

Heritage

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Acknowledgement of Country

BMACHO acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and emerging Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The Eldon Guesthouses and Lurline Street, Katoomba

As the Australian middleclass grew more prosperous and more mobile in the 1800s, a gap opened in the accommodation market: visitors wanted a mountain holiday but could not afford a grand hotel. Guesthouses filled that gap perfectly.

In 1905 the Katoomba & Leura Tourist Association was established by local businessmen, a number of whom were also aldermen, with the express purpose of the promotion of tourism and holiday accommodation in the town.

During the 1910s guesthouses and residential flats become a feature of Katoomba Street and the top of Lurline Street, encouraged by the rail service and increasing car transport. In the 1920s another wave of guesthouses opened in Lurline Street in both new and repurposed properties.

Lurline Street was lined with guesthouses. Most of them were owned, leased, or managed by women, when options for women who needed to earn a living were severely limited. The guesthouses were often run by enterprising ladies, some supplementing their husband's income and others being serious business women, serving the community with skills they had mastered in the home. However, running a business could be difficult, and married women faced legal barriers to property ownership and financial independence. Widows were left to fend for themselves and their children with whatever assets remained. Almost all of them built their businesses out of necessity and ran them with extraordinary competence.

As an example, we take a look at the *Eldon*.

The *Eldon* guesthouses, Katoomba

The first *Eldon* guesthouse

The original *Eldon* appears to have been built and owned initially by Mary Jesse Miller. None of the sources suggest a date of construction, but tracing advertising notices finds an advertisement for a house maid as early as April 1900 in *The Mountaineer*.

The guesthouse was possibly named for John Scott, 1st Lord of Eldon, 1751-1838, Lord Chancellor of England between 1801 and 1827, and a lawyer and judge.

The guesthouse was located at 121-129 Katoomba Street, almost opposite the current Catholic Church. The Allawah Flats are now located on this site, above a ground floor of shop fronts.

In November 1901 a sale of furniture at *Eldon* was advertised, and then in 1904 the wife of H J Wootten gave birth to a son at *Eldon*. The early years of *Eldon* saw it managed by Mrs Wootten, until about 1908 when she moved down the street with her husband to own *St Elmo* guesthouse. She was succeeded at *Eldon* by Mrs Webb, a hospitality manager, and a widow with two children.

In 1910 Mary Miller was recorded as having an issue with the employment of a maid, Fanny Rutherford, who brought her child with her, and was therefore considered unsuitable for the position.

A search of advertising relating to the first *Eldon* shows that Mrs Miller owned the establishment possibly until 1917. Any advertising for the premises after this point was undertaken by Mrs Webb.

Some sources suggest that the place was owned by Mrs Mary Miles, wife of W H Miles, but research does not substantiate this to date. A Mrs Weedon was also suggested as manager prior to 1917, but this also cannot be substantiated as yet.



The original Eldon c. 1921-1922

A garden in front of the building was said to be an early Paul Sorensen design as was a garden at another guesthouse of the time, *Westrella*.

In 1923, Mrs Emily Gearin, a widow and owner of the Gearin Hotel, purchased two cottages at 9-11 Lurline Street, *Elrington* and *Elington*. She had one of the cottages demolished to build a modern boarding house, and named it *Eldon*, effectively

transferring the original guesthouse's identity to a new site, taking with her the manageress, Mrs Webb.

In 1924 the old *Eldon* site was subdivided and redeveloped into shops and flats, and it is assumed that the old *Eldon* was at least partially demolished then. The new guesthouse at 9 Lurline Street opened the same year.

The second *Eldon* guesthouse

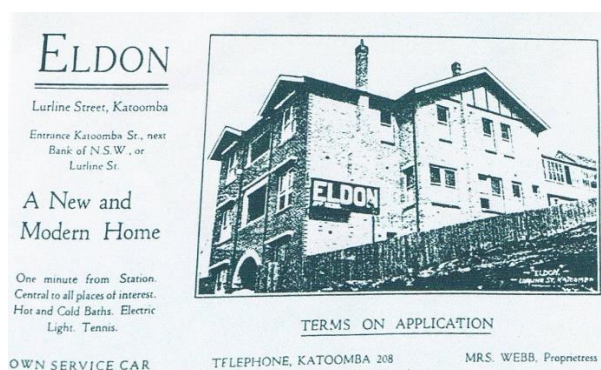
The new guesthouse opened in 1924 and advised features such as electric lighting and hot water, with a weekly tariff of 65 shillings. At its peak the *Eldon* was a functioning business with multiple staff and a steady flow of guests.

Mrs Gearin, and after her death her two unmarried daughters, Emily Frances and Mary Ellen, continued to own *Eldon* until after World War II. They improved the property with a tennis-court, lounges and a ballroom in the 1920s, and in 1937 the Misses Gearin demolished the second cottage and replaced it with a new rear section of *Eldon*, the north wing.

Mrs Webb and her spinster daughter Ada/Ida managed the guesthouse for the Gearins throughout this period of development, and then on until Mrs Webb's death in 1963.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the premises develop as a social hub. It hosted significant social events-balls, birthdays, honeymoons, and was a favourite among visiting tennis stars.

By then, Katoomba had over 60 guesthouses operating simultaneously. In June 1933 Katoomba Council approved a block of thirty new bedrooms for Mrs Gearin.



Eldon advertising

Activities hosted by Mrs Webb held in the 1930s included bridge, cards and musical afternoons at *Eldon* lounge, a 500 and Bridge Club fundraiser for the Katoomba Diggers' Distress Fund, and a cards and musical afternoon at *Eldon* in aid of St Canice's Church. They had their problems in the neighbourhood, with Mrs Webb's complaint to Council and request to pave the front footpath in February 1932, and with guests complaining about a smell in the side lane, which was proven to emanate from the adjoining fish shop, in the same month.

The guesthouse advertised for a housemaid and waitress in June 1934.

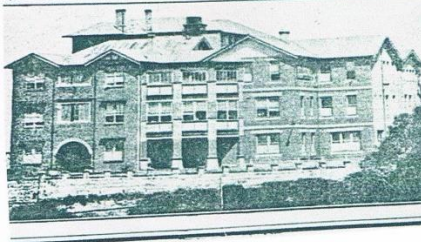
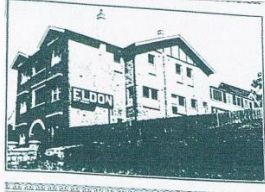
In July 1932 Alderman Freeland was made a JP and was residing at the *Eldon* at the time. Four years later he was welcomed home at *Eldon* from his travels, being received back into the 'tribe' again by his fellow 'Monkey Club' members, who had their headquarters at *Eldon*. The Monkey Club was formed in 1935, a club brought together by the community for the express purpose of the betterment of social life in Katoomba, with the intention of 'speak no evil, hear no evil and see no evil'.

ELDON
LURLINE STREET
KATOOMBA

The new "Eldon" is the last word in modern Accommodation Houses: New block now open; special feature thirty additional single rooms; Latest additions include: Ballroom, Smoke and Lounge Rooms, New Playtru Tennis Court, (All Weather Court), Hot and Cold Water Services, Electric Light, Electric Player. This establishment is under the personal supervision of Mrs. Webb. Excellent Cuisine, Big open fires. Special House Car Services to Sights.

One minute from Railway Station. Entrance Katoomba St. (next Bank N.S.W.)

Tariff from 10/6 daily, 50/- weekly. Single Rooms, £2-15-0 Special Winter Terms. Phone 208 Kat. MRS. WEBB, P'tress.

ELDON
KATOOMBA

MRS. WEBB desires to notify that she has REMOVED to Newly-built, Commodious Premises in

LURLINE STREET
with entrances to Katoomba Street, opposite Carrington Hotel, and next to Bank of N.S.W.

ONE MINUTE FROM STATION.

□ □

TENNIS COURT.
ELECTRIC LIGHT AND HOT WATER Service Throughout.
CAR SERVICE TO CAVES, Etc.

□

TARIFF:
50/- week 10/- day

□ □

Telephone: 208 Katoomba.
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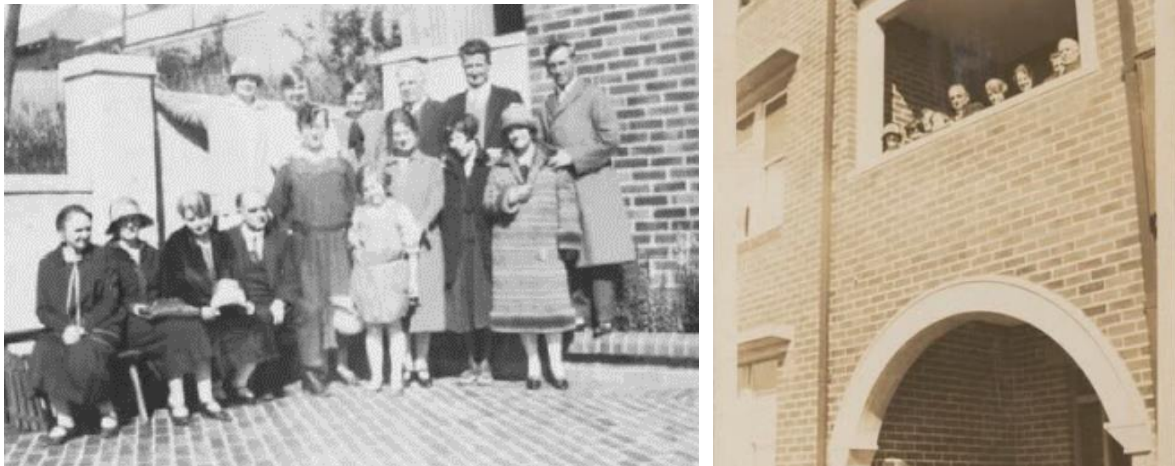
Eldon advertising

In 1939 the guesthouse was refurbished, providing every comfort and convenience. Still managed ably by Mrs Webb, it had beautiful surrounds next to the Bank of New South Wales. It was reported as having one of the best tables in the mountains, spacious ballroom, comfortable smoke and lounge rooms, professional entertainer, and tourist services by motor were available.



The Eldon, Lurline Street

However, after World War II coastal holidays were becoming more popular, and cheap overseas air travel opened up new destinations. Wartime restrictions and new regulations regarding guesthouses took their toll. The motor car meant that visitors could drive to the mountains for a day trip rather than staying for a week. Motels offered the modern convenience that guesthouses could not match. In Lurline Street, of the old guesthouses, some are restored, some are crumbling and decayed, and some are gone entirely, replaced by newer buildings.



Often cited photos of groups of guests at the new Eldon

For a time Mrs Webb, together with her daughter Ada ran a very successful business. They were dedicated charity workers, and many fundraising functions were held at *Eldon*. However, in 1951 Mrs Webb was struggling and was advertising in south coast papers for her guesthouse.



The second Eldon 2011

In June 1954 the Blue Mountain Advertiser reported that at the rear of *Eldon*, parking of cars and the bend in the road constituted a hazardous bottleneck. It was recommended that the road be sealed, rather than restrict parking. The motor car was having it effect.

After a period of time, probably following the death of Mrs Webb, and then her daughter's demise in 1996 at Burlington Nursing Home, the premises became a refuge for the destitute and homeless until the late 1990s. It has since been subject to further decay and neglect, in spite of some level of renovation then. The story of *Eldon* reflects the broader rise and fall of the Blue Mountains guesthouse era, shaped by changing tourism patterns and local fortunes.



The Eldon 2021

The Eldon is an inter-war guesthouse in a prominent position overlooking Lurline Street to take in views towards Leura and over the Jamison Valley. The building incorporates many of the characteristics of inter-war guesthouses in the upper Blue Mountains including the sandstone retaining wall to Lurline Street, face brick walls, and large balconies with infill windows. Real estate detail lists the place as a sixty bedroom, six bathroom building, located on a 1781m² allotment.

In 2009 the premises was being used as a boarding house, when the Sylvanvale Group relocated people living at the boarding house into new accommodation. The *Eldon* had been in very poor condition and Sylvanvale effectively swept in and 'rescued' the 34 people living there, working alongside the former New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services.

In 2015 a brochure was circulated in the community suggesting that the former guesthouse was to be utilized as a halfway house for ex-prisoners. This was proven to be completely false and did not go down well in the community. There have been numerous small fires reported on the property over recent years, the most significant being in July 2019 when significant internal damage was done.

The *Eldon* is listed on the Blue Mountains LEP, being recognised as a significant part of Katoomba's social and architectural history. Local dignitaries have emphasized a need to strengthen legislation and enforcement to prevent historic buildings such as this and the Paragon Cafe being demolished by neglect. This is another sad story of decay and neglect of a special place in the history of Katoomba.



Views of the state of the building in May 2026

Katoomba Street to Lurline Street

A few issues ago we looked at several of the old inns in the mountains, ones long gone and forgotten. In undertaking this research, it was noted that so many of the early inn names were used over and over again, relocating the name when the owner or proprietor moved on, which makes for confusion when searching for information about a particular place! Similarly, however, this happened with guesthouses.

Some of the guesthouses whose names were relocated with their owners included *Eldon* from Katoomba St to Lurline Street; *Clarendon* from Katoomba St to Lurline Street; *Cecil* from Waratah Street to Lurline Street; *Aircourt* moved across Katoomba Street; *Springhill* moved from the corner of Edward Street up to Katoomba Street; *Craigielee(lea)* was *Springhill* in Katoomba Street; *Craigielee* was also the *Cecil* in Waratah Street; *Belfast House* moved from Waratah Street to Lurline Street; *Hillside* moved from Katoomba Street to Waratah Street; *Rubyston(e)* moved along Katoomba Street; and San Souci moved along Lurline Street.

And as the guesthouse culture grew, Lurline Street developed a concentration of accommodation places. Having multiple guesthouses on one street was not a

disadvantage, and visitors knew that Lurline Street was where you stayed, and the choice was considerable.

But why the relocation from Katoomba Street and elsewhere to Lurline Street, as opposed to anywhere else in town. The distance to the railway station was similar. It would seem that Katoomba Street was perhaps becoming too congested and more suited as a shopping precinct, and Lurline Street provided more room to expand at the time, but still retaining lane access to Katoomba Street. The Waratah Street/Lurline Street seemed to become a particularly concentrated area, and Lurline Street accommodation still managed to provide views across the Jamison Valley from its windows and balconies.

The route along Lurline Street also took you more directly to tourist destinations, the clifftop views and bushwalks around the area. Its gradient was not as severe as Katoomba Street, and it also avoided any mining traffic which might be moving along Neale Street from the Britty North mines.

There are no longer any guesthouses as described above like *Eldon* operating in Lurline Street today, although there are a number of B & Bs operating which could still be termed a form of guesthouse.

Patsy Moppett

Note: The reference list is detailed in a separate document issued with this Newsletter.

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From the Editor

Guesthouses came into significance in the Blue Mountains and in coastal areas after the spread of the railways across the State. Tourist locations and recreational activities were more accessible and getting there became easier.

In Katoomba there was a concentration of accommodation in particular areas such as Katoomba Street, which soon moved to Lurline Street. Many of these guesthouses are gone, but some still remain in use as holiday resorts or as private homes. Some are in excellent condition, some not so much. In this edition of *Heritage* we look at one in particular which sits in a prominent position at the top of Lurline Street, but is fast falling into decay.

And in the examination of guesthouses in Katoomba, one frequently sees the name of Mrs Webb. So, who was this popular local businesswoman, who seems to feature highly in the development of the town?

And having already dealt with guesthouses in this issue of *Heritage*, the subject arises again in terms of Rosanna Knight and *Hurlstone*. One thing leads to another, so we will visit Rosanna in our next issue!

For something completely different, Peter Rickwood has contributed an article about the geology of the mountains and evidence of volcanic activity. We are so used to seeing sandstone that we forget about basalt outcrops which still contribute to particularly fertile pockets of soil, such as at Mt Wilson.

Sandstone has its own characteristics, as we are currently experiencing in the failure of the road pavement at Mt Victoria. Patience is the word for all travellers to and from the west, and plans have now been released to show how and when the powers-that-be are intending to address this problem: www.abc.net.au/news

And finally, a word about an identity of Leura and Katoomba. William Cluny Grantham came to Australia from New Zealand and made the mountains his home. He married a local girl of Scottish descent, Hannah Knight, and made major contributions to the community on a number of levels in his own quiet but significant way.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Heritage* in front of the fire during these cold winter days!

Mrs Webb of Katoomba

Following on from the previous article, it would seem appropriate to now examine a standout matter – so who was the oft mentioned Mrs Webb? Frequently she is simply referred to as ‘Mrs Webb’ with no inkling of her Christian names or background. A small amount of research has revealed a little about this remarkable businesswoman and her family!

Corbett

Mrs Webb of Katoomba was Annie Elizabeth Webb, nee Corbett. Annie Elizabeth Corbett was born in 1881 at Balmain to Edwin and Elizabeth Charlotte Corbett. Annie was the eldest of eight children: Annie E b.1881, Joseph T b.1883, Thomas G b.1885, Edwin C b.1887, Mary C b.1890, Florence E b.1895, Nellie V b.1897, and Edna M b.1899. All were born at Leichardt except Annie.

Annie’s father Edwin Corbett was born in 1855 in England. He arrived in Australia in c.1879 from Leicester. Edwin Corbett died in 1933 aged 78 at Katoomba. Edwin’s parents were Joseph T and Elizabeth Corbett, back in the UK. When Edwin died the Sydney Morning Herald reported that he had worked for the city council for 25 years as one of its leading joiners, having retired in 1928. He had been heavily involved in Freemasonry for some 30 years. He was buried at Rookwood.

Annie’s mother Elizabeth Charlotte Corbett was born in 1856 and following Edwin’s death she moved to Katoomba to live with Annie. She died in 1937 aged 81 at Katoomba. It was interesting to note that wreaths were laid by the permanent *Eldon* residents, the guests of *Eldon* and the staff of *Eldon*, along with a long list of others. This says a lot about the respect the community had for Mrs Corbett and Annie.

Webb

In 1909 Annie Elizabeth Corbett had married Percy Edgar Webb at Annandale. Percy’s mother’s name was Ada Julia Pye, born in 1860 at Penrith. His father was David William Webb, and they had married in 1881 in Sydney. Little is known at this stage about David. Percy was one of six children born to Ada and David: Percy Edgar b.1882, Rose Beatrice b.1882 (were they twins?), Arthur B. b.1884, Myrtle S. b.1888, Alvin U. b.1891, and

Wilfred P. b1894. Edgar and Rose were born at Glebe, whilst the rest were born at Leichardt.

Annie and Percy had two children: Ada Elizabeth born in 1909, and Edgar Albert born 1912, both born where they had been living at Petersham. Sadly, their father Percy Edgar died in 1913 at Petersham, only a year after Edgar's birth. The widow Annie and her children moved to Katoomba in 1917. It would appear as though Annie's mother moved to Katoomba at a later date, as mentioned above.

Whilst operating the new *Eldon* guesthouse, around 1961 Annie actually owned land, that being Section 1 Part lots 2,3 in Katoomba Street, a 16' x 99' block which contained a shop and associated outbuildings.

VALUATION LIST
DEPARTMENT OF THE VALUER GENERAL, N.S.W.—VALUATION LIST
VALUATION No. 7535

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS
Annie Elizabeth Webb
Eldon, Katoomba

LESSOR'S NAME
R.V. Webb, Katoomba St. Katoomba

COUNTY Cook
Regd. Ref. Va. 4051
To Title No. 205
DA 692

TOWN OR VILLAGE
Katoomba

STREET
Katoomba St.

Portion	Sec.	Lot	Area or Dimensions	Unimproved	Improved	Assessed Annual
1	Part	2,3	16' x 99'	4400	7300	562

Values
Unimproved 4400
Improved 7300
Assessed Annual 562

Rates
SANITARY SERVICE
GENERAL
TOWN IMPROVEMENT
WATER
SEWERAGE

1961 rates Notice for Annie Webb

After a prolonged period as a successful manageress of guesthouses in Katoomba, Annie Elizabeth died 20th August 1963 at *Eldon*, Katoomba, aged c.82.

Her son Edgar Albert died 23rd October 1987 at Manly.

Her daughter Ada Elizabeth died 2nd April 1996 at Katoomba. It is noted that she had been named after her grandmothers, Elizabeth Corbett and Ada Pye!

Patsy Moppett

References:

Ryersons Index

NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages

Katoomba: Katoomba Daily (NSW : 1920 - 1939), Friday 18 February 1938, page 1

Research by Robyne Ridge, Blue Mountains Historical Society 2026

Funeral of late Mrs Corbett: Katoomba Daily (NSW : 1920 - 1939), Friday 22 January 1937, p 2

Mr E Corbett: Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954), Friday 11 August 1933, page 16

Of lush soils and luxuriant growth in the Blue Mountains

Introduction

The descriptive term **The Blue Mountains** was given by the Governor, Captain Arthur Phillip, to the range that he observed from Port Jackson on Saturday July 4th. 1789 ¹.

Indigenous people undoubtedly knew of the existence of volcanic rock on the Mountains long before the period of recorded history as in the 20th Century implements made from basalt were found in the Grose Valley, and elsewhere in the Blue Mountains (Pers. comm., Reverend Dr Eugene Stockton, 27.4.02). But Europeans did not start to

discover the geology of these high summits until George Caley reached the summit of Mount Tomah (aka Fern Tree Hill) on 10th November 1804 and subsequently wrote of the rock there:

*"...very heavy and of a blue colour like the magnetic stone on Prospect Hill.."*².

Caley also wrote of Mount Bell (aka Table Hill):

*"In quality it was much the same as Fern Tree Hill." ... "Fern trees abounded in the rich soil."*³.

and of the middle hummock on what he named Mount Banks⁴ (aka Mount King George) he noted:

*"And at the main rock some rude pillar like pieces are standing."*⁵

which surely suggests the columnar structure that basalt often displays when cooled slowly. However, this remarkable explorer did not record basalt *per se*.

Later Explorers

The botanist Allan Cunningham visited Mt Tomah on 29th November 1823 and subsequently wrote:

*"In this earth I remarked, partly buried, large blocks of compact whinstone⁶ in no regular form;"*⁷.

[*"Whinstone is a traditional, provincial quarrying term for hard, dark-coloured, fine-grained rock, primarily basalt or dolerite, often used for construction and landscaping in Scotland and Northern England."* (Google search)]

However, it was not until 19 years later that Cunningham's account was published by Heward (1842)⁸ and once again the term basalt was not mentioned. Meanwhile, Surveyor General, T.L. Mitchell had travelled through the Blue Mountains in November 1827⁹ and in a letter he referred to 'King Georges Mount' and 'Tomah' stating:

"The rocks of both summits consist of fragments of basalt."

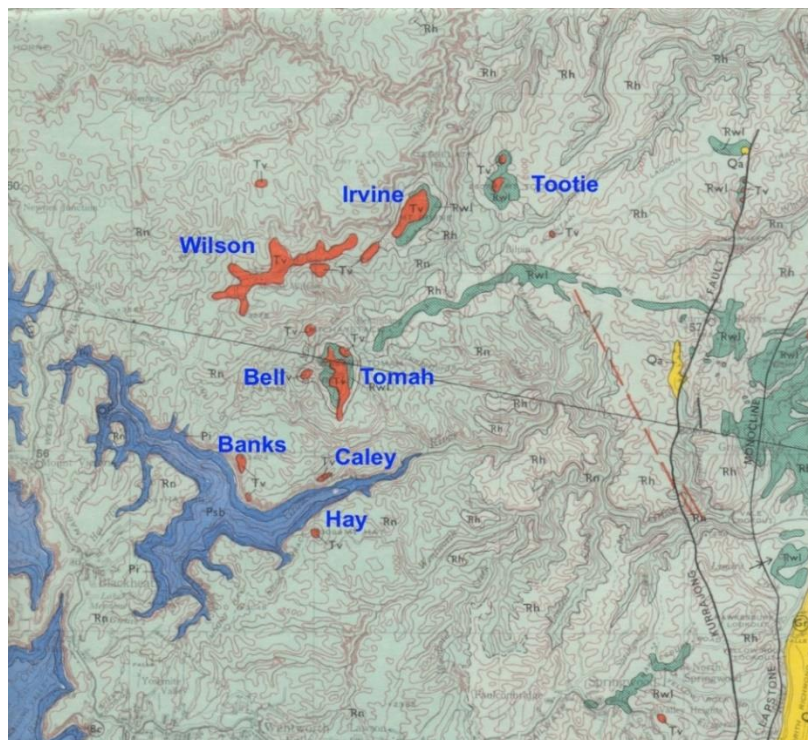


Figure 1. Basalt summits in the Blue Mountains.
(Most of the blue added names should be preceded by MOUNT)
Base map ex Carne 1906¹³.

so making the first specific mention of basalt, albeit his words were not in a document that was generally available at the time. And T.L. Mitchell collected rock samples¹⁰ which were almost certainly the first specimens of basalt retrieved from the Blue Mountains for scientific purposes.

Then in 1839 Count Paul Edmund Strzelecki (1797-1873) journeyed along Bell's Line of Road and in a publication delayed for six years he stated that Mount Hay had a:

*".. basaltic top .."*¹¹ and

"The localities at which basalt and its varieties occur in the two colonies are the following:--.."

*".... Mount Tomah, Mount Hay, Mount King George, ...".*¹².

But by then the most extensive occurrences of that rock type had been recognised as being on Mounts Wilson, Irvine and Tomah (**Figure 1**).

Mount Wilson

William Romaine Govett was the first European to ascend the Mount Wilson ridge sometime between November 26th and 30th 1832 and he undertook some of the most arduous surveying work ever undertaken in NSW¹⁴. In a letter to the Surveyor General he wrote:

*"That one range which I speak of connects with Bell's R. a little west of Mt George and shortly rises like Tomah and is covered like that mountain with peculiar vegetation"*¹⁵.

On his map of the area he wrote:

*"High mass of range of the richest soil and covered with almost impenetrable scrub."*¹⁶.

Although no specific use of the word 'basalt' was made, he did recognise and record the quality of the soils and the lush vegetation. Subsequently, 'Geological surveyor-in-charge of the Department of Mines' C.S. Wilkinson wrote longer descriptions viz:

*"The rich chocolate soil giving rise to such a luxuriant growth of vegetation on Mount Wilson has resulted from the surface decomposition of one of these trap dykes, which consist of hard augitic basalt..."*¹⁷.

And:

*"We found that the rich soil which, at this high point in the Blue Mountains, supports such a luxuriant growth of vegetation, has resulted from the decomposition of basaltic trap, which has burst through the Upper Coal Measures and Hawkesbury Sandstone, and in parts has overflowed them. This basalt appears to be of Upper Tertiary age and is probably contemporaneous with some of the extensive basalt flows in the Western District."*¹⁸.

It was accounts like those which were to attract settlers to the area.

The Blue Mountains have been subject to deep erosion which has left the basalt as isolated patches and there is little visible evidence to quell speculations as to the source of the lava and the pathways it took to reach its present locations. One idea popular in the 19th Century (that was still being trotted out almost a century later¹⁹) was that these summit cappings are remnants of a single lava flow²⁰ which may have come from a fissure eruption, possibly somewhere in the vicinity of Waterfall Creek, Mount Wilson²¹. That concept of a single source would have necessitated flow of lava southwards but the summits on which basalt now exists do not lie at heights progressively diminishing southwards²²; thus, Mount Banks is at a comparable height to Mount Wilson yet it is 9.5 km. due south of it. This, and other impossible flow

situations, suffice to dispel the simple story and in a Third Edition of their book (2000) even Branagan & Packham came to concede that:

*"there may have been separate flows ...There may have been a number of small conduits rather than a single source."*²³.
Peter C Rickwood

Note: The reference list is detailed in a separate document issued with this Newsletter.

A significant life – William Cluny Grantham

In glancing through the information in *The Miners of Katoomba*, a book compilation by Stephen Imrie in 2023 from the research files of Roy A Smith, one notices that some of the people have no information recorded against their names. However, this is explained by the publisher, Jim Smith, in that Roy did not have access to Trove, and Roy may not have had the time to further explore the name, as there was nothing in his notes. With the electronic resources available today, many of these gaps could be filled over time.

Roy himself explains that for economic reasons he did not have access to birth, death and marriage resources, which further limited his research endeavours. Roy also had to deal with the usual inaccuracy of electoral roles and newspaper reports, vague and inaccurate anecdotal evidence and name changes. Having said that, it is an amazing record of the people who were miners and/or associated with the coal and oil shale mining community in and around Katoomba between 1870 and 1904.

In an attempt to fill one of these gaps, I have chosen a name at random and proceeded to find out their association with the industry and/or the town. In regard to the chosen name, Roy's notes do not reveal how he came to list Grantham's involvement in his research.

William Cluny Grantham and Hannah Grantham (nee Knight)

William Cluny Grantham was not a miner. But his association with the Katoomba and Leura communities is not to be discounted.

William Cluny Grantham was born in 1862, to Thomas and Eliza Grantham (*nee Walden*) in Christchurch, New Zealand, according to NZ records.

It would appear as though the Granthams came to New Zealand in 1860 on the *Roman Emperor*, Thomas, Eliza and children Eliza, Sarah, Thomas, Grace, Emma and Robert Walden. William was the only child born in New Zealand, in 1862. Eliza Grantham died in New Zealand in 1904 aged 81, and Thomas Grantham died in New Zealand in 1905 aged 83 years.

(William's birth certificate says his mother was Eliza. His death certificate says it was Sarah, both having the surname Walden. Both the shipping records and NZ birth records name Eliza, so could the Australian death certificate be wrong?)

William's death certificate in 1944 stated that he had been in the colony since 1887, and that he was a builder.

William first came to Katoomba in 1888. In 1889 William chose to stay at Mrs Rosanna Knight's guesthouse *Westrella*, in Waratah Street. He was apparently working locally as a plasterer. About this time, a Charles Riley arrived on the train *The Fish* on the evening of 7th December from Sydney and was shown the way to the guesthouse. Upon entering he aimed a gun at Grantham and the gun miss fired. Mr Grantham was unhurt, but everyone was given a good scare. The police arrested the man and took him away. The reason for the incident was never established. However, this stay at Katoomba may explain how William came to meet his future wife!

Hannah was the daughter of John Knight and Rosanna McNeal (McNeall) and had been born in 1868 at Berrima. John and Rosanna (or Rosa) had been married at St Bees, Cumberland, England in 1865. Rosanna was born at Rerrick, Kerkudbright, Scotland in 1841. They arrived in Katoomba about 1885.

John Knight and Rosanna had nine children between 1867 and 1883. John Knight was a member of the Katoomba Progress Association and also on the Katoomba Cemetery Trust. Hannah's father John died expectedly in 1888 at Lithgow aged 44, and he is thought to be the first person interred in Katoomba Cemetery.*

After John's death, Rosanna had nine children to maintain, so the most obvious occupation for her was to run a guesthouse – *Westrella*. Her older children would have assisted, including Hannah, who would have been about 20 when she first met William Grantham.

Subsequently, in 1890 a wedding announcement in the Katoomba Times told of the wedding of Hannah Knight to William Cluny Grantham of Katoomba at the home of the bride's mother Mrs Knight, her father having died only two years before. This home was *Hurlstone*. William was 27 years old. The ceremony was led by Rev Horton, the Wesleyan minister at Katoomba. A handsome cruet was presented to the new Mrs Grantham in thanks for her previous contribution to the choir of the Wesleyan Church. Back at Katoomba, Hannah and William started their family. All of their nine children were born at Katoomba: Reginald J b. 1891, Waldon McNeal b. 1893, Constance Victoria D b. 1895, William Royal b. 1897, Robert Cluny b. 1899, Thomas Leo b. 1901, Alfred Kenneth b. 1903, Harry Alwyn b. 1905, and Mavis Ethel Hannah b. 1908.

During this time their parents threw themselves into the community. William was a building contractor and became involved in numerous construction jobs around the area. In 1898 he was appointed trustee of 141 acres at Leura, the Gordon Falls Reserve, along with R & A Craig, C Lindeman and others.



Leura Post Office building 1914 and today

In 1900 William was noted as the Leura postmaster at a presentation at Leura to the Rev Anson Smith. Mrs Grantham was also the post mistress, and in 1902 it was noted that she was using her own children to deliver telegrams.

In 1903 William became the Secretary of the Leura Progress Association, stepping down the next year but remaining on the LPA school board.

In 1904 Mrs Grantham was presented with a marble clock and purse of sovereigns by the Mayor of Leura, for her efforts as the postmistress of Leura. In this year Hannah sold her interest as postmistress at the Leura post office, and also sold her stationery business. William continued to run his timber yard and joinery works.

In 1905 William and Hannah had moved to the 'Sunny' side of Leura! At this time William was the contractor for new brick shop and dwelling for Mr F Cornett in Leura Mall, but a lease of four acres he held in the Parish of Jamison was forfeited. His community involvement expanded and in 1907 he became President of Leura Progress Association, and in 1909 Vice-president of the Leura Pastime Club. That year he was President of the Parents and Citizens Association at Empire Day in May. Also, in 1909 William was away at Coogee building a cottage for Mr Smith, a former Leura resident. It was reported that he was making good headway and would be back in a few weeks.

His contracting work was taking him further and further from home. Baby Mavis had been born the previous year, and William was not in good health, so the Granthams made the decision to relocate - to Manilla, where William had been working for some time past. The rest of 1910 became a monumental year for the community, bemoaning the loss of the family and also celebrating the contributions made by William and Hannah to Leura.

In April a farewell was held to see the Granthams on their way. There were a number of speakers, and the compliments to William and Hannah overflowed. They were deemed worthy citizens, esteemed and respected. Mr Grantham was honest, straightforward, and of a manly nature. Mrs Grantham was kindly-hearted and had a sympathetic personality. Their name was a household word, with many local bodies owing their existence and maintenance to the pair. There was a high eulogy for the young Granthams, who exhibited exemplary conduct. The Granthams had a quiet unobtrusive manner, were spotless characters, with energy, wisdom, discipline and sound judgement being demonstrated by Mr Grantham. Mrs Grantham was under the strong hereditary influence of her mother, Mrs Rosanna Knight. The town felt they were losing a townsman of the highest honour. Leura were losing one of its oldest and most respected residents in William Cluny Grantham, who would leave a big gap in all circles.

As a separate event the ladies of Leura met at Rosanna's guesthouse, '*Hurlstone*', for afternoon tea to say farewell to Hannah.

An illuminated address was prepared by Mr Dennis of Lithgow, framed by local artist A G Fowler. The address was forwarded to the Mayor of Manilla Council to be presented to William and Hannah, and a purse of £36 was also given, and the couple were welcomed to the town.

By 1913 they had thrown themselves into the local Manilla community! Due to his contracting work in the area, he was already known well, and they had settled in their new home *Berwen*, in Court Street, along with their children, whose ages then ranged from Mavis at 5 years to Reginald at 22 years. That year William became Chair of the Manilla School of Arts. The following year he found himself elected President of the Manilla P & C Association, was on the Hospital Board and a trustee on the Manilla Cemetery Trust.

Come the first World War, William's energy increased. In 1916 William landed the contract for work on the Council Chambers. That year the Granthams leased a premises in Court St, Manilla, possibly their house *Berwen*, to the government for one year for defence purposes.

The following year William became a member of the Mechanics Institute. He also became a committee member of the Manilla War Council, and for good reason. In

August 1917 his sons Robert Cluny, William Royal and Walden McNeal enlisted in the AIF. Fortunately, all three returned home safely in 1919.

After the war William remained an active citizen. In 1921 he was Chair of the town beautifying sectional committee of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1924 Hannah was aggrieved by the sad death of her mother Rosanna back at Katoomba, aged 82.

In 1927 William remained on the Cemetery Trust, and was contracted for work at the Manilla showground, building a sheep pavilion extension, a sheep judges' box, 104 new sheep pens, and 20 dog kennels. He was 66 years of age. Even in 1940 he continued his contracting work, winning the contract for the building of cottages for the Keepit Dam project. Construction of the dam had begun in 1939 but was subsequently halted in 1941 due to WWII. Work on the dam restarted in 1946 and was completed in 1960, but William did not live to see this.

On 7th April 1940 the Golden Wedding anniversary for William and Hannah was celebrated at the Katoomba Methodist Church, by Rev Richard Orton. They were still living at *Berwen*, Court St, Manilla at this stage, but returned 'home' for the event!

In 1942 William became a founding member of the Manilla Red Cross.



Name plates in memory of William Cluny and Hannah Grantham

Sadly, William Cluny Grantham died on Boxing Day in 1944 aged 82 at 19 Young Street, Croydon*, and was cremated the next day at Rookwood. He had been ill for only two days with a condition of the heart.

G RANTHAM.—The Relatives and Friends of Mrs. H. Grantham and Family are kindly invited to attend the Funeral of their dear Husband and Father, William Cluny, to leave Leslie S. Andrews' Funeral Chapel, 319 Liverpool Road, Ashfield, This Day, after service commencing at 1.30 p.m., for the Rookwood Crematorium, Leslie S. Andrews, Ashfield, opp. Presbyterian Church. Phone UA1025.

His obituary noted that he was an old resident of Manilla, who located at Glen Innes for a time and then moved on to Sydney. It was said that he was a man of sterling qualities who achieved the respect of all who knew him.

He was survived by wife Hannah and all his children, two daughters and seven sons. Having read of the superlatives extended to William by both the Leura and Manilla communities, there is little more can be added to such a description of a quiet but remarkable man!



Berwen, Manilla

Hannah Knight Grantham died in 1966 at Drummoyne, aged 97-98, and was cremated at Rookwood. Hannah in her own way worked for the community both in Leura and Manilla, and supported William's boundless energy and enthusiasm for helping his fellow man.

It is noted that *Berwen*, in Court Street, Manilla remains, and is a beautifully maintained home, with attractive gardens. The delightful stone bridge built by William Grantham is heritage listed in the Tamworth RLEP2010.

Patsy Moppett

**John and Rosanna's story will be outlined in a later issue of Heritage.*

**It is interesting to note the choice of Croydon for their final home. A William Grantham was the Conservative member for Croydon, Birmingham, UK, in 1885.*

Note: *The reference list is detailed in a separate document issued with this Newsletter.*

PLEASE NOTE THE CLOSING DATE FOR ARTICLES AND NOTIFICATIONS TO THE EDITOR FOR THE SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026 ISSUE OF *HERITAGE* IS THURSDAY DAY 25th AUGUST 2026

Community events & updates

2026 Transport Heritage Grants

The 2026 Transport Heritage Grants Program is now open! Apply for financial support to assist with projects that preserve and engage the public with NSW transport heritage. The Transport Heritage Grants Program is a NSW Government funded program, administered by the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) and is supported by Transport Heritage NSW. The program supports projects that assist the New South Wales community rediscover the culture, the events and the people that shaped transport in New South Wales, as well as support the restoration and conservation of, and access to, our valuable heritage assets (including buildings, rolling stock, vehicles, museum objects and collections). **Applications close 5:00 pm, 31st July 2026.**



Categories for applications include:

- *Restoration, reconstruction or preservation*
- *Exhibition, interpretation, education or publication*
- *Study, consultation, report or review*
- *Audience development, accessibility, and inclusion.*

Read the guidelines, deadlines, and access the application form at the RHAS website. Email grants@rahs.org.au if you have any questions.

Arms of Australia Inn Museum, Emu Plains – 50 Year Anniversary

Come along and share this momentous occasion with the folk at the Arms of Australia Inn Museum at their 50th Anniversary celebrations!



The day will include activities, displays and refreshments, and entry is FREE!!! The celebrations will be held between 10am and 3pm on **Sunday 25th October 2026**. You will find them at the Arms of Australia Inn Museum, Cnr Great Western Highway and Gardenia Avenue, Emu Plains.

Further inquiries may be made to the Secretary, Nepean District Historical Society:
 Email: info@armsofaustraliainn.org.au
 Phone: 02 4735 4394.

History Council's History Week 2026

Australians are renowned for spinning a good yarn, but how do stories keep history alive, and what do they tell us about ourselves?



During History Week 2026, from 5th to 13th September, the History Council is inviting members to explore the theme of *Keeping Stories* – from truth-telling to tall tales and beyond. For what is history if not the story of us? Here some prompts to fuel the imagination include:

- Stories of our towns and suburbs.
- Tall tales and true.
- Grand (and not-so-grand) narratives.
- Anecdotes from the archives.
- Why historians matter.

Registrations close Monday, 3rd August 2026. Join the History Council during History Week 2026 by registering your online or in person event now.

PLEASE NOTE: You must be a member of the History Council of NSW to register an event for History Week 2026. Events must be relevant to the practice of history and the theme, *Keeping Stories*, and will be published at the discretion of the History Council.

Your event must take place during History Week: 5th to 13th September 2026

For further information, contact their email address: admin@historycouncilnsw.org.au

BLUE MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS INC.

Registered office: 1/19 Styndra Place, Springwood 2777. Ph: 0410 198 737

Email: committee@bluemountainsheritage.com.au or j.koperberg@bigpond.com

Website: <http://bluemountainsheritage.com.au>

ABN: 53 994 839 952

The organisation: Blue Mountains Association of Cultural & Heritage Organisations Inc. (BMACHO) was established in April 2006 after local historical and heritage societies and individuals recognised the need for the creation of a cultural heritage strategy for the local government area (LGA) of Blue Mountains City Council. The constituency now embraces but is not limited to, the LGAs of Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Hawkesbury and Penrith. BMACHO membership includes historical and heritage groups, museums, commercial enterprises with an historical or heritage component in its core business, local government (local studies units, library collections) and a limited number of individual members by invitation such as but not necessarily academics. The aims and objectives of the organisation are:

1. To raise public consciousness of the value of cultural heritage.
2. To encourage and assist cultural heritage.
3. To initiate and support cultural heritage activities not already covered by member organisations.

One of the functions of BMACHO is to bring the various bodies into closer contact to encourage them to work more closely together and to provide a combined voice on matters of importance within the heritage sector.

Affiliations: BMACHO is a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

Registered Charity: BMACHO is a not-for-profit incorporated association and has been added to the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) charity register.

Publications: BMACHO's official newsletter *Heritage* is edited by Patsy Moppett. The *Blue Mountains History Journal* has been edited by Dr Peter Rickwood but is in obeyance at present. Occasional Papers are published from time to time.

Membership: The following organisations are members of BMACHO: Blue Mountain Education & Research Trust; Blue Mountains City Library; Blue Mountains Family History Society Inc; Blue Mountains Historical Society; Bygone Beautys Treasured Teapot Museum and Tearooms; City of Lithgow Mining Museum Inc; Colo Shire Family History Group; Everglades Historic House & Gardens; Friends of the Paragon Inc; Glenbrook & District Historical Society Inc; Hartley Historic Site, NPWS NSW; Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc; Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society Inc; Lithgow & District Family History Society Inc; Lithgow – Eskbank House Museum and Lithgow Regional Library – Learning Centre; Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum; Mt Victoria & District Historical Society Inc; Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc (including Turkish Bath Museum); National Trust of Australia (NSW) – Blue Mountains Branch; National Trust of Australia (NSW) – Lithgow Branch; Nepean District Historical Society Inc; Norman Lindsay Gallery and Museum; Penrith RSL Military Museum; Scenic World Blue Mountains Limited; Springwood Historical Society Inc; Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Heritage Museum; Woodford Academy Management Committee; Zig Zag Railway Co-op Ltd.

The following are individual members: Fiona Burn, Michele Corin, Philip Hammon, Dr Wayne Hanley, Gay Hendriksen, Adrian Howie, Ian Milliss, Patsy Moppett, Keith Painter, Dr Peter Rickwood, and Dr Robert Strange.

Committee: The management committee for 2026-2027 (from March 2026) is: Rod Stowe (President); Phil Hammon (Vice President); Philip Hammon (Treasurer and Membership Secretary); Jan Koperberg (Secretary/ Public Officer); Fiona Burn, Dick Morony, Patsy Moppett and Kate O'Neill.

Finance sub-committee: Jan Koperberg, Fiona Burn, Ian Kendall.

Disclaimer: Views and opinions expressed in the ***Heritage*** Newsletter originate from many sources and contributors. Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy of material. Content does not necessarily represent or reflect the views and opinions of BMACHO, its committee or its members. If errors are found feedback is most welcome.