local Anglican clergyman, the Reverend William Macquarie Cowper (later the Dean of Sydney) (Stroud and District Historical Society 2021). Their first child, Marianne (or Mary Ann) was born in Stroud in 1846 and died a spinster at the age of 91 years (Anonymous 1937, NSW BDM 1937). In 1848 Fletcher was granted a conditional pardon (NSW State Records (a); Willetts (undated)).

According to one family member who has sought to sift through what he has referred to as the many 'red herrings' in family accounts of Fletcher's life, Fletcher in later life went to considerable pains to conceal his convict past (Fletcher, A. undated) and there is little documentation about his life as a convict in the Hunter region. There is scant documentation on what occupation Fletcher pursued between gaining his ticket of leave in 1843 and gaining his pardon in 1848. Family speculations include a possible stint building boats on the Karuah River area south of Stroud (Private Fletcher Family Information 2022). However, careful searching of relevant regional references to the name of 'David Fletcher' reveals one other possible, and two other documented, if surprising, occupations for Fletcher during that period.

In July 1847 an AAC doctor's letter (James and Vidler 1979) reported a medical operation in Stroud for which a person of Fletcher's name assisted by making

> "an aneurysmal needle and a pair of retractors".

It is very possible, therefore, that Fletcher's skills in fine metalwork were utilised there in the crafting of instrumentation used by the doctor, Colin Buchanan, in what is one of the first recorded uses in New South Wales of ether for medical operations.

Some two years later, an advertisement in the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River Advertiser* (Maitland being not far from Stroud) announced that an auctioneer had received instructions from

> "Mr David Fletcher, Dentist and Jeweller, of High Street, West Maitland (Mr Fletcher being about to leave Maitland for Sydney)"

to sell

> "the whole of his splendid STOCK-IN-TRADE",

including

> "the most choice productions of Artistical Jewellery', furniture, and",

as an inducement to

> "working jewellers", "a Draw Bench, Flatting Mill, and portable Grindstone" (Anonymous 1849).

Fletcher's original skills as a metal gilder would seem to fit the occupation of jeweller. On the other hand, how, apparently without formal qualifications, he might have acquired the skills to practise dentistry must remain something of a mystery. Perhaps the key includes some sort of at least rudimentary paramedical and dental experience obtained at the Australian Agricultural Company hospital in Stroud, as illustrated by his assistance to Buchanan, and even, as one family speculation would have it, practice on fellow convicts and horses ! (Smith 2005). However, the question of how Fletcher could have accumulated the funds to set himself up in his joint profession is an even greater mystery that, for want of documentary evidence, eludes unravelling.

Setting Up as a Sydney Dentist

Such mysteries aside, it is clear that by mid 1849 Fletcher had moved to Sydney (Fletcher 1849). Advertising himself as "Dentist," (Fletcher 1851b) who, among other services, "stops decayed teeth without pain" (Fletcher 1850a) (a reference, perhaps, to his use of an anaesthetic of some kind), he first took rooms in the emporium, called the 'Temple of Fashion', of a manufacturing jeweller, electroplater and silversmith, J.J. Cohen in George Street (Anonymous 1848). However, by October 1850 he had moved to Hunter Street (Fletcher 1850b) where he probably met Parkes. Then, from March 1852, the year in which Ellen Fletcher gave birth to a son (Anonymous 1852), the family became residents, with professional rooms for David, at Wynyard Terrace in the soon to be named Wynyard Square (Fletcher 1852). Periodic advertisements in Sydney and Hunter River newspapers indicate that, while resident in Sydney, Fletcher continued for some years to make short visits to Maitland to treat dental patients (Fletcher 1855b,c; 1857).

From 1851 until 1855, when briefly he took into partnership an experienced London-trained dentist, Henry Jordan, Fletcher's dental practice was one of only four listed in the City of Sydney (Halliday 1977, p.37; Fletcher 1855a; Rée 2014, Chapter 1.). While generally advertising himself early on as a 'dentist', he increasingly styled himself also as a 'surgeon-dentist' (in, for example, several of the conveyancing documents referred to below).

Establishing a Presence in Waverley

Even before expanding his practice to include Henry Jordan, Fletcher must have been sufficiently confident that it would continue to flourish, because, as early as 1854, he acquired five acres of clifftop land at Waverley (NSW Land Registry Services 1886 & 1906) (at that time sometimes referred to as 'Bondi'). The property overlooked what was then a secluded and beautiful cove, originally called 'Dixons Bay', but soon to be often known contemporaneously and alternatively as 'Fletcher's Bay' (and later as Tamarama Bay). By 1858, while retaining his premises in Wynyard Square, he had established an additional residence on that Waverley property. There, at the top of the gully leading to the beach, he at some time built a Victorian, carpenter-gothic styled house, named *The Glen* (Figure 1) or 'Fletcher's Glen' (Anonymous 1914; Mayne-Wilson and Anderson 2010, pp.11 & 13)..

The Stroud and District Historical Society

Figure 1. A Fletcher family photograph of their home, *The Glen*, at Waverley

Taking an interest in local municipal politics, in 1859 Fletcher was one of seventy local residents of Waverley who petitioned successfully for the excision of Waverley from a proposal to amalgamate the district in an enlarged Randwick Municipal Council under the recently passed Municipal Corporations Act (Anonymous 1859; Cowper 1859). By 1863 Fletcher was sufficiently well known in Waverley to be elected as an alderman to the by then separately constituted Waverley Municipal Council (Anonymous 1863). He was elected as the first so-designated Mayor of Waverley in February 1868 (Mortimer 1868), and continued to serve on the Council until 1883 (Dowd 1959, pp.309-311). The year of Fletcher's mayoralty (Figure 2) saw a contretemps that included a skirmish among rival supporters, with Randwick Municipal Council and its mayor, Charles Moore, over rights of way through water catchment land in what is now Queen's Park (Anonymous undatedb).

Expanding Horizons

While retaining both his dental surgery at Wynyard Square and his residence *The Glen* at Waverley, Fletcher sought to acquire other properties – in the Blue Mountains and, during the same period, at Waverley. Thus Fletcher became a participant in the mania of

Waverley Library

Figure 2. Portrait of David Fletcher as Mayor of Waverley.

speculative land purchases in New South Wales that characterised the 1870s and early 1880s, as in a somewhat more extravagant fashion was his friend Parkes.

[Proceeds from the sale of Crown lands that facilitated some of those purchases were to underpin the State's finances for many years (Lamb 1967, p.39; 1972, p.24)].

Such speculative purchases included land along routes of the State's growing rail and other public transport systems (Muir 1994) and some of Fletcher's and Parkes' purchases were along the then expanding main western rail route over the Blue Mountains.

At the same time Fletcher, with a mixture of motives characteristic of the man, became something of a landscaping enthusiast and promoter and defender of a variety of bushland and coastal reserves for the enjoyment of the public.

The Lure of the Blue Mountains

Fletcher probably began to develop an interest in the Blue Mountains when, in 1865, his Waverley neighbour, good friend, and fellow councillor, William Henderson, purchased forty acres at Seventeen Mile Hollow (later, Linden) and built a house, later known as *Linden Lodge* (CoT (1879); Anonymous (undateda)).

Fletcher's own interest in acquiring property in the Blue Mountains appears to have begun in earnest in 1868, the year he became Mayor of Waverley. In January of that year, his friend, Henry Parkes hosted a day visit to the Wentworth Falls by the Duke of Edinburgh (Smith et al. 2006, Part 1, Section 2B, p.2). Within a few months, land surrounding the top of the Falls had been surveyed and advertised by the Department of Lands as sites for "residences" and Fletcher bid at auction for six substantial blocks. However, he was at that time unsuccessful because there were not sufficient bidders to justify sales (Smith et al. 2006 Part 1, Section 2B, p.10; CoT 1878b).

Thwarted for a time, Fletcher may then have devoted himself principally to his Waverley interests. Nevertheless, his desire for land in the Blue Mountains did not wane. Ever keen to promote the interests of his friends and close family, in 1874 Fletcher had applied successfully on William Henderson's behalf for a rail stop at Henderson's Seventeen Mile Hollow property, soon to be known as 'Linden Tank', then 'Henderson's Platform' and later 'Linden' (Searle 1980, p.54). In May, 1876, Fletcher purchased just over three roods of land adjoining Henderson's property at Seventeen Mile Hollow, which he transferred to his daughter Marianne in the next year (CoT 1877a).

No doubt motivated in part by Henry Parkes' purchase of property near Springwood (at what, at Parkes instance, became named 'Faulconbridge'), Fletcher in 1876 had himself purchased twenty-six acres on the main western road at Springwood (CoT 1876) not far from Parkes' land. From archaeological investigation of the site of the house *Greenheys*, later built on part of that property, it appears likely that Fletcher built himself a modest, perhaps temporary, cottage. He may

have used it as accommodation on his visits to the Mountains, but he did not otherwise develop his holding before starting almost immediately to sell over half of it (CoT 1876; Nobis 1992).

Such were the terms of the Alienation of Crown Lands Act of 1861, that in 1877 upon payment of £1 per acre, Fletcher was granted title, without competition, to the blocks at the Wentworth Falls for which he had bid unsuccessfully in 1868 (CoT 1877c, 1878b). Later in the same year, Fletcher purchased part of Armstrong's Wentworth Falls block (CoT 1877b). Illustrating the mixed motives inherent in his purchases, between 1877 and 1882, Fletcher then proceeded to transfer two of his Wentworth Falls blocks to his son and fellow dentist, sell two to a Waverley friend, Margaret Stone, and a substantial part of the largest to another person (CoTs 1877c [folios.151, 152, 153 and 154] and 1878b [transfers of title]).

Both in 1868 and 1877, bidders for blocks adjacent to Fletcher's selections at Wentworth Falls were a Department of Lands surveyor, Walter Dickinson Armstrong (CoT 1877b); Warnock 2018, p.2) and a successful architect recently arrived from Brisbane, Benjamin Backhouse (CoT (1878a); Cable (1879)). Both of these men were soon to be engaged with Fletcher, Parkes and a Sydney auctioneer, in public business to do with the Falls.

In February 1877, in addition to gaining title to his original selections at the Wentworth Falls, Fletcher participated in a joint purchase of seventy acres of land on the northern side of the western railway in the Weatherboard (then the name of the village that was

HLRV (1913)

Figure 3. Map portion showing locations of Fletcher's Waverley properties (purple circles around portion numbers) in relation to the names of original grantees and the names of later street configurations.

later re-named as Wentworth Falls) (CoT (1877d,e)). After an immediate, agreed subdivision of the parcel, one of Fletcher's fellow purchasers, Walter Armstrong, built a house on his portion, calling the house *Gila*. (It still stands today, but now is known as *Green Gables* (Warnock 2018)). Illustrating his speculative bent, Fletcher, by contrast, sold his portion almost immediately, in May 1877, to a Sydney solicitor, who immediately, and probably by prior arrangement, onsold it to the Glebe solicitor, and political ally and creditor of Parkes, Sir George Wigram Allen (CoT 1877f; Cowper and Teale 1969).

More Developments at Waverley

Fletcher decided to extend his property holdings in Waverley and the map portion in Figure 3 shows the locations of the blocks he acquired in relation to later street configurations. Portion 348 was his original purchase in 1854 and the point of the arrow on this block in Figure 3 indicates the approximate position of the house called *The Glen*. In 1875, he purchased the additional five-acres of block number 349 (CoT 1873) and he commenced leasing block 350 (NSW Land Registry Services 1875) which in January 1876, he purchased outright from the well-known Sydney doctor and public health official, Haynes Gibbes Alleyne (NSW Land Registry Services 1876; Refshauge 1969). When he acquired his Wentworth Falls properties in 1877 he also purchased the ten-acre Waverley property encompassing a gully of untouched bushland leading down to the beach (NSW Land Registry Services (HLRV) (1877)); it is numbered 318 and on Figure 3 it is shown in the name of the original grantee, J.R. Hatfield.

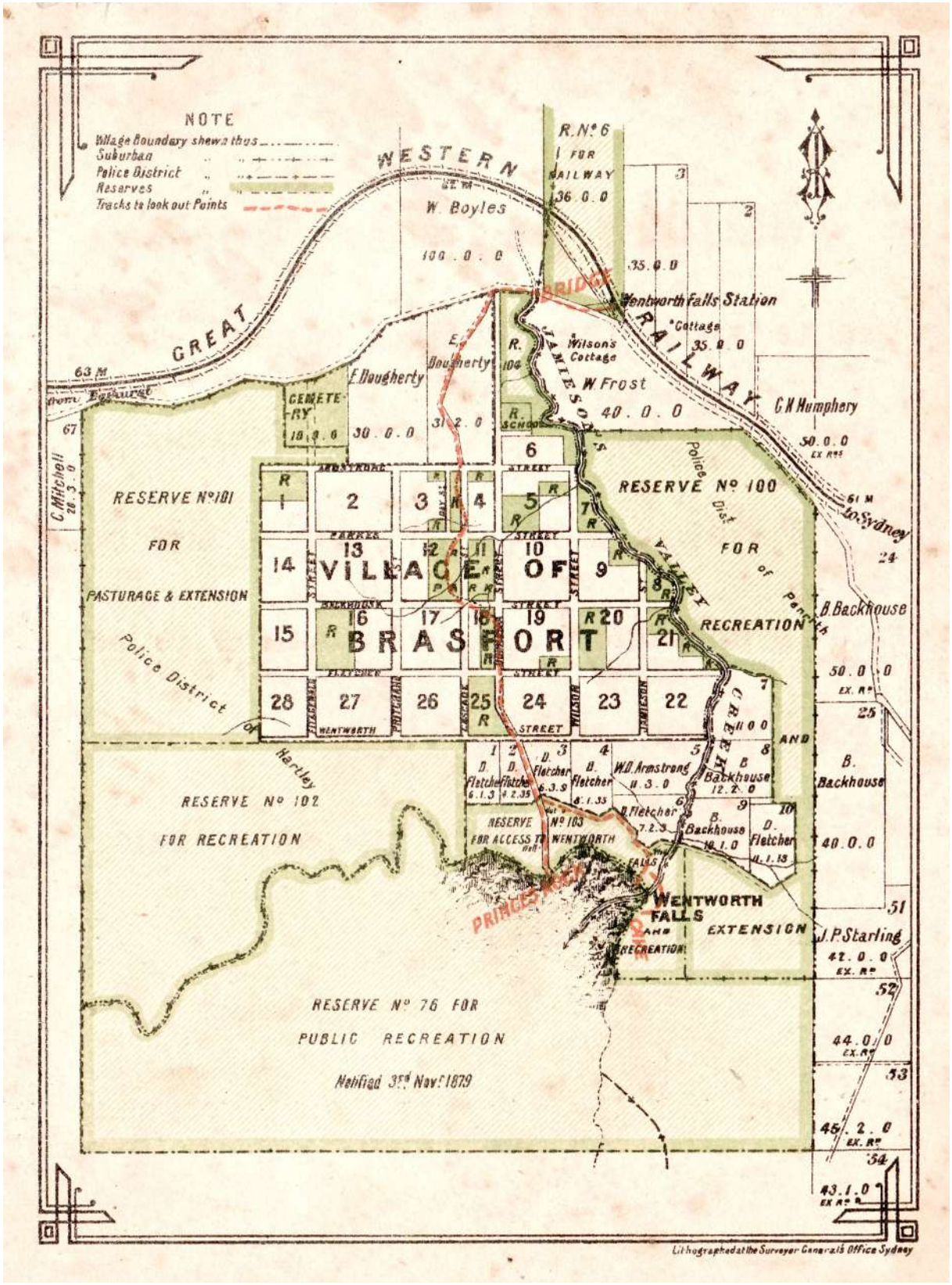
Between his purchases in 1875 and 1882, Fletcher subdivided and sold off most of block 349 (CoT 1873, transfer notices). In 1877, he also sold block 350 to his Waverley friend (and purchaser of two of his Wentworth Falls properties), Margaret Stone (NSW Land Registry Services 1876). To her, in 1880, he also sold the northern half of the ten-acre block 318 (NSW Land Registry Services (HLRV)(1880b)), and, a few days later, he transferred ownership of the southern half of it, encompassing the gully leading down to the beach, to his son (NSW Land Registry Services (HLRV)(1880a)).

In the meantime, on his ten-acre block 318 in Waverley, Fletcher had built a second cottage, *Fairlight*, in the gully leading down to the beach. As was intimated in an effusive contemporary illustrated article (Allen 1878), Fletcher became known for his generosity in providing rights of way to the public through this and his other private properties and for "enhancing" their native vegetation by "judicious planting" of decorative ferns (R.A. 1876, col.4). He also became celebrated as a generous and convivial host of parties of visitors to his homes (Anonymous 1882c).

Courtesy of the staff of Waverley Library

Figure 4. A drawing/painting, possibly by Julian Ashton c.1880, of Fletcher's land below his house *The Glen*, leading down through a gully to the beach on 'Fletcher's Bay'.

Perhaps motivated by a combination of public spirit and some hope of financially gaining from a likely increase in the value of his own Waverley properties, Fletcher determined to ensure public access to the little known Sydney beauty spot. According to



Blue Mountains Historical Society Inc.

Figure 5. Map of the Village of Brasfort.
Lithographed at the Surveyor General's Office, Sydney. (Biden 1883-1885).
[Showing streets named after the first members of the Wentworth Falls Reserve Trust and the adjacent properties of three of those members, including David Fletcher.]

later testimony by Charles Moore, Director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, Moore visited Fletcher's property at *The Glen* frequently over many years to collect in its environs

> "some of the rarest and most interesting plants to be found about Sydney" (Moore 1885).

Perhaps with some advice from Moore, Fletcher spent considerable resources in developing public access paths, wooden bridges and stone steps and fountains on the land immediately surrounding his cliff-top house *The Glen* and in the gully below it, the whole area sometimes referred to as 'Fletcher's Glen' (Figure 4) (Mayne-Wilson & Anderson 2010, p.14).

Reserve Management and Proposal for a Village at Wentworth Falls

Fletcher's experience in providing, for a time, relatively unobtrusive public access to wooded, scenic sites was also to be utilised in another of the environments of particular interest to him - the Blue Mountains. In 1878, Fletcher, Parkes, Armstrong, Backhouse and William Pritchard (a Sydney real estate agent, auctioneer and municipal politician known to the others and beginning to interest himself in property sales in the Mountains (Anonymous 2022)), were all appointed as the first Trustees of the Wentworth Falls Reserve (Farnell 1878). They met frequently at Fletcher's rooms in Wynyard Square, Sydney, and considered

> "the advisability of applying for a site for a village and for the necessary money appropriation in order to carry out improvements" (Trustees, Wentworth Falls Reserve, undated).

In August 1881, the Surveyor General approved a plan for the village, to be called, on a motion of the Trustees moved by Fletcher, 'Brasfort' - a literal French translation of 'Armstrong'. It is likely that the plan (Department of Lands, NSW 1881) (Figure 5) was Armstrong's work, or that it was drafted with his input; streets are in a grid pattern and include one in the name of each of the first Trustees. A few months later, a Department of Lands notice of sale advertised one-acre lots of land that were to constitute the village (Hoskins 1881).

One of the other principal streets in that plan running north/south (and later, in 1938, renamed as the present 'Falls Road') was called 'Boonara Street', a distinctive name that was in use for a street adjacent to Fletcher's residence in Waverley. Its inclusion in the plan, together with the street in Fletcher's own name, points to Fletcher's influence with the drafter of the plan, likely to have been Armstrong.

Smith 2012, p.8. (Reproduced, with kind permission of the author)

Figure 6. Caney's photo 175 of Weeping Rock on Jamison's Valley Creek, showing, on the left, a cleared picnic area on Fletcher's land.

The village enterprise suggests that the motivations of Fletcher and his fellow trustees were at least partly related to promotion of their property and speculative interests in the area. However, the range of activities undertaken by the trustees attests to additional, perhaps somewhat less self-serving, motivations. In Fletcher's case, for example, it seems highly likely that his enthusiasm for the landscaping and public access works he was undertaking at his beachfront land at Waverley would have led him to support

enthusiastically the similar plantings of exotics and landscaping and the path and track-making activity of the Wentworth Falls Reserve Trust and its appointed caretaker, Peter Mulheran (Smith, et al, 2006, Section 2B, p.2; Smith 2012, pp.1-4). Presumably, it was Mulheran who was commissioned to clear a portion of Fletcher's land adjacent to Weeping Rock at the top of the Falls as a picnic spot (Figure 6).

Fletcher was described by a member of a similar Trust for reserves at Lawson, as

> "one of the most active of the Wentworth Falls Trust." (Fox 2011, p.16).

In pursuit of their work, particularly with regard to decorative plantings of exotics, it is possible that Fletcher and his fellow trustees also gained some assistance from his Botanic Gardens friend, Charles Moore, who in 1879 was appointed a Trustee of reserves at Lawson (Hoskins 1880), not far from Wentworth Falls. Moore was also well known to Parkes and was to assist with plantings at Parkes' house in Faulconbridge (Moore 1875). It seems more than likely that the three would have conversed frequently on reserve landscaping, public access and other management matters (Moore 1875).

Testimony to Fletcher's special affinity for the Wentworth Falls area is the fact that by 1889 at the latest, and at least six months before his death, a lookout overlooking the Falls and out into the Jamison Valley had become known, as it is today, as 'Fletcher's Lookout' (Anonymous 1889, p.14, col.2).
[It appears to be the only feature of the Reserve named after any of the first trustees.]

Fletcher served as a trustee of the Wentworth Falls Reserve Trust until his death in 1890. As late as 1888, for example, the then secretary of the Trust, Frederick Rooke, was thanking Fletcher for his role in the dissemination of circulars at the Falls discouraging "acts of wanton destruction or disfigurement" there and asking Fletcher when he would next visit the Falls (Rooke 1888).

In addition to playing a role on the board of the Wentworth Falls Recreation Reserve Trust, Fletcher took an interest in the work of the trustees for the similar reserve at Lawson, who included his friend, Charles Moore of the Botanic Gardens. Showing that he was not averse to modifications of natural terrain in order to promote public access, Fletcher, in an exchange with a critic of some land-clearing undertaken to create an entrance avenue to the reserve, said that he had been shown over the reserve by the Lawson Trustee, Joseph Hay, and that he had confidence that "no trees of any kind worth preserving" would have been destroyed and that the work of the trustees would be vindicated (Fletcher 1880).

Progress and its Perils at Waverley and Tamarama

The ambivalent motivations inherent in Fletcher's attempts to preserve the natural beauties of environments that he clearly loved while opening them to public access, occasionally exposed him and his associates to public criticism. In late 1879, for example, he toyed with the idea of having his auctioneer friend, Pritchard, sell some of his property in the gully at Waverley referred to in an advertisement as land known as 'Fairlight Glen') with its rich endowments of native and exotic plants and its

> "attributes of MOUNTAIN SCENERY" (Anonymous 1879b),

his foray elicited one fervent hope that

> "some effort may be made by those who have influence in the matter to keep this paradise from passing again into private hands, as it ought never to have been alienated from the people" (Anonymous 1879a).

Charles Moore, continued to take a keen, protective interest in Fletcher's Waverley holdings and writing in 1885, when some of Fletcher's Waverley property was put up for sale, Moore commented that

> "I would… much regret to see such a beautiful spot sold for any other purpose than as an intact private property or as a Public Reserve, that its great natural charms might be preserved".

He approvingly noted that

> "There is not now any other place left almost untouched within such easy access from the city, where so little has been done … to interfere with our native trees and shrubs…".

However he added, with ominously prescient prediction of the eventual fate of the *The Glen* and the gully below it,

> "I shall, under any circumstances, venture to hope that the pristine character of that Glen will not be fatally destroyed by the erection over it of buildings of bricks and mortar." (Moore, 1885).

Lest Fletcher's choices of locations for investing in land and his public service on wooded reserve trusts give the impression that his predilections were all arcadian, this short account of his life will conclude by outlining other of his interests and activities that reflect some enthusiasm for the growth and spread of the Sydney urban metropolis.

In later years of his service on Waverley Municipal council, Fletcher was closely involved in a number of Council representations responding to population growth in Sydney that was putting pressure on, and opening commercial opportunities in, the City's south-east littoral area. As examples, the Council sought to lobby Parkes and his ministers to purchase land for a public reserve at Waverley (Anonymous 1879c), to extend the eastern Sydney tramway from Woollahra to Waverley (Anonymous 1880) and then to Bondi (Anonymous 1881a, 1882b), and to resume private land at Bondi in order to secure access by the public to the beach (Anonymous 1881b).

In February 1887, after he had left Waverley Council, Fletcher used his personal influence with Parkes to get Cabinet to hasten completion of a half-mile extension of the Bondi tramway. That benefitted Fletcher's son (David John George Fletcher) and his friend Margaret Stone, who were to lease their portions of the ten acre clifftop holding at Waverley (block 318 originally owned by Fletcher) to builders and architects who were constructing an aquarium (Mayne-Wilson and Anderson 2010, pp.13-14). Indeed, Fletcher importuned Parkes not to forget his promise to have Cabinet assent to the tramway extension, lest delay would have

> "disasterious" [*sic*] consequences for the syndicate's expenditure of 'at present over four thousand pounds' " (Fletcher 1887).

The 'Royal Aquarium and Pleasure Grounds' were duly opened in September 1887 by Parkes himself (Anonymous 1887).

In 1924, Major W.L. Johnston, a historian and photographer of Waverley and of Tamarama Gully, originally part of 'Fletcher's Glen', was to speculate that Fletcher himself would have grieved at flow-on developments that led to the degradation of the gully after his death (Mayne-Wilson and Anderson 2010, p.21). However, given Fletcher's extraordinary combination of speculative entrepreneurialism and determination to make the beauties of nature available to a wide public, it is impossible to be certain.

Final Account

David Fletcher died suddenly in his sleep on 16 April 1890 (Anonymous 1890a,b) and his funeral was attended by Parkes, Charles Moore of the Botanic Gardens, Fletcher's Waverley neighbours and others (Anonymous 1890b).

David Fletcher's entire estate, in which there were properties assessed for probate at a seemingly modest £2,178, were left to his son who soon settled *The Glen* at Waverley on his mother (Ellen), and a small parcel of land there on his sister (Marianne) (NSW State Records 1932). Fletcher's wife, son (David) and daughter (Marianne) continued to live in the area until their respective deaths on 4 April 1908, 22 July 1918 and 16 May 1937 (Anonymous 1908, 1918, 1937).

The schedule for probate submitted by Fletcher's son (NSW State Records 1932) contains entries for two properties that reflect, on the one hand, a starting point, and, on the other, an end point, for Fletcher's odyssey in New South Wales. One was a "Block of Land", being

> ''Lot 1 and 10 of Sec E on the land of the Australian Agricultural Co. Parish of Carrington County Gloucester…".

This small plot of 160 perches was almost certainly on land at Carrington, Port Stephens that housed the headquarters of the Company to which Fletcher was originally assigned as a convict; it is close to the mouth of the Karuah River, where family legend has it that Fletcher worked at some time in the 1840s as a boatbuilder.

The other was a

> "Block of Land containing 12 acres more or less at Lapstone Hill…"

on the eastern escarpment of the Blue Mountains (NSW State Records 1932). As recounted here, it was to the Blue Mountains that Fletcher's aspirations had led him in the 1860s (NSW State Records 1932).

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Acronyms

BDM	Births, Deaths & Marriages
CoT	Certificate of Title
HLRV	Historic Land Registry Viewer

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Electrifying the Blue Mountains, 1891 to 1947.

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Abstract:
Electricity infrastructure is a key element of the built landscape of the Blue Mountains. The iconic chimney of the Carrington Hotel marks the beginning of successful public electricity supply in Katoomba. This paper charts the electrification of the Blue Mountains from 1891.

After experiments with other fuels, the public authorities finally settled on electric street lighting after 1915, although it was well into the 1920s before all the townships were connected. Private connections followed the installation of street lighting wires, and local businesses and homes created a growing market. The Katoomba Municipal Council bought the private power company's business in 1923 and built its own powerhouse - in Bent Street, which operated until 1947. Thereafter all bulk supply came from the NSW grid, but the Blue Mountains City Council operated the retail business until 1980, when its electricity department was finally transferred to the Prospect County Council.

Key Words:-Electricity supply,-Electrification, Katoomba, Carrington, street lighting, Blue Mountains

1. The Carrington Hotel and the Katoomba Electric Lighting Company

The first known installation of electric lighting in the Blue Mountains was in the Belgravia Hotel in Medlow (later renamed Medlow Bath) which opened on 6 June 1891 (Anonymous 1891a) (Figure 1). The supply was sufficient for 40 lights of 16 candlepower, as well as for pumping water up from

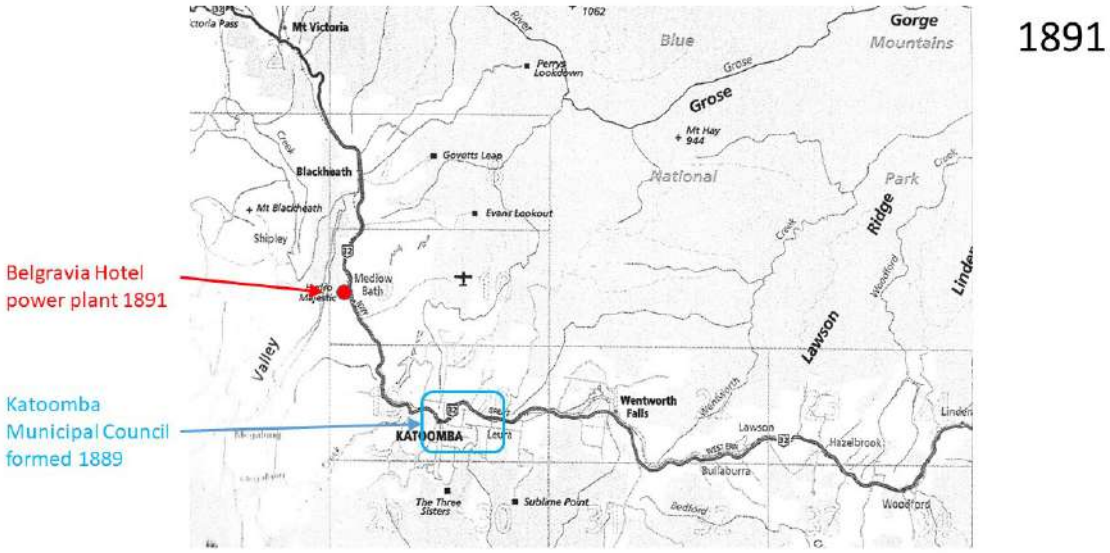


Figure 1. Electricity supply, and the local government authority responsible for public lighting 1891 *(diagrammatic)*.

a spring in the Kanimbla Valley. The hotel's owner, Mr. Richardson, offered to supply the householders at Blackheath with electricity at 1s3d (1/3) per light per week but only if 200 lights could be guaranteed (Anonymous 1891b). There is no record of the offer being taken up.

There was considerable interest in electricity from the street lighting committee of the Katoomba Municipal Council (KMC, established 1889), but it was to be many years before the street lighting issue was settled. During that time the KMC continued to debate the merits of electricity and gas, and private versus municipal ownership. In the interim, it installed kerosene lighting in the main streets, with the first 20 lamps being lit for the first time on 28 December 1895 (Anonymous 1895).

The matter came to a head again after 1904, when the Municipalities Electric Lighting Act gave NSW councils the power to raise capital for electricity works. The Municipal Gas Act 1884 already allowed councils to construct, purchase and operate works to supply gas for public lighting and for private purposes (Wilkenfeld 1989). After a number of resolutions and rescissions, the KMC decided against electricity and contracted the street lighting to the Katoomba and Leura Gas Company (KLGC), which was formed in 1906 and started supplying gas in 1907 (Figure 2).

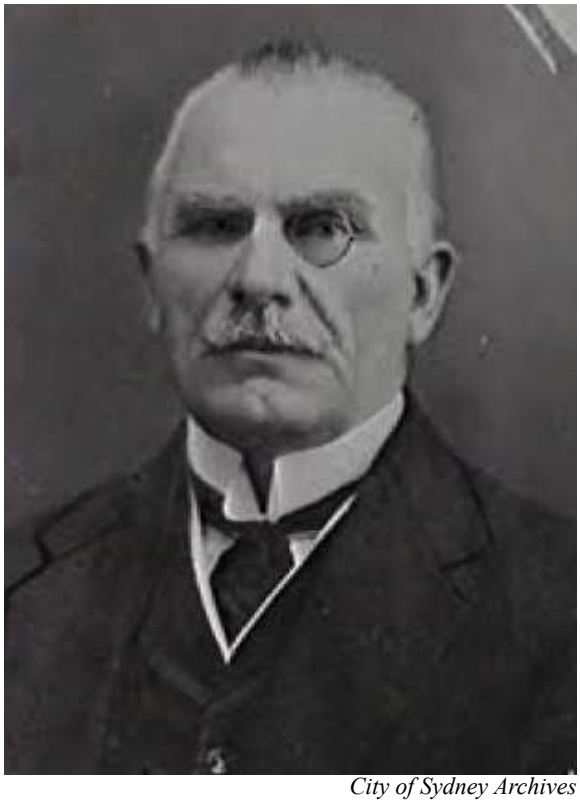
After the Hydro Majestic in Medlow Bath, the next significant electrical installation was

Courtesy of Scenic World.

Figure 2. Reproduction of an original gas lamp at Katoomba - sponsored by Scenic World.

in the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba, commencing with the lighting of the dining room in 1910 (Anonymous 1939). The generator was driven by a 4 hp (3 kW) gas engine, presumably taking its fuel supply from the gas company.

[Technically, a generator is a rotating machine that produces direct current and an alternator is a rotating machine that produces alternating current. The generator or alternator may be driven by an engine or a turbine, powered in turn by the combustion of fuel or the force of water. Where it is not known whether a private installation was AC or DC, the more common term generator is used. Public supply electricity supply in the Blue Mountains was AC from the start.]



City of Sydney Archives

Figure 3. Sir James Joynton Smith 1858-1943.

While the Hydro Majestic power plant came to supply some other buildings in Medlow Bath, it was the Carrington which became the epicentre for the electrification of the entire Blue Mountains.

As with so many other Blue Mountains enterprises of that time, the driving force was Sir James Joynton Smith (Figure 3). He was born James John Smith in Bishopsgate, London in 1858, the first son of a gasfitter, so he had some feeling for public lighting (Joynton Smith 1927). After various careers in Britain

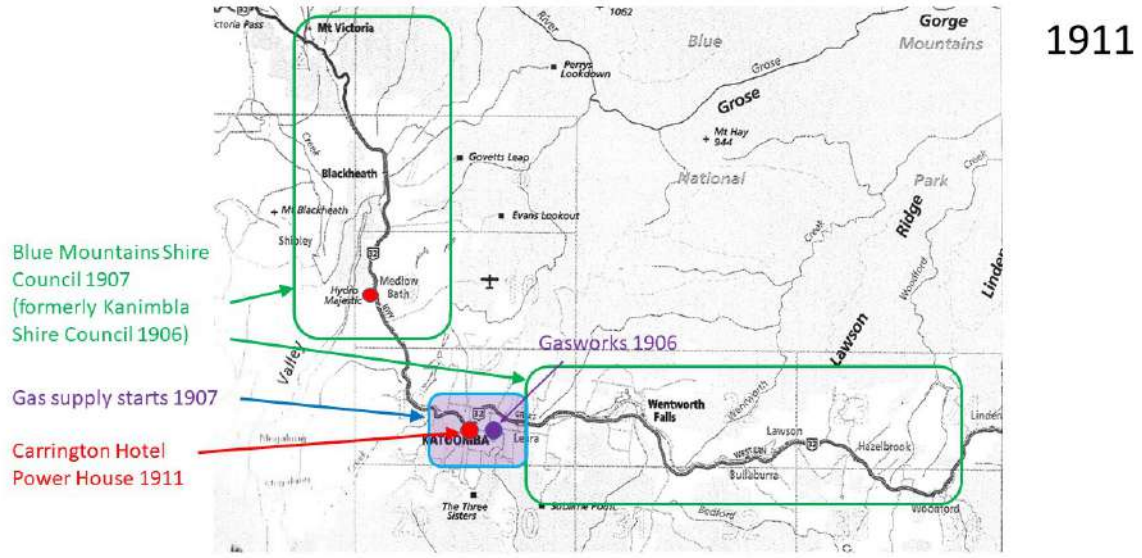


Figure 4. Electricity and gas supply, and local government authorities responsible for public lighting 1911 *(diagrammatic)*.

and New Zealand he arrived in Sydney around 1890 (Cunneen 1988). In 1896 he leased the run-down Imperial Arcade Hotel in Sydney from the Australian Mutual Provident Society, which also operated a private power station on the premises. Joynton Smith purchased the generating plant and the business of the Imperial Arcade Electric Light Company for the sum of £2,000, and sold the business to the Sydney Municipal Council in 1908 for the sum of £20,875 (Wilkenfeld 1989). He was left with the generating plant, for which the Council had no use, but under the sales agreement he could not set up an electricity business anywhere in the metropolitan area.

In 1911 Joynton Smith purchased the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba, and within the year the hotel was supplying power to the Katoomba Family Hotel across Parke Street (number 15 - Silvey 1996, p.109) and to the Katoomba Railway Station (Figure 4). He discovered that the KMC's control of services running through public streets extended only 20ft above ground level, so his cables were run above that height, taking care to keep clear of the Post-Master General's Department telephone and telegraph wires (Joynton Smith 1927, p.182).

Photo: G. Wilkenfeld 2016

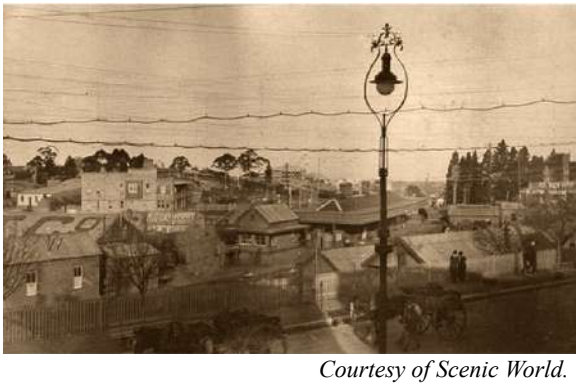
Figure 5. Rear of the Carrington Hotel, Parke Street, Katoomba.

Between 1911 and 1913 Joynton Smith had a number of major alterations made to the Carrington, including the construction of the powerhouse building, with its brick chimney, on the Parke Street side (Figure 5). Next the KMC gave permission for Joynton Smith's Katoomba Electric Lighting Company (KELC) to erect poles to extend the service, and the company was connecting private customers by November 1913 (Anonymous 1913b). Even so, the public streets remained lit with gas, although the KMC minutes record many instances of council dissatisfac

tion with the dimness of the street lamps 0the practice of not lighting them on the nights around the full moon (KMC 1915a).

With Katoomba then having both a gas and an electricity supply, the KMC continued to wrestle with the street lighting issue. The KMC had first considered purchasing the gas company in September 1912, but the parties could not agree a price. At the KMC elections in February 1914, the ratepayers rejected the proposition of buying out the gas company, partly because they had seen the rapid progress of the electric power system. The KMC then shifted its attention to the KELC, which now raised the same issues as the gas company had done, and presented the same options – to contract for supply, to set up in competition or to purchase (Anonymous 1914a). The impending expiration of the gas street lighting contract created some urgency.

The outcome of the February 1914 elections was that the majority of elected aldermen were opposed to the KMC's outlay of the capital cost of a new electricity scheme (Anonymous 1914b). Although many aldermen supported the principle that public utilities should be in public hands, the fact that privately owned gas and electric companies were already well established in Katoomba made it costly and risky for ratepayers to set up yet another utility in competition. In the end the KMC turned to the KELC for street lighting (Figure 6).



Courtesy of Scenic World.

Figure 6. Old Style Electric Street Lamp, Katoomba.

The electric street lighting was inaugurated by the mayor, Alderman George James, on 30 June 1915 and the ceremony was followed by a banquet at the Carrington Hotel (KMC 1915a). Initially there were 165 lamps lighting 13 miles (20.9 km) of streets in Katoomba and Leura.

A Babcock and Wilcox boiler supplied steam to two Parsons turbo-alternators, rated at 200 kW and 130 kW, as well as to a 20 kW direct current (DC) generator that was used to charge the batteries which supplied current at night after the generators were shut down (Anonymous 1915). The 50 cycles per second alternating current (AC) was generated at 415 Volts and transformed at the powerhouse to 3,300 V for transmission to the more distant parts of the town. Local transformers reduced the voltage back to 415 V, 3-phase (240 V between phases and neutral): the standard used for power distribution throughout Australia to this day. The citizens appreciated the light, but were less pleased with the black smoke pouring from the Carrington chimney but the volume of smoke was reduced when chain grate stokers were installed in mid 1916, pre-heating the coal and so leading to more complete combustion (Anonymous 1916b).

However, the legal position of the KELC was still uncertain. The exclusive franchise to supply gas, and a non-exclusive franchise to supply electricity, were held by the KLGC, as Joynton Smith was well aware:

> "The council had given me permission to erect poles, but it was always on the cards that they would start their own lighting plant and push my poles off the map. Consequently I sought means of entrenching myself. I discovered that the Gas Company had in their franchise not only the right to dig up roads for their mains, but also to supply electric light and erect poles. Of this latter right, which was embodied in an Act of Parliament, they had never availed themselves, being content with the dividends derived from the gas. So I bought for four thousand pounds all rights affecting electricity which had been vested by Parliament in the Gas Company." (Joynton Smith 1927, p.182).

The introduction of electricity for street lighting did not lead to complete satisfaction. When the KMC asked for relocation of two of the brightest (2,000 candlepower) lamps in Main Street and Katoomba Street, the

KELC replied that it was unable to move them because the Postal Department objected to the electric lighting wires crossing their wire (KMC 1915b).

The Gas Company's sale of its electricity rights to Joynton Smith was not concluded until 1919. By then, the KMC's interest in owing its own electricity business had cooled somewhat, but it revived as the end of the 10-year contract approached.

2. Supply to Neighbouring Councils

Incorporated as the Kanimbla Shire Council on 13 June 1906 with its headquarters in Lawson, the Blue Mountains Shire Council (BMSC) was established in 1907 and was responsible for providing municipal services, including street lighting, in Lawson, the eastern part of Leura, Blackheath, Mount Victoria and several smaller townships. Those centres were beyond the reach of the Katoomba and Leura Gas Company's mains, so other lighting options had to be explored.

At the urging of the Blackheath Progress Association (BPA), in June 1914 the BMSC called for proposals for lighting the town of Blackheath. The submissions included two for electric lighting: from the KELC and the Blue Mountains Electric Power and Engineering Company. The BMSC resolved to have further discussions with the two electricity suppliers, but also appointed a consulting engineer to draw up a scheme for lighting all the towns in the Shire. In July 1914, the appointee was Mr. J.E. Donoghue, the chief engineer of the Electric Light and Power Supply Corporation, which supplied Balmain and the surrounding suburbs of Sydney (BMSC 1914a).

The BMSC also had the Bill for the Blue Mountains Shire Electricity Loan Act, 1915 drawn up which if passed would have authorised the borrowing of up to £25,000

> "for the purpose of establishing a system of public electricity supply within and outside the Shire" (BMSC 1915).

However there is no record of it being introduced into the NSW Parliament.

In the meantime, the BMSC went ahead with acetylene street lighting in Lawson and Blackheath, calling it an "inexpensive temporary system" (BMSC 1914b). This displeased the BPA, which accused the BMSC of refusing a good offer from the KELC, and maintained that the council's plans for a whole-of-Shire scheme would not be economic because of the low density of settlement outside the towns (BPA 1914).

In February 1916, having abandoned the attempt to finance its own electricity undertaking, the BMSC contracted with the KELC to extend supply to the townships of the Shire:

> "The shire council has arranged a contract with the Katoomba Electric Supply Company for a term of 15 years, for a minimum supply of 150 60-candlepower street lamps at Blackheath, Medlow, Wentworth Falls, and Lawson. The council reserves the absolute right to take over poles, wires, etc. at the end of five years at cost price, or during the currency of the contract at cost price, less three per cent per annum for depreciation, the council to check tenders, and to supervise work and materials. The cost of private lighting will be 6d a unit for fewer than six lights, and 6d weekly for 25-candlepower lamps. The lighting is to be installed within 12 months." (Anonymous 1916a).

By January 1917, poles were being erected along the road between Katoomba and Blackheath (Anonymous 1917). The work took longer than expected, and the BMSC was still paying for the 'temporary' acetylene lamps well into 1917 (NSWSR 1917). However by March 1918 businesses and houses in Blackheath were being connected and there was talk of extending the wires along Hat Hill Road (Anonymous 1918b).

Lawson received its first electric street lamps in early 1918 (Anonymous 1918a) and since the mains to Lawson passed the town of Wentworth Falls the BMSC started consulting with the Wentworth Falls Progress Association about the location of lamps (BMSC 1918). However, the electrification of Wentworth Falls did not get fully under way until 1923 (Anonymous 1923d) (Figures 7 & 8).

After separating from the BMSC at the end of 1919, the Blackheath Municipal Council (BMC) and the BMSC approached the KELC to request a separate electricity supply

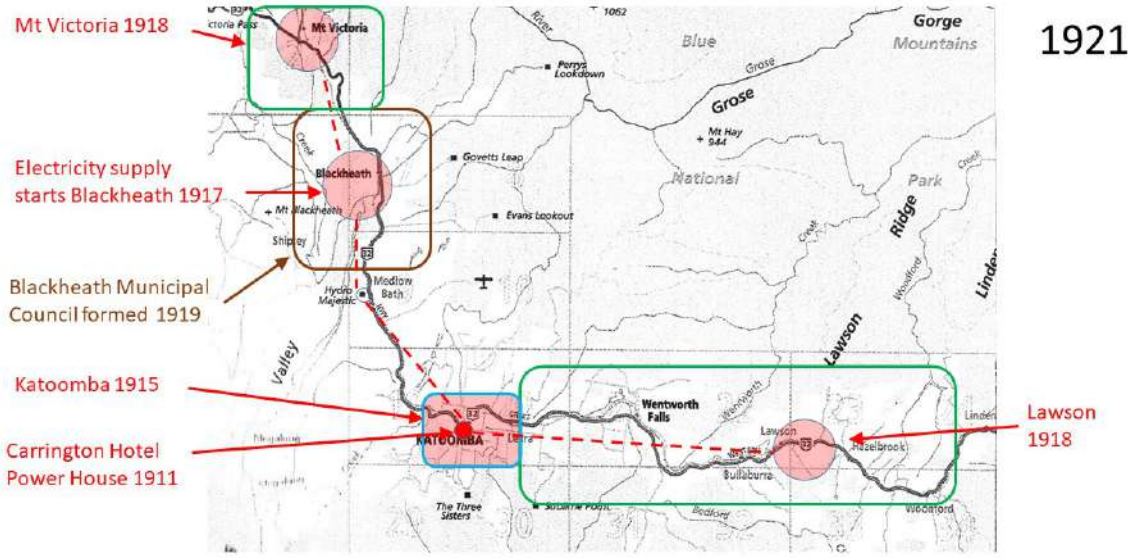


Figure 7. Local government areas, towns where electricity was available and power transmission links, 1921 *(diagrammatic).*

Blue Mountains Historical Society Inc. P510A.

Figure 8. Erecting electric lamps in Wilson Park, Wentworth Falls, 1920s.

contract for Blackheath, as it was still covered by the 1916 contract between the company and BMSC. While the KELC declined, its relationship with the councils remained by and large cordial, although the councils occasionally requested street lights to be relocated, and delayed payments if they wanted to make a point.

The town of Mount Victoria, to the north of Blackheath, remained in the Blue Mountains Shire. The electricity supply line to Mount Victoria passed through a substation in Blackheath, and if there was a problem that required cutting supply to one town, the other was also affected.

The BMSC was contracted to pay the KELC an annual fee for each active electric street light, and it recovered the cost by levying a lighting rate of ½d per £ of unimproved value on properties within reach of the mains. The KELC offered connections to private consumers along the line of mains, so the council's decisions about street light locations determined the availability of electricity for private purposes.

At the start of 1922 the KELC requested the BMSC and BMC to purchase the distribution equipment located in their areas, as provided

in the 1916 contract (Anonymous 1922a). In March 1922 the two councils and the KELC held a special conference which resolved:

> "That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that the Councils of the Municipality of Blackheath and the Shire of the Blue Mountains should each control its own electricity supply and distribution, and with this object in view this Conference recommends to each of the Councils concerned that it jointly appoint Mr. Donoghue (an Expert) to inspect if necessary, and report fully with valuations of plant, probable income and expenditure and also submit what he would consider a fair price for delivery of electricity in bulk by the Katoomba Electric Lighting Company delivered at the boundary of Blackheath Municipality at Medlow Bath and at the boundary of the Shire at Leura." (BMC 1922).

The parties managed to negotiate an agreement by mid-1922. This swift action drew favourable comment from the press, combined with a back-hander for Katoomba, which had yet to act on the power of acquisition clause in its own contract with the KELC.

> "If the Blackheath and Shire Councils have shown promptitude and sincerity in dealing with a vital matter such as the supply of electric current, the action of the Katoomba Council in respect to the same proposition, judged by results, supplies a vivid contrast humiliating to Katoomba, the senior body" (Anonymous 1922d).

As no copy of the contract has come to hand, it is not clear whether the KMC could have sought to purchase the KELC's business only at the end of the 10-year contract (i.e. after 1925) or earlier. The BMSC borrowed £20,000 to fund the purchase price of £13,900, plus £6,100 to cover immediate extensions (BMSC 1923b). The KELC had supplied consumers through the same circuit as the street lights, so private supply was only available when the street lights were switched on. Once it acquired the system, the BMSC decided to run parallel wires so that supply was available independently of the street lighting schedule (BMSC 1923a).

Requests for supply started flowing in to the BMSC Lighting Committee, even before it formally took over the distribution business at the beginning of 1923 (BMSC 1922). The ratepayers of Springwood had long been eager for the KELC to extend supply, and had even raised £4,000 towards setting up their own generating plant when the KELC declined (Newell 1923). The ratepayers of Faulconbridge were less keen, even though the mains would have to pass them to get to Springwood. Their objections were resolved once it was made clear that they would get power at the same price as Springwood, even though the town was much smaller and it would be more costly per customer to install the house wiring.

After some wrangling with the KELC, the Blackheath Municipal Council separately settled on a purchase price of £7,764 for its part of the system (BMC 1923).

From 1 January 1923, the BMC and the BMSC found themselves running a rapidly growing electricity business. They did not have generating plant, since they purchased the electricity in bulk from the KELC (at about 1d/kWh), but they were responsible for all other aspects – planning, financing, approving individual connections, installing meters, setting tariffs, collecting accounts and even licensing electricians (until a Statewide scheme was introduced). Each council appointed an electrical engineer to assist, but the elected councillors remained in charge, approving all decisions and expenditures even as the electrical department grew in worker numbers and revenue.

3. The Katoomba Council buys out the KELC

Under the 1915 arrangement the KELC supplied electric street lighting in the Katoomba municipality and could use the streets to run its poles and wires, although the KMC's permission became irrelevant after 1919, when the KELC purchased the gas company's statutory rights to use public land for this purpose. Even so some of the aldermen continued to agitate for the council to set up its own electricity business in competition with the KELC. The opportunity for the KMC to build its own powerhouse grew out of a separate issue – water supply. The council owned steam-operated pumps to move water from the Cascade Creek dams north of the railway line to a service reservoir located to

the south of the line. Pumping by electricity was first discussed between the KMC and the Public Works Department as early as June 1913, but there was no thorough investigation until June 1915 (KMC 1920b).

In November 1915 the KMC accepted the KELC's offer to supply power to electric pumps at 1d/kWh, provided it got an allowance of free water to cover the extra steam to generate the energy required (KMC 1920b). The project relied on the KMC obtaining the necessary pumps and electric motors from Britain, but the outbreak of the First World War in July 1914 had disrupted normal trade. The council placed orders for equipment in August 1916, but as the war dragged on the delivery was delayed indefinitely. In the meantime the aging steam pumps were becoming unreliable.

In March 1918 the Mayor and Town Clerk travelled to Melbourne to ask the Commonwealth Director of Munitions to grant a "B Certificate" giving priority for the manufacture (and shipment) of the Councils' electric motors in Britain (KMC 1918). The request was refused. The following week one of the existing pumps broke down and had to be replaced. The KMC introduced restrictions on garden watering which were to last well after the war.

The relationship between the KMC and the KELC became testy. Letters seemed to go astray or fail to be answered, and some key discussions between the Mayor and the KELC manager, Otto Camphin, went unrecorded (KMC 1920b). Apart from the pumping matter, there were regular disagreements about the position and safety of poles, and fines for non-working street lights (even though the KELC employed a patrolman to attend to broken lamps).

In mid 1919 the KMC commissioned the consulting engineer J.E. Donoghue to prepare a plan for a new powerhouse to generate electricity for pumping. Donoghue estimated that the running cost saving compared with steam pumps would be sufficient to cover the interest on the capital. He recommended a site in Bent Street to the north of the rail line, and a system for feeding coal by gravity from rail-side hoppers all the way to the boilers. (The KMC eventually built its powerhouse at that site, but it did not start operating until 1923, and the gravity feed system was never built). The council accepted Donoghue's proposal and in September 1919 obtained the government's authority to raise a loan of £11,000 to fund it (KMC 1919). In January 1920 it accepted tenders of £8,694 for the boilers and generator; it planned to use its own labour for construction of the building (KMC 1920a).

This momentum was derailed by council elections at the end of January 1920. These were unusually heated, with many long-serving aldermen losing their seats to a well-organised 'Progress and Vigilant Association' ticket which included Otto Camphin, the manager of the KELC.

There were hints that Joynton Smith heavily backed the ticket to head off the KMC's plans to build its own electricity business in competition with the KELC (Anonymous 1920). If so, the strategy succeeded. In April 1920, soon after the new Council took office, it passed a motion

> "That the Katoomba Electricity Supply Co. be asked if they are prepared to enter into negotiations with the object of selling out their public and private lighting business to the Council." (KMC 1920b).

Although Camphin did not vote or take part in the discussion, this proposal was obviously more advantageous for the KELC than if KMC had proceeded to set up its own system.

Before negotiations could get under way there was another water pumping crisis in April 1922, which almost caused the shutdown of the boilers at the Parke Street powerhouse and consequent problems for the 50,000 or so visitors in town for the Easter season (Anonymous 1922b). The KMC finally procured an electric motor and pump, which after many delays started operating in mid-1922, with power obtained from the KELC. The water supply and electricity systems, already inter-dependent, grew even closer once the water pumping switched over to electricity.

Apart from lighting, heating and pumping there were regular proposals for other grand

electric projects to support the rapidly growing tourism sector. In September 1920 the KMC approved a proposal from the Electric Lift Syndicate to construct a lift at Echo Point. The proposal limped on through the 1920s, but was eventually killed off by the financial depression and the construction of the Great Stairway down to the Jamison Valley (Anonymous 1932a). So nothing came of this, nor of earlier schemes for electric tramways and electric trolley-buses (Anonymous 1913a).

Once electric pumping was installed, it accounted for nearly 27% of the annual output of the Parke Street powerhouse. The general Katoomba and Leura load accounted for 43%, the eastern townships (Wentworth Falls and Lawson) for 16% and the western townships (Blackheath and Mount Victoria) for 14% (Anonymous 1922c).

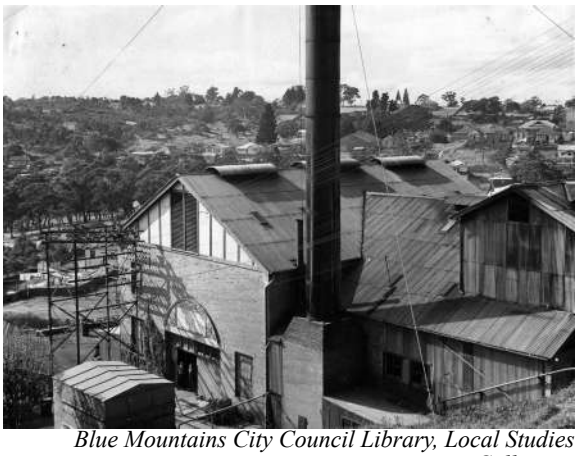
The KMC was by far the largest single customer of the KELC, so it was logical for it to pursue the purchase of the KELC's retail business as well as its bulk supply contracts with other councils, and so consolidate the electricity supply to the whole of the upper Blue Mountains, from Lawson to Mount Victoria. However, there was another potential supplier of bulk power on the horizon – the NSW Railway Commissioners (RC).

The RC had completed the Ultimo powerhouse in 1899 and the White Bay power station in 1912, to power the electrification of the Sydney tramway system and, later, the city and north shore railways. In the 1920s the NSW government encouraged the RC to build power stations to support economic development in other parts of the State, even where there was no electric traction. In August 1922 the RC wrote to the KMC advising:

> "…the Commissioners have under consideration the establishment of a Central Generating Station in the neighbourhood of Lithgow, and enquiring whether Council is prepared to consider the purchase of electricity in bulk." (KMC 1922).

Some councillors were interested, but others sensed that delays were likely. Nearly a year later the RC advised the KMC that Parliament had still not appropriated funds for the project, which would take at least two years to build once it was approved (Anonymous 1923c). The Lithgow power station was eventually approved by the Government in February 1926 and started operating in December 1927 (Anonymous 1927b). Until then Lithgow was supplied with bulk power by the Oakey Park coal mining company.

Fortunately, the KMC had not waited, but in 1922 erected its own powerhouse in Bent Street (Figure 9) with a 225 kW generating set which finally started operating in February 1923 to supply the electric pumps at the dam (Anonymous 1923b).



Blue Mountains City Council Library, Local Studies Collection

Figure 9. Katoomba powerhouse in 1935.

Negotiations for the purchase of the KELC's distribution business dragged on, even as the Blackheath and Blue Mountains Shire councils finalised the purchase of the KELC distribution assets in their own areas, taking over the businesses in January 1923.

During 1923 the demand for electricity in the upper mountains increased significantly with the opening in February of a 25 hp (19 kW) plant at Mount Victoria for crushing chert (stone used for road base) (Anonymous 1923a).

> "A 25-horse-power motor has been installed, the electric current being obtained from Katoomba. A pumping plant brings water from the valley below. The whole of the plant, including the steam waggon, has cost the Blue Mountains Shire Council approximately £8000." (Anonymous 1923a).

Also there was the installation of an additional 50 hp (38 kW) pump at the Katoomba dam in September (it broke down in

December) (KMC 1923c). That pump was located on the upper (older) dam, and with the completion of the lower dam it had to raise the water from the lower reservoir as well. It was resolved to relocate the pumping station to the lower dam

> "to remove the cost of lifting the water twice."

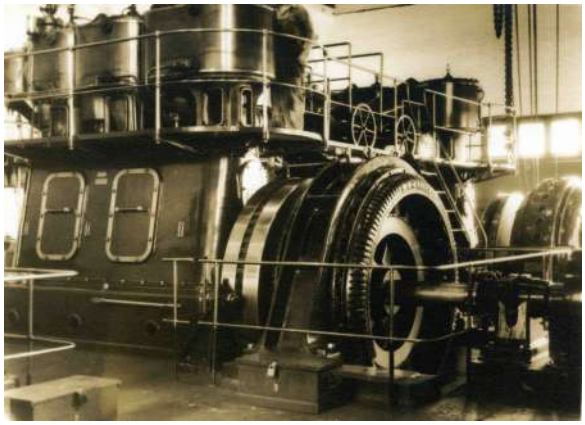
In January 1924 the KMC called for comparison of pumping costs under three options: steam, electric pumping using KELC's supply and (the cheapest option) electric pumping using supply from the Council's own powerhouse (KMC 1924).

In July 1923 the KMC discussed with the BMSC the possibility of forming a county council for electricity supply, and in August the KMC started the process of engaging an electrical engineer (KMC 1923a). In September the KMC received an up-to-date report on the value of the KELC's assets and revenues, and in October it offered the KELC £35,000 for the Katoomba and Leura distribution business, and

> "…the sum of £8,500 for the 500 k W (*sic*) Bellis Morcom Generating Set with the largest boiler, subject to it being first passed by an Engineer appointed by the Council, and to it being re-erected in the Council's Power House by the Company, and the running thereof supervised by the Company, also that the Company guarantee its running for a period of six months." (KMC 1923b).

Negotiations went back and forth during 1923, 1924 and well into 1925. In January 1925 a NSW Department of Public Works enquiry found the KMC to be split, with five aldermen in favour of purchasing the KELC's business and four against. The dissenters had taken it on themselves to approach the Oakey Park Coal-mining Company which supplied power to Lithgow, to inquire about the possibility of supply to Katoomba, should the council set up its own retail business to compete with the KELC (Anonymous 1925).

The opposing aldermen were finally voted off the council, and the KMC took over the Katoomba retail electricity supply business from the KELC on 1 April 1925 at a purchase price of £32,500, and it also acquired the KELC's bulk supply contracts with the BMSC and the BMC. The KMC planned to generate the electricity at its new Bent Street powerhouse, but the KELC agreed to retain a 200 kW alternator at Parke Street and to provide backup supply for 5 years (while continuing to generate electricity for the Carrington Hotel). The KMC took out loans for the purchase of the KELC's business, for a new 500 kW Bellis-Crompton steam engine-driven generating set, and also for the KELC's 500 kW Bellis-Morcom set. However, there was considerable debate in council about the wisdom of buying the KELC's plant, said to be 18 years old, and the costs of repairs to bring it up to standard (Anonymous 1926). Soon after, the KMC ordered a third 500 kW generating set from Britain. With the original 225 kW alternator installed for pumping in 1923, and the three 500 kW alternators, the total nominal capacity of the Bent Street powerhouse reached 1,725 kW in 1927 (Figures 10 & 11).



Blue Mountains City Council Library, Local Studies Collection

Figure 10. Main Generator**,** Katoomba Powerhouse, 1935.

The next constraint was boiler capacity, as was noted in June 1928:

> "The increase in demand for electric current is phenomenal, as witness the fact that the peak load, on Saturday last, soared to 890 k.W. (*sic*) Such a demand, in the off season, is eloquent testimony to possibilities next Summer, and the Council should not delay in placing its order for another boiler." (Anonymous 1928a).

By 1928 the transition from Parke Street to Bent Street was complete, and the KMC settled down to running its electricity business as efficiently as it could. The electrical engi-

Blue Mountains City Council Library, Local Studies Collection

Figure 11. Main switchboard, Katoomba Powerhouse, 1935.

Blue Mountains City Council Library, Local Studies Collection

Figure 12. Katoomba Municipal Council Electrical Department Staff, 1937.

neer, Mr. C. Crowley, drew an annual salary of £750, higher even than that of the Town Clerk (KMC 1928), commensurate with the large staff he had to manage (Figure 12). One of Crowley's first priorities was to increase the daytime load, and hence the return on the capital invested. The peak load on the system occurred between dusk and 11pm, when street lights, display lights and indoor lighting were all in use. At the end of 1926 the daytime load was only 250 kW even when the water supply pumps were on. The KMC adopted the engineer's proposal of a two-part tariff, under which consumers paid a lower price as their consumption increased. By the end of 1927 the typical daytime load had risen to 400 kW, exclusive of the pumping load (Anonymous 1927a).

To further develop the load, Crowley recommended that the Council set up a showroom for electrical appliances. However he resigned in November 1929 and by January 1930 the showroom had been closed and Crowley and Holroyd Electrics bought the stock and opened a new showroom at the Katoomba Station Steps (Anonymous 1930a).

As consumption rose so prices fell, which in turn encouraged greater consumption. When the KMC bought the electricity retailing business in April 1923 the KELC was charging 11d/kWh for all lighting and 5d/kWh for all power (i.e. daytime use). By August 1928

the KMC had dropped the tariffs to a *maximum* of 7d/kWh for lighting and 4d/kWh for power, falling to as low as 1½d/kWh with high usage (Anonymous 1928b). Also dropped was the tariff which the electricity business charged the street lighting fund, going from 3½ d/kWh to 3d, and the water pumping tariff from 2½ d/kWh to 2d (Anonymous 1928b). The business was self-supporting, in that the KMC did not need to levy a special rate for repayment of electricity loans, as many other NSW municipalities were forced to do (Anonymous 1927a).

When the KMC's electrical engineer, A. Mayer, addressed Katoomba Rotary Club in April 1939 he proudly pointed out that in 1938 the business had 3,647 customers, sales of 3,951,427 kWh and £37,000 revenue (on a capital investment of £90,000) and 45 miles (72.4km) of mains wiring. Katoomba was brightly lit by 620 public street lights, both Katoomba and Leura Falls were floodlit, and in the main street there were many private neon signs –

> "it is said that Katoomba has more of these signs in proportion to population than any town in New South Wales." (Anonymous 1939).

4. Growth after the Second World War

Despite the apparent success of the business, in 1929 the KMC commissioned a report from Mr. L. Franki, the electrical engineer of the BMSC (which along with BMC was buying power in bulk from the KMC) and he found that

> "the undertaking was considerably over-capitalised" (Anonymous 1930d).

Lithgow Mercury, 4 February 2014

Figure 13. The Lithgow Power Station, built in 1927 by the NSW Railway Commissioners.

Moreover Mr. Franki was appalled at the poor record keeping:

> "It is amazing, and almost impossible to believe that in a system such as yours, on which there has been such a large capital expenditure, that absolutely no record is available in plan form of the mains erected, where high tension mains are run, the positions of poles, the poles from which consumers are connected, and other general information so necessary and essential to enable the undertaking to be efficiently controlled and worked, and alterations to be considered and made in an intelligent, economical, and satisfactory manner.
>
> A plan with the above information should be prepared at once." (Anonymous 1930c).

Mr. Franki noted that the KMC had 1122 poles, of which 598 had been erected after 1928, and had 1874 house services, compared with 900 when it bought the business (Anonymous 1930b). He recommended that the KMC take bulk supply from the Rail Commissioners, whose Lithgow power station had opened in 1927 (Figure 13). The KMC did not take up the recommendation, but Franki's own BMSC did.

In late 1930, work began on a high-voltage line from Lithgow to a new RC sub-station in Lawson. The Railway Commissioners were so pleased with the line and its 100 foot wide cleared right of way that they printed an illustrated booklet promoting it as a tourist walk, with the locations of the railway stations nearest to the route carefully marked (NSWRC 1931).

The BMSC terminated its supply contract with the KMC and, on 1 July 1931, started taking supply from the RC. Although the new 33 kV line actually ran through the town, the Blackheath Municipal Council was

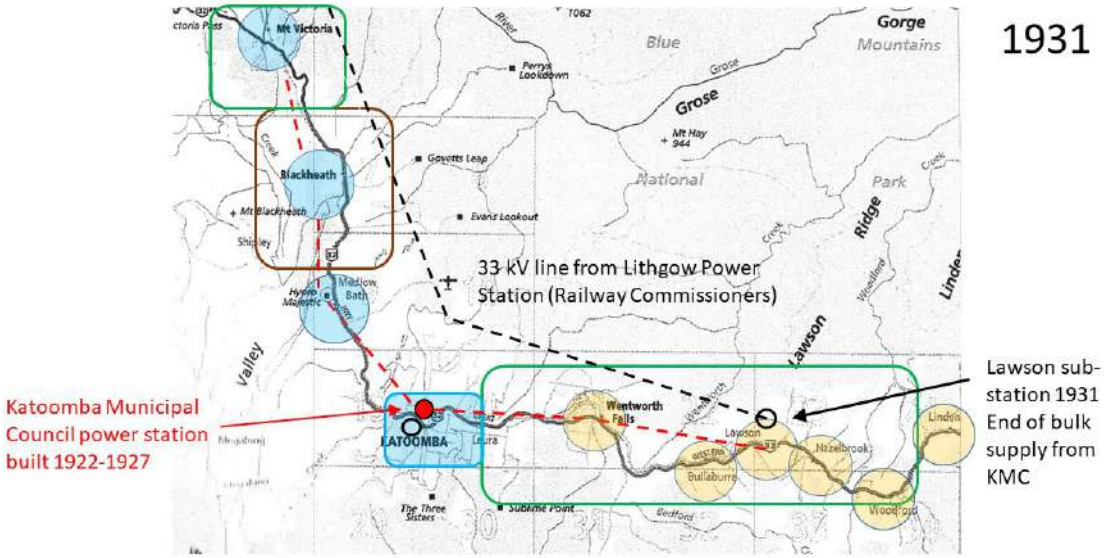


Figure 14. Local government areas, towns where electricity was available and power transmission links, 1931 *(diagrammatic).*

not persuaded to follow the BMSC's example, pronounced itself happy with the KMC's supply and renewed its bulk supply contract in November 1932 (Anonymous 1932b). However the BMC was able to remove the line running to Mount Victoria, which as part of the BMSC was now supplied from Lithgow (Anonymous 1930e).

By mid 1931 Blackheath itself was connected to two sources of supply – Katoomba and (in emergencies) the new RC high voltage line (Figure 14).

The new supply arrangements were to last until the formation of the Blue Mountains County Council in July 1944. The idea of a County Council to provide shared services and utilities in the Blue Mountains had been floated as early as 1921 (Anonymous 1921) but the time had never been ripe. And still there was some controversy. The KMC and BMSC supported the idea but Blackheath, independently-minded as always, did not. Nevertheless the decision was in the hands of the Minister for Local Government, J.J. Cahill, who agreed to the KMC and BMSC each nominating two County Councillors, and the BMC one.

The Minister made a point of attending the first meeting of the County Council on 25 July 1944. He noted that it had been given wider powers than any other County Council in NSW: water supply, sewerage, electricity, gas, public transport, erection of homes and other buildings, and tourism promotion. Other municipal functions such as public health, buildings and subdivisions, and construction and maintenance of roads, remained with the constituent councils (Anonymous 1944).

When the County Council commenced operation on 1 January 1945 it acquired the electricity supply assets of the three constituent councils, including the distribution network and the Bent Street powerhouse. The cost and source of generation was a high priority. The KMC had started negotiations on bulk supply with the Railway Commissioners in 1943, well before the County Council's formation.
Once bulk supply arrangements with the RC had been finalised (Anonymous 1947a) the County Council closed the Bent Street powerhouse in February 1946. It was none too soon. Plant failures, voltage drops and power shortages were becoming all too common in Katoomba. On 31 December 1945 the public New Year's Eve celebrations were cancelled due to restrictions on decorative outdoor lighting. Revellers had to take buses to Blackheath, which was served from the RC high voltage line between Lithgow and Lawson:

> "The only bright spots in Katoomba were the Picture Theatres. Brilliantly illumined (*sic*) by their own power plants, they unrestrainedly proclaimed their independence and enabled patrons to forget the cheerless darkness of the street." (Anonymous 1946a).

The fact that there were still private generators in service suggests that business confidence in the KMC's supply must have been low.

Private consumers were not happy either. A complainant wrote to a local paper

> "I have nothing but electricity by which to cook, and the power is so weak that to prepare a meal takes hours longer than it should. No matter how powerful the light-bulbs one installs, the electric light is as bright and flickering as a tallow candle." (Katoomba Housewife 1947).

Even the KMC itself took the opportunity in early 1945 to complain to the County Council about the electricity service, once the County had become responsible for it (Anonymous 1945). The County Council tried to keep the Bent Street powerhouse limping along, and it was still placing orders for new boiler parts in late 1946. In the meantime a third of Katoomba's electricity demand was met by the Lithgow power station, via Blackheath (Anonymous 1946c). The Bent Street powerhouse was finally decommissioned on 6 February 1947, not quite 20 years after it formally took over the Katoomba load from the Carrington Hotel's powerhouse at Parke Street. The decision to end generation at Bent Street also contributed to the closure in 1945 of the Katoomba Coal Mine, which had opened in 1925 and supplied fuel (of variable quality) to the Bent Street powerhouse (Anonymous 1947b).
By having all of its electricity supplied from the RC system, the County Council expected

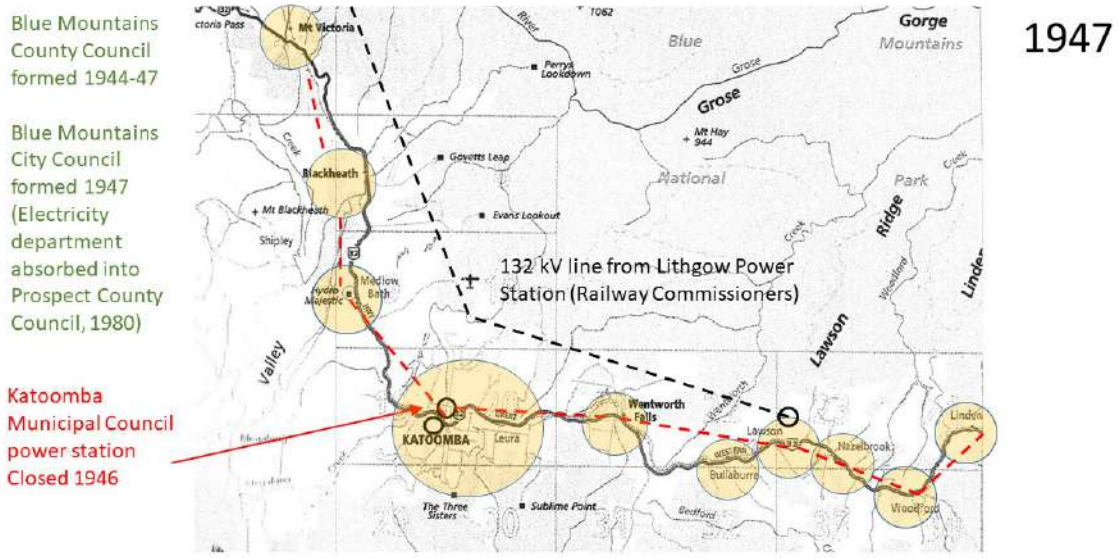


Figure 15. Local government areas, towns where electricity was available and power transmission links, 1947 *(diagrammatic).*

to save approximately £3,000 a year in Katoomba alone (Anonymous 1946b). After 6 February 1947 all public electricity supply in the Blue Mountains was generated outside the area (Figure 15).

The three largest electricity networks in NSW (the RC, the Southern Electricity Supply owned by the Department of Public Works and the Sydney County Council) had all been interconnected by the end of the war (Wilkenfeld 1989). Apart from Lithgow, the main RC power stations were in Sydney (at Ultimo (capacity of over 70 MW by 1947) and White Bay (completed 1912, capacity of over 132 MW by 1947)) and in Newcastle (Zarra Street, 27.5 MW).

The RC's Western Area extended from Dubbo across Bathurst, Orange, Lithgow and the Blue Mountains. By 1947 the Lithgow power station was itself a relatively small part of the RC system, even though by then it had four turbine generators totalling 10 MW output, nearly six times the capacity of Bent Street with its antiquated reciprocating steam engines. In 1946 the Lithgow power station generated 33,175 MWh, less than 4% of the RC total output (TED 1948). Bulk sales to Western Area councils (including the BM County Council) totalled 45,391 MWh, so about a third of the Western Area's electricity consumption was being imported from outside the area.

The BM County Council itself lasted less than three years. In February 1947 the Minister for Local Government commissioned a report on the formation of a Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) to encompass Katoomba, Blackheath and the Blue Mountains Shire (Anonymous 1947c). The Government was said to have been heading towards a single council even before the BM County Council was declared and may have seen the County as a necessary intermediate step.

The BMCC was formally created on 1 October 1947, so abolishing the three constituent councils as well as the County Council. Mr. C.A. Strachan was appointed chief electrical engineer to what now became the Blue Mountains City Council Electrical Department. This arrangement was to be the most stable in the history of Blue Mountains electricity supply. It lasted for over 32 years, until the end of 1979, when the NSW government merged the council's electricity undertaking with the Prospect County Council, which supplied electricity to western Sydney. By then the Blue Mountains City Council was the last municipal council in NSW

still managing its own electricity undertaking – all the others had long been merged into county councils.

After 1950, all the separate generation bodies (including the Railways, the Public Works Department and the Sydney County Council) were merged into the new Electricity Commission of NSW, which embarked on a program of building very large power stations on the main coalfields, including two near Lithgow (Wallerawang and Mount Piper power stations) (Wilkenfeld 1989). After more amalgamations, the Blue Mountains is now served by one of the three remaining NSW electricity distribution networks: Endeavour Energy, whose many hundreds of thousands of poles include several hundred installed by the Katoomba Electric Lighting Company as early as 1915 (Figure 16).

The restructuring of the NSW electricity market after 1995, which was part of the creation of the National Electricity Market encompassing all States and Territories (other

Photo: G. Wilkenfeld 2016

Figure 16. An original KELC electricity supply pole still in service in 2022 outside 6 Duff Street, Katoomba,

Photo: G. Wilkenfeld 2016

Figure 17. Former KMC powerhouse in Bent Street powerhouse, Katoomba, in 2016.

than WA and the NT) resulted in the organisational and functional separation of electricity generation, long-distance transmission, distribution and retailing. Although the Blue Mountains fall into the Endeavour Energy distribution territory, consumers can choose to purchase their electricity from a number of retailers, including AGL, EnergyAustralia and Origin.

The Bent Street powerhouse still exists (Figure 17), but the steel chimneys were taken down in September 1949 (Anonymous 1949). The original equipment has been removed but its fate is not known. At the time of writing, the building is occupied by a company selling solar photovoltaic and battery power systems.

The Parke Street powerhouse attached to the Carrington Hotel also still exists (Figure 5), together with its iconic brick chimney. Power generation ended in the late 1920s, and in 2009 the boiler room space was converted into the hotel's food and wine store and, recently, the transformer room became a brewery. There is no original equipment left.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

BM	Blue Mountains
BPA	Blackheath Progress Association
BMC	Blackheath Municipal Council
BMCC	Blue Mountains County Council
BMSC	Blue Mountains Shire Council
BMSC LC	Blue Mountains Shire Council Lighting Committee
KELC	Katoomba Electric Lighting Company
KLGC	Katoomba and Leura Gas Company
KMC	Katoomba Municipal Council
TED	Tait's Electrical Directory

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Rowan Brae School, Blackheath

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Abstract
Rowan Brae Day and Boarding School (1937-1950?) was a private school that opened in Mt Victoria and after a year moved to Blackheath. In Mt Victoria the house *High Lodge* was used but it seems never to have been re-named *Rowan Brae*, and the building used in Blackheath only acquired that name long after the school had closed. The school was operated by spinsters Clara Ashcroft and Daisy Plunkett, neither of whom had a formal teaching qualification. In Blackheath they seemed to have lived in the school house on the Great Western Highway despite owning the adjacent building *Park Brae* in Wentworth Street which may have been an annex. Unknown are the number of pupils and the layout of the rooms for teaching, and only a little about the activities in the school.

Key Words: Rowan Brae, School, Ashcroft, Plunkett, Blackheath, Blue Mountains

INTRODUCTION

Many villages in the Blue Mountains have had non-Government Schools at various times and Blackheath has had more than most other settlements. Fairly complete records of Government Schools have been accumulated in NSW State Archives but that organisation has no similar information about Private Schools.

The known non-Government Schools that have existed in Blackheath are listed in Table 1. Brief historical accounts of most of those can be found within the book by Rickwood & West (2005). Subsequently Ron Brasier (2013) wrote a definitive paper on the Osborne Ladies College which was the school that had been in existence for the longest time, and had been the largest, until it was superseded in the late 20th Century by Gateway Christian School.

Table 1. Known Non-Government (Private) Schools in Blackheath

St Aidan's Grammar School (aka Miss Newbury's Grammar School)	pre 1896-1917
Misses Herbert's Ladies School	1889-1893 ?
Miss Darling's Ladies School	1899-1901
The Convent of Mercy School	1917-1932
Mr. Burgess' Private School	c.1920
Osborne Ladies College	1923-1958
Oakdene Grammar School	1933-1939
Rowan Brae Day and Boarding School	1938-1950 ?
Sacred Heart Catholic School	1964-1970 at least
Gateway Christian School (aka Blue Mountains Christian School)	1985+

Some of those Private Schools had very small enrolments but none-the-less were significant to residents of Blackheath. One such was the Rowan Brae Day and Boarding School (1938-1950?) of which the known details are still rather sparse and confusing even after much further research has been undertaken since the original article by Yeaman (1976) was edited and re-published (Yeaman 2005). In order to draw attention to the aspects that still puzzle they are given separate sub-headings in the text that follows in the hope that a reader might be able to provide some clues.

Foundation in Mount Victoria

In 1937* a newspaper columnist reported:

> "That beautiful residence "Rowan Brae," on the Great Western Highway, where Mr and Mrs Sams lived ... has been turned into a kindergarten and boarding-school for girls. Miss Plunkett is the head." (Anonymous 1937a).

[*Note that another source tells of foundation in the previous decade;
"The Lloyd Jones family from Sydney leased it as a holiday residence and it was leased to Miss Plunkett and Miss Ashcroft in the 1920s as a school before they transferred to Rowan Brae at Blackheath (PBH 130)." (NSW State Heritage Inventory 1170216 (Mv042)).
But that earlier leasing date has not been substantiated and nor has the name Lloyd Jones which does

1943 AUSIMAGE © Jacobs 2022 Group (Australia) Pty. Ltd

Figure 1A. *High Lodge*, Mount Victoria

not appear on the Certificate of Title as having been an owner at any time.]

In March 1937 Clara** Ashcroft was aged 42 and Daisy Plunkett 39 years; biographical details of those ladies are in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.

[** seemingly known within the family as Gwen (Anonymous 1947) but elsewhere and in this account Clara is used].

That property (Sec.1, Lots 20/25), **45-47 Great Western Highway** (Figure 1)**,** is opposite Mount York Road, and was named *High Lodge* (Mt Victoria Rate Records 1934 & 1937; NSW Electoral Roll 1936a; Anonymous 1937b) and continued to be so after the school had moved to Blackheath in June 1938 (e.g. Mt Victoria Rate Record 1939a, b). However the NSW Country Telephone Directory (1937) gives the address of the teachers as "Private School, Bathurst Rd., Mt. Victoria - 85". At the rear of the property there was an extensive area suitable for use as a playground (Figure 1A) but since

Photo: realestate.com.au

Figure 1B. *High Lodge*, Mount Victoria

subdivision that area has become a separate lot (L 2 DP 943578).

In newspaper articles that school was named "Rowanbrae" (Anonymous 1937b) or "Rowan Brae" (Anonymous 1938a) and the Electoral Roll entries (1937b,c & 1938b,c) for the teachers also gave those spellings so those names might well have been what the ladies informed the compilers so as to indicate their connection to the School.

PUZZLE 1

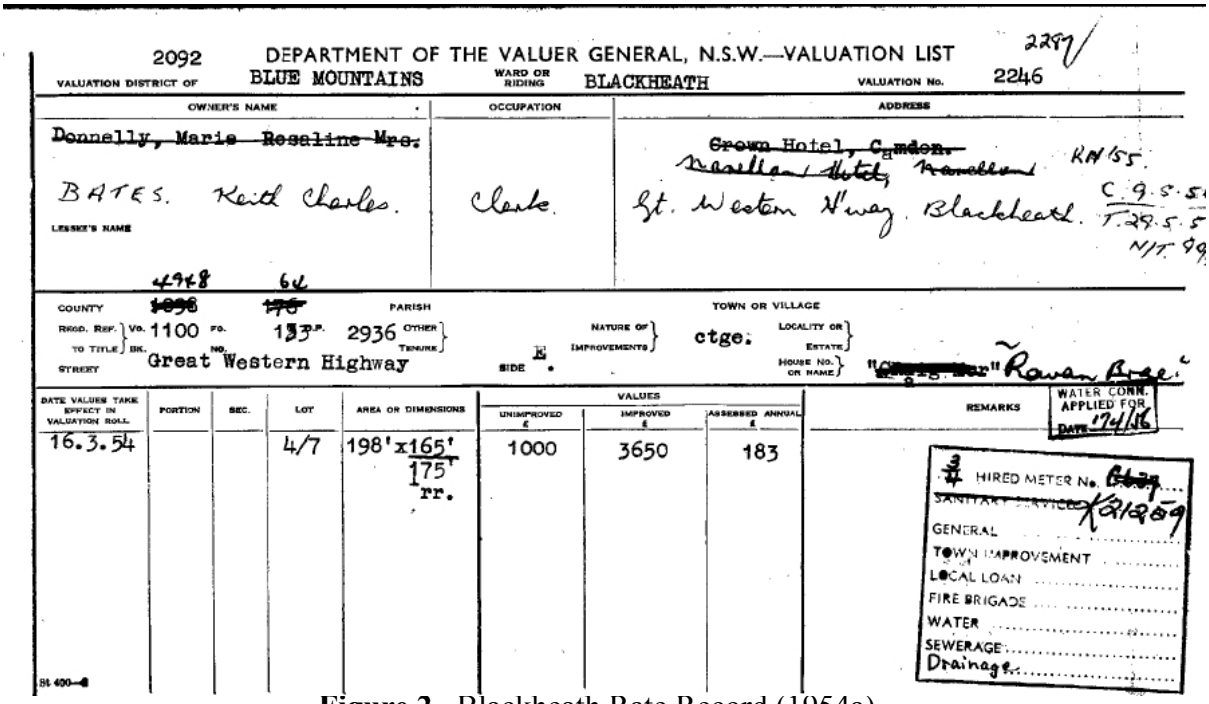
So was the house *High Lodge* in Mount Victoria unofficially re-named *Rowan Brae* from March 1937 (Anonymous 1937a) to June 1938 (Anonymous 1938b) when the school was functioning ? It would be nice to locate a photograph of that building taken in that time interval to see if there was signage outside and what was stated on it.

PUZZLE 2

That raises the question as to where the ladies found the name that they gave to their school. In Scotland there are houses named Rowan Brae or Rowanbrae (many of which now advertise that they provide accommodation), and that name has been used for various streets in that country. But the geographical place Rowan Brae (c.8 km south of Huntly, Aberdeenshire) is somewhat obscure as the name only appears on very detailed versions (i.e. large scale of a small area) of the UK OS Explorer map: OL62. But the Misses Ashcroft and Plunkett are unlikely to have seen a print of that map so the puzzle remains.

The School in Blackheath

Throughout a decade of newspaper advertisements not one has been found that gives



2092 DEPARTMENT OF THE VALUER GENERAL, N.S.W.—VALUATION LIST 2287/2246

VALUATION DISTRICT OF BLUE MOUNTAINS WARD OR RIDING BLACKHEATH VALUATION No.

OWNER'S NAME	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS
~~Donnelly, Marie Rosaline Mrs.~~ BATES. Keith Charles.	Clerk.	~~Crown Hotel, Camden.~~ ~~Rosellan Hotel, Rosellan~~ RN 155. Gt. Western Hway. Blackheath. C 9.5.5 T 29.5.5 N/T 99

LESSEE'S NAME

4948 64

COUNTY ~~Cook~~ PARISH TOWN OR VILLAGE

REGD. REF. TO TITLE Vo. 1100 Fo. 153 BK. 2936 OTHER TENURE NO. NATURE OF IMPROVEMENTS ctge. LOCALITY OR ESTATE HOUSE NO. OR NAME "~~Craig Mor~~" Rowan Brae

STREET Great Western Highway SIDE E.

DATE VALUES TAKE EFFECT IN VALUATION ROLL	PORTION	SEC.	LOT	AREA OR DIMENSIONS	VALUES UNIMPROVED £	VALUES IMPROVED £	VALUES ASSESSED ANNUAL £	REMARKS
16.3.54			4/7	198'x165' 175 rr.	1000	3650	183	WATER CONN. APPLIED FOR DATE 7/4/16

HIRED METER No. ~~6837~~ X21989

SANITARY SERVICES

GENERAL

TOWN IMPROVEMENT

LOCAL LOAN

FIRE BRIGADE

WATER

SEWERAGE

Drainage

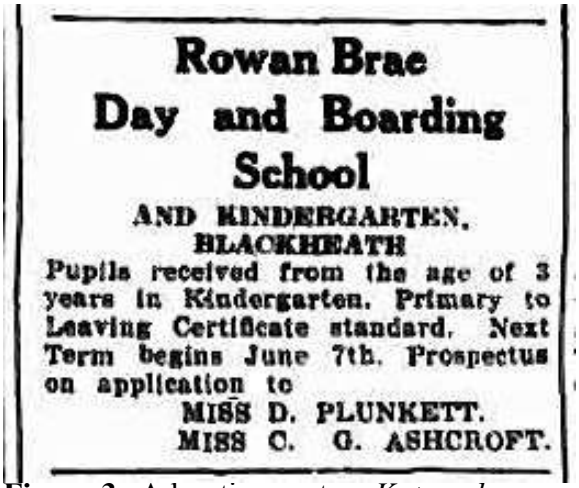
St 400—6

Figure 2. Blackheath Rate Record (1954a).

the address of the school in Blackheath - it was a brief paragraph in a newspaper that stated:

> "The Misses Plunkett and Ashcroft have taken "Rowan Brae," Blackheath, and will open a school there on Monday next, June 6. The school will be known under the name of "Florence" " (Anonymous 1938b).

[That erroneously implies that in 1938 the building in Blackheath was named *Rowan Brae* - but that name did not get recognised and used by Council until 1954 (Figure 2). And the School never did acquire the name *Florence* !]



Rowan Brae
Day and Boarding School
AND KINDERGARTEN,
BLACKHEATH
Pupils received from the age of 3 years in Kindergarten. Primary to Leaving Certificate standard. Next Term begins June 7th. Prospectus on application to
MISS D. PLUNKETT.
MISS C. G. ASHCROFT.

Figure 3. Advertisement ex *Katoomba Daily*, 12 May 1938, p.5, col.6.

That house is in the northern part of Blackheath (just to the south of Sturt Street) and is now regarded as being **284 Great Western Highway**. From 9 January 1907 it was the elegant residence of the wealthy land owner Ebenezer Vickery (e.g. Blackheath Rate Record 1914-16) and then of Mrs Ethel Vickery from 2 March 1917 (Blackheath Rate Record 1917) until 14 August 1928 (CoT 1893). According to the earliest available Blackheath Rate Record (1914-16) that house was then named *Florence* and it continued to be called so in subsequent Blackheath Rate Records for 1917, 1918 and 1919 which is the extent of the existing pre-1934 rate records. But from 1934 (Blackheath Rate Records 1934) until 1954 (Blackheath Rate Records 1954a) Council recorded the name of that house as being *Craig Mor* and only subsequent to 1954 as *Rowan Brae* (Figure 2) which is the name still in use (BMCC Map 2021).

As advertised (Plunkett & Ashcroft 1938; Figure 3) the name of the school was "Rowan Brae Day and Boarding School" but Yeaman (1976, p.249) erroneously called it "Rowenbrae (*sic*) junior school" . NSW Country Telephone directories (1939-1950) list both C.G. Ashcroft and D. Plunkett as residing at "Private School, Bathurst Rd. 85" but Rowan Brae School itself was not listed.

Pupils

Whereas the version of Rowan Brae School in Mount Victoria was

> "a kindergarten and boarding-school for girls" (Anonymous 1937a)

in Blackheath it was co-educational and provided for both day and boarding pupils "from the age of three years" to "Leaving Certificate standard" (Anonymous 1938a and Figure 3). It was conducted by Miss Clara Gwendolyne Ashcroft and Miss Daisy Plunkett who was assisted at times by her sister, Selina (aka Lena), a nurse (Anonymous *no date*). "The uniform was maroon and grey" (Yeaman 1976, p.249).

Qualifications

The qualifications possessed by Clara Ashcroft and Daisy Plunkett to justify calling themselves teachers are unknown and it is possible that they 'just believed that they could teach' ! as no legal requirement has been discovered for the formal training of those conducting private schools in NSW in the 1930s and 1940s.

- Clara Ashcroft was listed in NSW Electoral Rolls (1925b-1936b) as having "home duties" so she was not proclaiming to be a teacher before Rowan Brae school was opened in Mt Victoria. But she did have some formal tuition, thus:

  > "Miss Ashcroft, ...trained with Lawrence Campbell for Dramatic Art and took Art courses with Miss Dimmock and Miss Cornish." (Anonymous 1951a)

but when has not been established. She was "particularly interested in the kindergarten work".

On the other hand,

- Daisy Plunkett had a very short stint as a "temporary assistant teacher" in Bimbi, NSW in 1915 (NSW Department of Public Instruction 1915) which was hardly adequate training for that profession yet four years later she was listed (one year after becoming 'of age') as a teacher in the NSW Electoral Roll (1919) and also so listed in the NSW Electoral Rolls (1921-1936c). Apparently at some time "Miss Plunkett, trained at 'Shirley' Edgecliff," (Anonymous 1951a).

(That was a feminist educational establishment run by Margaret Hodge who had been an "honorary lecturer in the theory and practice of education (1899-1903)" at Sydney University (Bettison 2005)).

Daisy Plunkett

> "was on the teaching staff of -ay (*illegible*) Road, Church of England Grammar School" (Anonymous 1951a)

but when and for how long is not known.

From 1943 (Blackheath Rate Record 1943) until 1951 (Blackheath Rate Record 1951) "School Teacher" was the profession ascribed to both ladies, whereas in Electoral Rolls their professions are merely 'teacher' -

Property Showcase, September 2015, p.18.

Figure 4. Rowan Brae house in 2015.

Ashcroft (NSW Electoral Rolls 1937b-1954); Plunkett (NSW Electoral Rolls 1937c-1972).

Buildings

The house at 284 Great Western Highway must have been leased by Ashcroft & Plunkett for the two Certificates of Title (CoT 1893 & 1938) do not contain the name of either of those ladies. The Rate Records always called the building a cottage - never a school yet that was how it was officially recognised by the Minister for Education (Evatt 1941).

The house (Figure 4) was built in the 1890s and has been described as being a:

> "Federation arts and crafts style ..... Hipped roof house facing west to Great Western Highway. Slate roof with terracotta crested ridging. Corbelled brick chimneys with strapwork decoration and brick cowls." (NSW State Heritage Inventory 1170080).

The southerly extension with a long verandah was added in c.1990.

Expansion

> "During the Second World War years the school expanded to such an extent that a house in Wentworth Street was added to the school to provide additional accommodation." (Yeaman 1976, p.249).

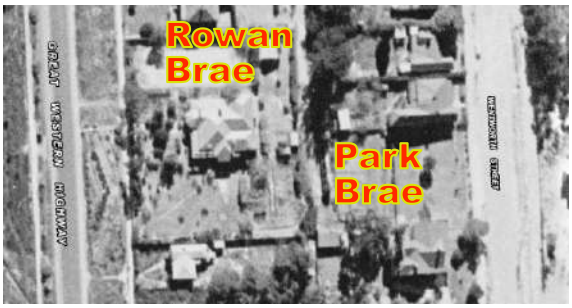
But no **firm** evidence has been found to substantiate that contention.

Park Brae

The inferred extension to the school was a house called *Park Brae* that is conveniently located east of *Rowan Brae* across Hampden Lane and has the address 164, Wentworth Street (Figure 5). It was acquired by "retired draper" Edgar Board in 1923 (CoT 1897) and on his death it passed into his estate (Blackheath Rate Record 1937) and by August 1938 to a trio consisting of his widow, his daughter Helen and estate agent Clarence Thompson (CoT 1897). By 1940 the Misses Plunkett & Ashcroft were paying the rates (Blackheath Rate Record 1940) and continued to do so until 1954 (Blackheath Rate b). According to the Certificate of Title (CoT 1946) *Park Brae* was acquired by Miss Daisy Plunkett & Miss Clara Ashcroft on 10 August 1945 and in an Affidavit Daisy Plunkett (1956a) swore

> "This property was purchased by the abovenamed (*sic*) deceased and myself in or about the month of August one thousand nine hundred and forty five for nine hundred and fifty pounds (£950) from Helen Gwendoline Board."

That had been Daisy Plunkett's first property purchase but three decades previously Clara Ashcroft had bought land (Lot 11, Sec 3) on the east side of Seaview Avenue, Newport, when aged only 19 (CoT 1910 & 1913).



1943 AUSIMAGE © Jacobs Group (Australia) Pty. Ltd

Figure 5. 1943 image showing the proximity of *Park Brae* to *Rowan Brae*.

In 1946 the address of Miss Daisy Plunkett & Miss Clara Gwendolyn Ashcroft on rates records for *Park Brae* was changed from "Rowan Brae School, Bathurst Road" to "*'Kalkite'*, Hat Hill Rd" (Blackheath Rate Record 1946b)**. *Kalkite* remained their stated address until & including 1954 (Blackheath Rate Record 1954b); thereafter it was the address of just Miss Daisy Plunkett (Blackheath Rate Record 1957) although when Brian Mathews became the owner her name was struck out and that alteration was dated "3 10/58" (*sic*).

**[Blackheath Rate Record (1946a) is annotated "Lots 1/5 sold to Miss Daisy Plunkett & Miss Clara Gwendoline Ashcroft. "*Kalkite'* Hat Hill Rd, Blackheath 296/19 12.9.4 *illegible*"]

PUZZLE 3

For what purpose was *Park Brae* actually used ?

- The rate records always listed *Park Brae* as a cottage and never as a school so to what purpose did the Misses Ashcroft and Plunkett put it from the time that they leased it in c.1940 until they bought it in August 1945 ?

- Was *Park Brae* in fact an annex to the school for some part of that leasing period, as inferred by Yeaman (1976, p.249), or did it at one time become the main site of the school as was implied by "In the late 1940s it relocated to Wentworth Street." (Yeaman 2005, p.321) ?
- And after the ladies had bought it in 1945 was *Park Brae* ever again used for school purposes ?

Kalkite

Kalkite (now *Montrose*) is a large property located on the southern side of Hat Hill Road at the corner with Inconstant Street; whereas it once had the address 15 Hat Hill Road now the BMCC regard it as being at 17 Inconstant Street. It consists of five lots split into two parcels; Lots 1-4 (CoT 1911b) and Lot 5 (CoT 1911a). Both Lots 1-4 (parallel to Hat Hill Road) and Lot 5 were acquired by

> "Daisy Plunkett and Clara Gwendoline Ashcroft, both of Blackheath, Spinsters, are ... joint tenants. See Transfer No. H101975 dated 7th September 1949" (CoT 1911b)

and on the death of the latter

> "Daisy Plunkett, the surviving joint tenant, is now registered sole proprietor of the land .. 8th December 1958" (CoT 1911a)

[That change of registration occurred 3 years after Clara Ashcroft died - very delayed]

Daisy Plunkett held *Kalkite* until 24 October 1972 (CoT 1911a,b) that year being the same as in her last Electoral Roll entry for that address (NSW Electoral Roll 1972).

PUZZLE 4

From 1972 Daisy Plunkett kept some belongings in *Kalkite* and after her death in 1987 they were auctioned at that address (Steer & Co. 1987) which prompts the question 'what was the arrangement for storage that she had negotiated' ?

Property Summary

So there were three properties in Blackheath associated with Daisy Plunkett and Clara Ashcroft - *Rowan Brae*, *Park Brae* and *Kalkite*.

PUZZLE 5

But where did the ladies actually live at various times ?

- Census records do give abodes but only for the night specified for a particular census so they may be just temporary residences. And unfortunately the detailed records of the NSW Census are not available post 1901.
- Certificates of Title reveal the names of owners of properties but those persons are not necessarily the occupants.
- Rate records reveal the name(s) of ratepayers and they may have a different mailing (? residence) address e.g. Plunkett & Ashcroft paid rates on *Park Brae* but from 1946 their mailing address was *Kalkite* in Hat Hill Road (Blackheath Rate Record 1946b). Often the names given on rate records are those of tenants e.g. Plunkett and Ashcroft in *Park Brae* in 1940 (Blackheath Rate Record 1940) & 1943 (Blackheath Rate Record 1943) before they acquired the property in 1945.
- Electoral Rolls purport to list residential addresses - but as that detail is provided by the elector are they accurate?

  Although Misses Ashcroft & Plunkett are listed in the NSW Electoral Rolls (1939b,c - 1950a.b) as residing at *Rowan Brae,* Blackheath (i.e. 284 Great Western Highway) they did not own that property, were tenants and then part owners of *Park Brae* from 1940-1953. Also they were part owners of *Kalkite* from 1946; Clara until her death in 1955 (Anonymous 1955) and Daisy until 1972 (NSW Electoral Roll 1972).

  Amelia Jane Ashcroft (Clara's mother) also resided at *Rowan Brae* firstly when the school was at Mt Victoria (NSW Electoral Roll 1937a) and when it was located in Blackheath (NSW Electoral Roll 1947). Indeed, the notice of the death of Miss Ashcroft's mother (Anonymous 1947) indicated that she died

  > "at her residence, Rowan Brae, Bathurst Road, Blackheath"

  which seems to reveal that at least the Ashcrofts used the main part of the school as a residence in what may have been the final year in which the school operated.

Clara Ashcroft & Daisy Plunkett are listed in the NSW Electoral Rolls (1951a,b) as living at *Kalkite* (15 Hat Hill Road). But Clara was last so listed in the 1954 (NSW Electoral Roll 1954) yet she died on 22 February 1955

so she was alive in the latter part of 1954 when the 1955 roll would have been compiled but she is not named in it.

PUZZLE 6
So where did Clara live in those last months of her life ?

Daisy Plunkett inherited the second half share in *Kalkite* and lived there until 1972 (NSW Electoral Roll 1972) when she parted with the property (CoT 1911a,b). For a considerable time her sister Selina (aka Lena - a nurse) lived there too (NSW Electoral Rolls 1953-1967)**.**

So if electoral rolls are to be believed then neither Clara Ashcroft nor Daisy Plunkett ever lived in *Park Brae*.

Closure
The last newspaper account of the school so far found was published in January 1948 and deals with exam results (Anonymous 1948) which at least indicates that the school operated in 1947. However the NSW Country Telephone Directories (1948 and 1950) list both C.G. Ashcroft and D. Plunkett at "Priv. Schl. Bathurst Rd. - 85" (telephone number) seemingly indicating that they were still 'active' in *Rowan Brae* in 1950.

PUZZLE 7
So did the school continue to operate through 1948 until the ladies moved to *Kalkite* at some date in 1950 before the NSW Electoral Roll (1951a,b) was compiled ? It seems likely.

A heritage report (NSW State Heritage Inventory 1170080) states that the closure of the school was in 1948 which conflicts with the statement

> "For over 14 years, the Misses Ashcroft and Plunkett, successfully conducted their own school at Blackheath." (Anonymous 1951a)

as with the School having been opened in Blackheath in 1938 that time span puts the closure year at 1952. Yeaman (1976, p.249) claimed that the school continued until the death of Miss Ashcroft hence in 1955 but most probably it was closed in 1950 enabling the ladies to be free of that commitment and able to start art classes at the Katoomba Children's Library in 1951 (Anonymous 1951a,b) - but whether that was their sole activity at that time has yet to be established..

Life after Rowan Brae School
When aged 59, Clara Ashcroft was still fit enough to spend a whole day assisting a search party looking along bush tracks for a missing elderly lady (Anonymous 1953d). Despite that fitness it would have been impossible for her to have had an active part in Rowan Brae School from 1953 as she was the initial Director of the Blackheath Pre-School Kindergarten (also called the Kookaburra Kindergarten) (Millios & Hood, 1976; Anonymous 1953a,b,c) and was in charge of it until her death in 1955.

Indeed, the history of the Rowan Brae school is obscure, particularly from 1948 until the mid 1950s.

Postscript
Rowan Brae at 284 Great Western Highway, Blackheath, was a Guest House for many years and then part was leased in which to operate an independent gourmet restaurant (Anonymous 1999a) which opened on 15 October 1999. Just prior to that date Misses Mary-Jane Craig and Corinne Evatt moved from *Lucinda's Restaurant* at the *Norwood Hote*l and appropriately named their new restaurant *Ashcroft's* (Anonymous 1999b) which ran successfully until late 2000.

Thereafter those ladies re-established *Ashcroft's* at 18 Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath, opening on 21 March 2001 (Anonymous 2001). The restaurant gained a reputation for fine dining for which it was awarded 'Two Hats' in the Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide (Anonymous 2005) and in several later years. *Ashcroft's* was closed on 20 October 2013 (pers. comm. Mary-Jane Craig, 10 October 2013).

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APPENDIX 1 - Biographical details of Miss Clara Ashcroft

Clara Gwendolyn Ashcroft was born on 28 July 1894 (Anonymous 1894b; NSW BDM 1894) to parents James William and Amelia Jane (née Hall). The Ashcroft family were living in Waverley (Anonymous 1894a) when Clara (their only child) was born but in 1897 they moved to the Newcastle area where her father was "assistant metallurgist at the Sulphide Works, Cockle Creek" (Anonymous 1897). Thereafter the patriarch changed jobs several times while Clara was young so some of Clara's schooling was out of Sydney such as at the Hay High School and Kindergarten (Anonymous 1899) where aged 5 she was "a housemaid, Miss G. Ashcroft" in a drama performance. A report of the Coronation Ball at Mt. Garnet, Queensland, states "Juveniles:—Miss Gwendoline Ashcroft, "Fairy Queen." (Anonymous 1902) - she was aged 8.

But Sands Directories, from 1908 to 1913 list J.W. Ashcroft as residing at Gordon Road, Roseville, so a Sydney based home was provided for Clara from at least the age of 14. She spent her teenage years in Roseville and first attended Roseville College (Anonymous 1935) and then Ravenswood School for Girls at Gordon where aged 17 her 1911 exam result was recorded (Findmypast 2018).

[Anonymous (1935) reported on a reunion of pupils at "Roseville College" and amongst the "official guests" were Miss D. Plunkett and Miss G. Ashcroft then aged 38 and 41 respectively. It seems likely that both had been pupils but being of different ages they would have been in different classes, yet the connection with that school is how they might have met.]

In 1913 Clara, then aged 19, was living in Roseville (CoT 1913) with her parents in an un-named house on Lane Cove Road (NSW Electoral Roll 1913). Subsequently the parents seemed to have resumed a nomadic existence until 1922 (NSW Sydney Metropolitan Telephone Directory 1922) when they bought part of the George's Hall Estate, near Bankstown, including the main building "*The Homestead*" (CoT 1915). Her father died there in 1922 (Anonymous 1922); his widow, Amelia Jane Ashcroft, inherited the property but sold it in November 1923 (CoT 1915) and moved to *Ben Aku*, 19 (*number specified later*) Stanley Street, Chatswood where Clara lived with her mother (NSW Electoral Roll 1925a) and was listed in the NSW Electoral Roll (1925b) as doing 'Home Duties'. Although eligible to have been on the electoral roll in 1915, Clara has not been traced in any of those rolls until 1925. Clara is similarly named as being at that address until 1936 (NSW Electoral Rolls (1936b) but her name has not been found in the NSW Sydney Metropolitan White Pages telephone directories for 1925-1936.

After teenage Clara seems primarily to have assisted her mother with "home duties' until 1937 when at the age of 42 she became involved with Rowan Brae School at Mt. Victoria.

Clara Ashcroft was involved in educational establishments in the Upper Blue Mountains from 1937 until she died, but she also had some 'outside' interests. Thus in 1941 she was elected Secretary to the Blackheath Boy Scouts Group Committee (Anonymous 1941) and in 1944 she was involved with the Blackheath Branch of the Liberal Party being both a Committee Member and a "Delegate to the State and Federal Electorate Conferences" (Anonymous 1952).

Clara Gwendolyn Ashcroft died on 22 February 1955 (NSW BDM 1955) of 'Cerebral haemorrhage' (Hailstone 1955) aged 61. She left a net estate valued at £3,941 (Plunkett 1956b) the whole of which was bequeathed to Daisy Plunkett, the Executrix of her will (Ashcroft 1951); probate was granted in December 1956.

PUZZLE 8

In 1951 it was reported that

> "Miss Plunkett has been working for the past 26 years with Miss Ashcroft:" (Anonymous 1951a).

That statement puts the start of their collaboration as 1925, well before their first confirmed joint activity in Mount Victoria in 1937, but is it true ?

APPENDIX 2 - Biographical details of Miss Daisy Plunkett

Daisy Plunkett was born in 1897 (NSW BDM 1897) to parents Henry James and Mary Jane (née Kensell). When Daisy was four years old her parents lived at 23 Simmonds Street, Newtown (Census 1901) so her infancy was spent in inner Sydney. She was aged about eight when the family moved to Waverley (Sands' 1906, p.1109) and started a long residence at Grafton Street east, Woollahra (e.g. Sands' 1919, p.1630) so it is logical to suppose that she would have been educated in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney but as indicated in Appendix 1 her known link is to "Roseville College" (Anonymous 1935).

On 6 July 1915, Daisy Plunkett commenced work as a "temporary assistant teacher" at Bimbi Public School, (c.25 km SW of Grenfell NSW) on a salary of £100 (p.a.) (NSW Department of Public Instruction 1915). For an 18-year old girl just getting to Bimbi from Sydney would have been an arduous adventure starting no doubt with a train trip to Bathurst (or perhaps to Grenfell as a branch line existed in those days - Gunn 1989, pp.234-235) and then a coach ride for the rest of the journey. But on arrival Daisy had to cope with children living in a tiny village (114 residents in 2016) so it was not long before she resigned on 30 September 1915 (NSW Department of Public Instruction 1915) and it is likely that she returned to Sydney in October 1915.

Daisy became eligible to be on the electoral rolls in 1918 and enrolled promptly for she is first listed in the NSW Electoral Roll (1919) as living with her family at 272, Grafton Street, Woollahra. Her occupation is stated to be a Teacher but it has been established that she did not teach at a Public school so where she was employed is unknown. She was living with her parents in Cootamundra in August 1919 (Anonymous 1919) when the 1920 roll would have been compiled, but thereafter until 1936 (NSW Electoral Rolls (1921-1936c) she resided at 28, Nelson Bay Road, Waverley with siblings Elizabeth C (? b: 1907), Henry J (b: 1893), Lena (b: 1887), Mary T and Maude A. (b: 1884). After a brief visit to northern NSW in 1932 (Plunkett 1932) she had a life in the Blue Mountains from 1937-1972 during which her non-educational pursuits ran to being a member of the "Blackheath citizens 'No' Committee" (Anonymous 1944a) campaigning against the 'Federal Powers Referendum', Vice-President of the Blackheath Boy Scouts Committee (1943 & 1944 - Anonymous 1944b) and Hon. Secretary of the Blackheath Branch of the Liberal Party of Australia (Goldie and Plunkett 1951; Anonymous 1952).

In late 1972 Miss Plunkett relocated from Blackheath to 1/9 Avalon Road, Avalon Beach (NSW Electoral Rolls 1973-1977a) and then to "Mowll Village, Castle Hill"** (NSW Electoral Rolls 1977b-1980) but her name has yet to be found in any electoral roll in her final six years, 1982-1987. However the NSW Sydney Metropolitan Telephone Directories (1980 & 1981) include a D. Plunkett with the address Kilvinton Village, Castle Hill (284 Castle Hill Road) - that seems likely to be Daisy and to indicate a move to an allied, and nearby, retirement abode.

[** a retirement village (named after Howard West Kilvinton Mowll (b:1890; Anglican Archbishop of Sydney 1933-1958) (Wikipedia 2021)) that is now at 35, Western Road, although that name has been applied to other nearby locations as well]

Daisy Plunkett's death on 31 January 1987 (NSW BDM 1987) occurred at Gordon (Anonymous 1987) leaving a gap from 1982-1987 as to where her official residence was, notwithstanding which it seems that she still had some hold on *Kalkite* in Blackheath (Steer & Co. 1987). If she was still living in one of the Castle Hill Village residences in those final years then her absence from electoral rolls may be due to a cognitive condition (senility or some such cause). No probate records are known so she may have died intestate.

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