

WWDHS NEWSLETTER No. 427 Oct 2017 – Nov 2017 ISSN 2207-1016

NEXT MEETING

Monday 16 October 2017,
at Museum of the Riverina,
Botanic Gardens Site.
Committee Meeting @ 6:15pm

General Meeting @ 7:30pm
The speaker will be Michelle
Maddison on her upcoming
exhibition at the Museum,
'Uncovering Her / Story'

20 November 2017: General Meeting

The speaker will be Barbara Pillans who will be talking about her book, *A Land Fit for Heroines: Stories of pioneering women on soldier settlement blocks*. The women include Honor Kells, Daphne Howard, Marj Andrews, Joan Alston and Maisy Hartwig who lived on the Wantabadgery Soldier Settlement.

8 December 2017: Excursion

Underground tour of the Museum of the Riverina, Botanic Gardens Site (Willans Hill) and morning tea on the deck of the museum. At the completion of the tour, all those attending are welcome to join us for lunch at a venue to be decided.

Details will be sent by email at a later date.

THE NEW COMMITTEE

At the Annual General Meeting on 18 September 2017, the following members were elected: Peter Morris (President and Treasurer), Peter Gissing (Vice President), Geoff Haddon (Vice President), Margaret Hill (Secretary), Brian Andrews, Judy Buik, Geoff Burch, John Diessel, Leanne Diessel, Craig Dixon, Henry Gardiner, Sherry Morris, John Mueller (committee members). Henry Gardiner remains Public Officer.

WWDHS Patrons: Michael McCormack, Federal Member for Riverina,
& the Honourable Wal Fife.

WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 90, WAGGA WAGGA. 2650.

President: Peter Morris Ph 6922 9337
Vice-President: Peter Gissing Ph 6922 3213
Vice-President: Geoff Haddon Ph 6921 2186
Secretary: Margaret Hill
Newsletter Editor: Geoff Burch
Email: info@wwdhs.org.au

Committee meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
6:15pm at MOR, Willans Hill site.

General meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
7:30pm at MOR, Willans Hill site.

Annual Subscriptions: Single: \$20, Couple: \$30.
Corporate: \$50. Due 1st July each year.

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Doman Hall in 2017. The single storied northern wing is on the left and the two storied southern wing on the right. There are also two interconnecting wings.

If you have any information, reminiscences, funny stories associated with Doman Hall (also known as Doman Building or Doman Block) , if you were a resident anytime between 1964 and 2016 as an internal or external student or attending a conference could you please ring me on 0269229337 or email sherryjmorris@me.com. Thank you, Sherry Morris

WANTED

INFORMATION ON DOMAN HALL CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY



Bernard (Dick) Doman
First Principal of WAC



—photo by permission of D. Gyger, Wagga Wagga.

THE DOMAN BLOCK

South-western aspect—featuring southern wing students' rooms (both floors) with sickbay, dispensary and Matron's flat (ground floor—foreground).

Photographed August, 1963.

WAGGA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE STAFF—1964

Principal: F. C. BUTLER, B.Sc.Agr.(Syd.), Ph.D.
(Cantab.)
Deputy Principal: J. R. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc.Agr.(Syd.)
Librarian: Miss M. I. WAIGHT
Matron: Mrs. J. A. HACKETT

LECTURERS

K. G. BEIRNE, B.Sc.Agr. (Syd.)	Agriculture, Genetics and Plant Breeding
K. S. LYSAGHT, H.D.A.	Sheep Husbandry
B. P. HEALY, B.V.Sc.(Syd.)	Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry
D. J. CAMPBELL, B.Sc. (Tas.), Dip.Ed., T.T.C.	Biology
R. K. SWAIN, B.Sc.(N.Z.)	Chemistry and Physics
A. C. NICOL, H.D.A.	Supervisor of Students Practical Training

SECONDED LECTURERS

WAGGA WAGGA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

P. A. ANTHONY	Metalwork and Mechanics
A. G. CHAPPELL	Welding
W. G. COLLINS	Farm Engineering
B. C. LEAHY	Surveying and Building Construction
A. MOFFAT	Farm Book-keeping
E. E. MORGAN	Woodwork
C. S. RUSSELL	Woodclassing

*Doman Block, named in honour of the first principal of Wagga Agricultural College (WAC), Dick Doman .
Source: Program for the Official Opening of The Doman Block, WAC (now Charles Sturt University)
by the NSW Minister for Agriculture, A.G. (George) Enticknap, 24 April 1964*

Wagga Wagga & District Historical Society

Acting-President's Annual Report, September 2017

The year past has seen the loss of our long serving archivist and past President, Phyllis de Jersey and several other members affected by serious health issues. Whilst this has impacted adversely on some of the Societies activities it is pleasing to report that the Society has continued to advance the cause of local history in Wagga Wagga. Our best wishes and thoughts are with Geoff and John and more recently myself for a speedy recovery from illness.

Notwithstanding the efforts of your committee there is a need for some regeneration of the Society and though there has been some membership growth more is needed, particularly from younger generations. It reflects poorly on the Society that the office of President has been vacant for the past year. It is a strong positive however that your Society has recognised these problems and a variety of future opportunities available to it as a result of a Forward Planning exercise begun recently which will hopefully to be completed soon by the incoming committee.

The Societies, website, blog, Daily Advertiser feature and newsletter continue to be popular with members and our Facebook page recently passed 500 likes. We have had a variety of interesting speakers at our meetings and a change in format in July to meet during the day with the Wagga Railway Heritage Society was quite successful. Audio tapes, mostly featuring local personalities presenting to the Society from the 1970's through to 2000's have been digitised and added to the "For Members " tab of the website.

We have continued to pursue digitisation of the Wagga Express 1919 to 1929 for Trove and have been supported in this by Charles Sturt Regional Archives (CSURA) and Wagga City Council. Unfortunately, the State Library of NSW have not been as supportive and additional funds are still required. A grant application with RAHS which will be announced soon may help.

We have worked well with CSU and particularly with their Riverina Archives. Some discussion has been had with CSU about the impending relocation of the CSURA to the north campus and whilst details remain to be confirmed we have sought and received assurances that the service provided by CSURA will not be compromised and indeed improvements are likely.

The RVN News reel migration project has been completed and digitisation of the Societies Archives at CSURA (RW5) substantially completed with assistance from CSURA and RAHS. Our research scholarship awarded jointly with CSURA has been awarded to Sue Weekes who is researching music unique to Wagga using CSU, MOR, Wagga City Library and our own archives collection. Kevin Herring has continued to donate material to the Society and this has been passed on to CSURA.

We also work closely with Wagga Wagga City Council and particularly Museum Manager, Luke Grealy. The Society has four representatives on the Councils Museum Advisory Committee which is now chaired by Geoff Burch, with myself as Vice-Chair. Separately Council has been developing a Botanic Gardens Site Museum Masterplan with a view to securing grant funding for improvements and expansion. Your Society has been supporting this in principle but final approval from WWDHS as the site owner has not yet been given pending provision by Council of final details.

There are several issues currently being "worked through" with Council including the Best Cemetery, Heritage Walks, Interpretive signage and problems with Councils Wagga Cemetery web portal. They all appear to be viewed as low priority by Council staff so we may need to revise our advocacy in these areas.

The Society has recently been granted Charity Status and we are now seeking status as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) which would allow benefactors to make tax deductible donations to the society. A revised constitution is being presented to members for approval at this Annual General Meeting.

Several of our members have indicated that they will be attending the RAHS Annual Conference being held this year on 28th and 29th October at Cowra. We continue to exchange newsletters and variously work with other local Historical Societies including Albury, Yass, Harden-Murrumburrah, Ganmain and the Rock.

Judy Buik joined our management committee this year and was appointed as Archivist while our research officer, Leanne continues to respond to a steady stream of enquiries. We were very pleased and proud to see long time member and local historian, Sherry Morris awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia which she received recently. Congratulations Sherry.

Peter Gissing, Vice President, Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society, 18th September 2017

Wagga Wagga Historical Society Annual Archive report

September 2017

This year we the Historical society lost Phyllis de Jersey. Phyllis was the societies Archivist since 1970s. She did the remarkable job of collecting and organising the material we have now, largely on her own. The Archive room has now been named "The Phyllis de Jersey Room", and this has been celebrated with a smart brass plaque hanging in the room.

I have become the archivist now after working with Phyllis for several years, (hopefully learning a lot from her), and will try to continue her remarkable work.

I have begun a programme to align the archive material with the Collection Development Policy. This means the archives will have to be resorted and indexed into largely two areas. That material, which refers to and belongs to the museum archive, and that material which needs to be de-accessioned and reallocated to a more suitable institution. So I have begun the task of sorting.

Also I have begun transcribing the very valuable guest speaker talks, which we have stored on tape. As the years go on the tapes will deteriorate and the idea is to transcribe and then at least the talk can be stored. The history is so valuable. Help is needed here, so any body who would like to do a tape please get in contact.

Otherwise we have moved a number of unwanted items of furniture out of the room. We still have 5 chairs and 3 tables! Now there is a lovely open space, to move in.

The minutes are being put together in order and indexed. These date from the 1940s when the first tentative moves were made to begin a Historical society. There are quite a lot of missing minutes, so if anybody has a store of old minutes I would like to have a look in case I can pick up one of the missing ones.

The forthcoming year will be an interesting and a busy one, I am sure of that.

Judy Buik September 2017

The Treasurer's Report will be published in the next newsletter

The Murder of the Pohlman Brothers

By Geoff Burch

Mid to late April in the western Riverina – 1868. Wagga Wagga has just hosted a popular race meeting, which attracted visitors from all around the district, and the town is a convivial place for conducting business and trade. Amongst those visiting were two German brothers, John and Louie Pohlman, who stayed with a German friend, Mr Carl Muller.¹

Recent rains had swelled the rivers but as the Wagga Wagga Express noted:

*The exceptionable heat of the weather has continued unchanged during the past week, and is causing much injury to the young grass which was springing up luxuriantly after the recent rains, but which is now rapidly drying up and withering away. The country is beginning to assume quite a brown and burnt up appearance; and as far as surface indications go, is even more dry than it was in the middle of the summer, but there is still some moisture below the hard baked-up surface soil; and if the present heats pass off in rain, as it is more than probable that they will, the failing vegetation will soon recover, and there will be an abundance of feed during the coming winter. From all parts of the colony we have received accounts of intense heat in the weather. Both Victoria and South Australia are also suffering from the same cause, and numerous bush fires in both colonies have been reported. In our own neighbourhood a good many bush fires have also broken out; but they have, as far as we have yet learned, been confined within moderate bounds, and no great damage has been sustained by them.*²

Other areas were more positive with the Hay correspondent of the Deniliquin paper, writing on the 11th March:

*The Lachlan River is reported bank and bank, and all the creeks rising rapidly.*³

While, from the Darling, under date February 28th, a correspondent declared:

*Since the rain the Darling, Barwon, Warrego, Mara Creek, and Bogan River country is looking well. The rush of grass was something surprising. Saltbush, lignum, and herbs of every description were freshened up as if by magic, one could fancy he beheld visibly the shooting of the vegetation. More rain is wanted, but all fears of drought are for the present dispelled. As lambing is going on the fall is very opportune. By the way they seem never to have done with lambing and shearing in these districts, both are now being proceeded with on many stations. The heavy thunder showers that rolled along were partially distributed, but I have seen no place that has not had more or less of the general boon.*⁴

It was a good season for the squatters, shearers and other hands – plenty of work and money to spend. To take advantage of business opportunities, two German hawkers, the brothers Pohlman, journeyed towards Yanco, where they expected to do some good trading. This was not their first foray into the region and they were well known to the manager and men on the Yanco Run.

The two men spent some days at Yanco before deciding to return back towards Narandera. Business had been good and the two men looked forward to banking their profits when they reached town.

¹ Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

² Sydney Mail. 21st March 1868, p14.

³ Sydney Mail. 21st March 1868, p14.

⁴ Sydney Mail. 21st March 1868, p14.

The Discovery.

On the 31st March the Narandera Police discovered charred human remains in a spent campfire, located in the scrub some seven miles from Yanco Station and eight miles from Narandera.⁵ The police believed the remains to be those of the Pohlman brothers. Rather than bury the bodies the murderers had chosen to chop up their victims and to burn their bodies in a blazing camp fire. The skulls were in good order suggesting the two victims had been hacked with either a knife or other cutting instrument. If not for the human bones found in the ashes, no evidence of the foul deed would exist. A dray with some £200 worth of goods had been pushed into the scrub, in an effort to make it less visible to those travelling this route.

Based on reports of their movements, police believed that the heinous crime had been committed around the 13th March 1868.⁶ There was a witness to the atrocity and the police sought help from the public to locate, *a black Indian*, whom they believed could help with their investigations. It was believed that this man had, *seen two men making tea at the fire in which the charred remains of the hawkers, John and Louis Pohlman, were subsequently found. It was further believed that the men referred to invited the Indian to partake of some tea, but he declined on the ground that a very bad smell emanated from the fire, which was very large, and in which he saw some pieces of money.*⁷

The Indian was described as follows:

*an Indian, some-what like a half-caste, about 28 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches high, black hair, scar side of face, near one eye; stated that he been a cook at Greengale Station.*⁸

Police were able to determine that the murderous crime had been committed by three men. One of these had been responsible for hacking the two hawkers to death, while the other two were both well aware that by their complicity they too would hang, if captured. After disposing of the bodies the three perpetrators helped themselves to a new outfit each – from the hawkers' wares – along with new bed rolls, etc.

The two hawkers had hidden their cash in a box under the dray, which the murderers failed to discover. A relative of the two hawkers told police where to find the box and £75 in cash was subsequently recovered.

The Pohlman brothers left the McNeill brothers' Yanco Station on the 13th March driving a covered dray drawn by two horses - a bay and a grey. On the following day the three perpetrators were camped in a large sheep paddock, on part of the Yanco Run, near a spot called *the round waterhole*. The three men claimed to have come from the Merool and indicated that they were heading for Tubbo where they hoped to gain employment.⁹

The three murderers chose to head east and were first seen at the cross roads, Collingullie. They were shortly afterwards back at Wagga Wagga and offering goods for sale at the Farmers' Home Hotel, on the eastern edge of the town.¹⁰

⁵ NSW Police Gazettes. 8th April 1868, p108.

⁶ Sydney Morning Herald. 2nd April 1868, p5. / Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

⁷ NSW Police Gazettes. 24th June 1868, p198

⁸ NSW Police Gazettes. 24th June 1868, p198.

⁹ Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

¹⁰ Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

Shortly afterwards, the guilty trio approached a snagging party who were working along the river at Cunningdoo. The murderers offered up jewellery for sale along with a pair of Wellington boots and a pipe; the man accompanying the prisoner offered a black cloth vest for sale, and Campbell afterwards offered some Crimean shirts, before they continued on their way again.¹¹

The three murderers continued their voyage along the river and in March 1868 were drinking at Patrick Roger's Star Hotel, on the Kyeamba Creek at Alfredtown. Rogers purchased some tobacco from Campbell, which the latter claimed to have bought from George Forsyth and Co. of Wagga Wagga. The trio also sold various items of clothing to other patrons drinking at the hotel.



Above: The location of the “Murdering Sandhills.” Courtesy Google Earth.

The Evidence.

The Superintendent at Yanco was William Garrow Elwin, and he testified as follows:

The photographs I now look at are the photographs of the two hawkers whom I knew as John and Louis Pohlman; they had, when at Yanco, a large assortment of general goods, consisting of drapery, pipes, and many kinds of fancy goods, and boots and shoes; I did not see them leave the head station, but about a fortnight afterwards heard of a cart resembling theirs at a sandhill near the 'round waterhole,' and found it there covered from view from the road by some saplings, which had been half cut through, and bent over in such away a way as to keep them growing and effectually screen the cart from view from the road; I sent information to the police at Narandera, and the next day accompanied Constable Foley to the spot and made accurate search; the goods in the cart were much upset, and there was the appearance of a large fire having been made about 150 yards from

¹¹ Gundagai Times. 18th April 1868, p3.

the cart, the remains of which we together closely examined, and found a quantity of buttons and pieces of bone, four half-crowns, some hinges and a portion of a cash-box.¹²

One of the prosecution witnesses, Thomas Woods, deposed that:

I am a driver in the employ of Mr. McEcheren, of Coonong, and in March, 1868, was in the employ of Mr. Jenkins, of Buckenbong; on the 13th of March, 1868, I saw the prisoner at a waterhole near a sandhill on the Yanco run below Narandera; there was another man with him, and both had swags rolled up in blue blankets; I had some conversation with them, and told them that I was going to Booligal; they asked me to take them with me, as they wished to go to Booligal, and said they had a sick companion lying under a tree close by; I said that I would take one of them, but could not take them all; they said they were hard up, and had been drinking; I gave them some dinner, and stayed with them for about an hour, and then proceeded on my way, leaving the whole of them behind me.¹³

Campbell was identified by a number of witnesses and subsequently found guilty by the jury and sentenced to death by the presiding judge.¹⁴

The Perpetrators.

The three suspected murderers were:

1. Robert Campbell – described as follows:

About 55 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches high, stout build, fair complexion, light hair and beard, and moustache mixed with grey, the two latter full, small lump or wart on one eyebrow, long features, aqualine nose, respectable appearance, and walks erect, speaks with a slight Irish accent; dressed in light California hat, tweed waistcoat, and brown tweed trousers; was formerly a butcher at Rutherglen, or Wangaratta, Victoria.¹⁵

The description was upgraded in May 1868, as follows:

Robert Campbell, between 50 and 60 years of age, 6 feet high, slender build, fair complexion, sandy grey hair, neck and head stooped; has a lump or wart over one eye; dressed in light California hat, tweed vest, shepherd's plaid shirt, and brown tweed trousers; a native of county Wicklow, Ireland; an old shepherd; has lived at the American Yard station and Bundun, near Jerilderie, also, at Wangaratta, Victoria; he was also employed in the month of January, 1867, by Mr Miller, butcher, Rutherglen or Wahgunyah.¹⁶

In June 1868, Campbell was reported to have been seen about a month ago travelling towards Echuca from Shepparton, accompanied by another man. It was said that he had once worked at Wilson Brothers' Wimmera, and was likely to make for that place. He had a peculiar gait, the right

¹² Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

¹³ Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

¹⁴ Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

¹⁵ NSW Police Gazettes. 8th April 1868, p108.

¹⁶ NSW Police Gazettes. 6th May 1868, p138.

leg being rather splay-footed. A later report described Campbell as a tailor, who was fond of singing when drinking in a public-house; he was also well known to the police in the Wimmera district.¹⁷

A further amended description was issued in March 1870, as follows:

*The wart or wen on his temple is large and not discoloured, and is concealed by his hat; has a peculiar walk, stepping short with one leg, but not lame. It is stated that Campbell was a soldier in the 18th Regiment and was sent to Tasmania for the manslaughter of a comrade at Norfolk Island, and that he has a D in blue under the right arm, a crucifix and AFC under one arm, and two rings on the fore and middle fingers, left hand.*¹⁸

2. Edward Costello - described as follows:

*About 50 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches high, medium build, sallow complexion, thin features, dark grissly hair, worn long, no hair on face; dressed in light California hat, dark waistcoat, striped Crimean shirt, and dark tweed trousers; is known by the name of Jim the Stockman.*¹⁹

The description was upgraded in May 1868, as follows:

*Known as Old Jack. He is about 50 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches tall, stout build, stooped shoulders, dark grissly hair, no hair on face, a little under chin, large dark eyes, greasy looking face, repulsive countenance; has the appearance of a gypsy; an Englishman. These men were seen in the early part of last month beyond the Ten Mile Creek, going in the direction of Albury, and seeking employment.*²⁰

Costello, who also went by the pseudonym of Patrick Fagan, was the first of the trio to be arrested, in late April, by Senior Constable Fullerton of the Corowa Police, and he was committed to Wagga Wagga for trial.²¹

3. Andrew Dignam - described as follows:

*About 50 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches high, swarthy complexion, round features, downcast look, dark gypsy-looking eyes, dark straight hair, mixed with grey; dressed in dark tweed trousers, dark vest and shirt, and felt hat.*²²

The description was upgraded in May 1868, as follows:

Andrew Dignam (this man is known as "Jim the Stockman.") He is about 50 years of age, 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, sallow complexion, long straight dark hair, slightly mixed with grey, no hair on face, has lost some front teeth, his neck runs in a straight line with his poll which gives him a peculiar appearance, stammers, sharp looking; a native of Dublin; dressed in light felt hat, a vest over a jumper, and elastic-side boots slit up the insteps; an old hand, and has served his time with Hamilton Hume of Yass; supposed to have gone to Grenfell or the Lachlan; he was digging at Grenfell some

¹⁷ Empire. 9th July 1868, p3.

¹⁸ NSW Police Gazette. 9th March 1870, p73.

¹⁹ NSW Police Gazettes. 8th April 1868, p108.

²⁰ NSW Police Gazettes. 6th May 1868, p138.

²¹ NSW Police Gazettes. 29th April 1868, p136.

²² NSW Police Gazettes. 8th April 1868, p108.

*time ago; has with a black and tan sheep slut, with some grey hair on the back; also a calico tent and blankets. Warrants have been issued by the Wagga Wagga Bench for the arrest of these offenders.*²³

The three men continued east and were traced as far as the American Yards [Humula]. Dignam left the other two men on either the 17th or 18th of March and made his way to Melbourne where he boarded a ship to New Zealand and was never brought to justice. No trace was ever found of Edward Costello either and he too may have left the country.

The Reward.

In May 1868 the government gave notice of a £200 reward for, *information that will lead to the apprehension of the murderers of the Pohlman brothers, and free pardon to any accomplice not being the actual murderer, who shall give the required information.*²⁴

No doubt motivated by the reward, and the potential for fame and promotion, police officers all around New South Wales and Victoria commenced arresting a host of innocent men. The first such two were James Goff and Patrick McNamara, who were arrested in the Murray district, but quickly released on the grounds that no-one could identify them as the murderers.²⁵

In August 1868, Constables Flannigan and McElroy, of Hamilton, arrested one James Campbell, believing him to be one of the murderers. Campbell was able to provide an alibi and he was discharged from custody when he appeared in court.²⁶

Late in October 1868, Edward Costello appeared in the Wagga Wagga Court charged with the murder of the Pohlman brothers. Costello had been arrested at Hay by Constable Egan, and he claimed that he was living at Jugiong with Mr. McAnsh at the time of the offence. Sub-Inspector Meares produced a certificate and letter from Mr. McAnsh of Jugiong, showing that prisoner was in his service from October 1867 to May 1868, and as the murder was committed in March, he could not possibly be identified with the crime. The prisoner was, accordingly, discharged from custody.²⁷

Police enthusiasm continued into March 1870 when Senior Sergeant Cleary, of the Bourke Police, arrested Robert Murphy, believing him to be Robert Campbell. Murphy was subsequently released from custody due to a lack of any evidence connecting him to the crime.²⁸

Additional arrests, and subsequent dismissals, occurred right through into the 1880s.

Robert Campbell was seen, in March 1870, *on Ferguson's Run*, by one David West, who reported same to the police. Campbell was said to be, *very dissipated looking, and was dressed in an old brown swallow-tail coat, moleskin trousers, and drab American hat. He stated his intention of being on the Murrumbidgee at shearing time.*²⁹

²³ NSW Police Gazettes. 6th May 1868, p138.

²⁴ Gundagai Times. 30th May 1868, p3.

²⁵ NSW Police Gazettes. 8th July 1868, p209.

²⁶ Sydney Morning Herald. 24th August 1868, p5.

²⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 31st October 1868, p2.

²⁸ NSW Police Gazette. 9th March 1870, p76.

²⁹ NSW Police Gazette. 22nd June 1870, p164.

In October 1870 police finally made a genuine arrest. Robert Campbell, alias Palmer, appeared in the Wagga Wagga Circuit Court, on the 4th October, charged with the murder of the Pohlman brothers. He had been taken into custody by Constable John Chisholm, of Mansfield, Victoria, on the 13th July 1870, at the Sheepwash Hotel, Oxley. Campbell claimed that he knew nothing about it, and laughed; he afterwards said that, had the rivers not been up, he would have given the constable some trouble to catch him.³⁰ Constable Chisholm was subsequently granted the £200 reward.³¹

The Hanging.

Erection of the gallows had commenced by December 1870, by the firm of Mr Charles Hardy, and were described as follows:

*In the corner close by the gate the gallows were erected, the beam of which over topped the wall by over a foot. Immediately beneath the trap-door was a deep well, dug upon the occasion of Campbell's execution to ensure a sufficient drop. In order to deaden sound as much as possible, the posts against which the trap swung were padded. The ominous piece of timber, and still more ominous rope, that showed above the wall were watched intently by a number of persons outside the gaol as the hour for the execution approached.*³²

Campbell was hung on the 10th January – five years later, to the day, Daniel Boon shot and killed Alexander McMullen at North Wagga Wagga and subsequently became the second man to be hung in that town.

A local press report gave the following background:

*Robert Campbell, convicted of the murder of the Pohlman Brothers, was executed at the gaol this morning, in the presence of the gaol authorities and a few of the townspeople. The gallows was erected in the angle of the yard formed by the left side of the gaol and the yard front wall facing Waterview. It stood over a circular bricked excavation of six feet in diameter by ten feet in depth, so arranged that, upon the pulling of the bolt, the body of the criminal descended partly below the surface, while no part of the scaffold was visible outside the walls. The grating of the condemned cell in which the unhappy prisoner was confined looked out upon the scaffold, and during its erection the noise of the workmen was distinctly heard by the convict, and portions of the scaffold were actually within his view. In consideration of his unhappy state it was intimated to Campbell that he might occupy another cell, but he preferred to remain where he was, death apparently having no terrors for him. He had previously spent the greater portion of his time in prayer and religious study, and died, penitent and resigned, but denying the murder of the Pohlman's to the last.*³³

In a last minute confession Campbell declared, *I did not do it (the murder), but was accessory to it, and had the property. I did not see it done, but I think it was done at night, and in a drunken fit.*³⁴

³⁰ Sydney Mail. 15th October 1870, p12.

³¹ Australian Town & Country Journal. 15th October 1870, p22.

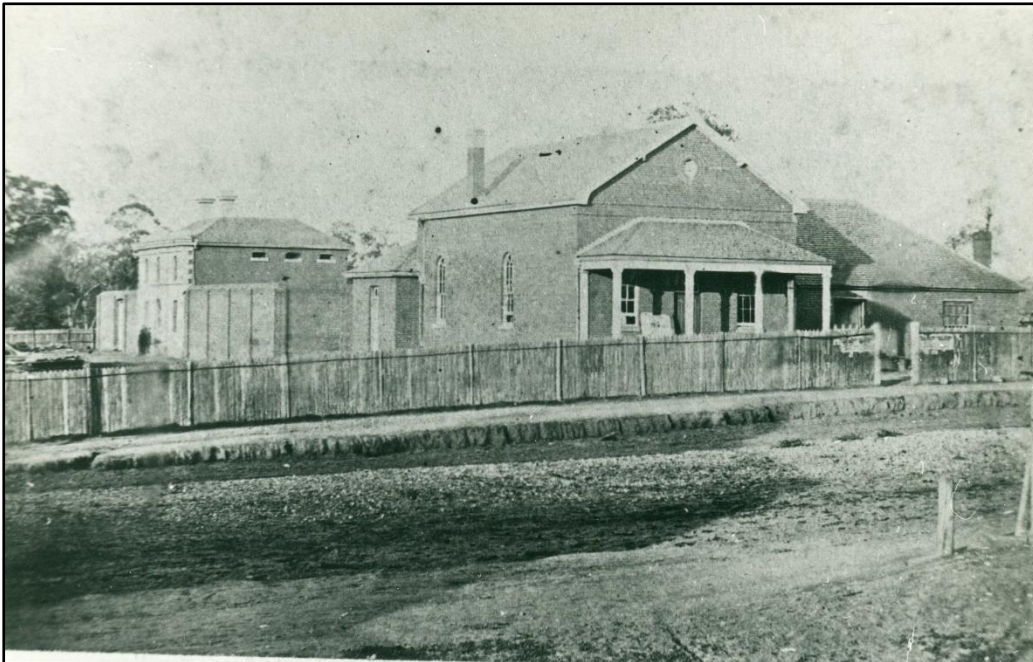
³² Manaro Mercury. 29th July 1876, p4.

³³ Empire. 11th January 1871, p2.

³⁴ Evening News. 13th January 1871, p3.

The event itself was reported in the following words:

As soon as the sergeant had concluded reading, the fetched man moved to the foot of the gallows, and then with a firm and steady step slowly ascended the steps of the platform above, and composedly placed himself upon the spot indicated by the executioner, fervently repeating all the while the responses to the which was being read to him by the priest. When the final prayer was being recited he knelt down, and upon rising endeavoured to shake the spectacles from his eyes, as they appeared to discomfort him. Failing in this he called the executioner to his assistance and the spectacles were removed, the last awful moment having arrived, the executioner adjusted the rope tightly round his neck, the knot being so arranged as to cause dislocation when tightened. Up to this time the wretched man neither trembled nor blanched, nor beyond a unnatural blueness of the hands betrayed the slightest signs of fear, but as the hangman passed the rope about his neck a fearful spasm of horror shot across his countenance, and as the spectators sickened and turned away from the agonized workings of his features, the white cap was drawn over his head, and his last view of man was taken upon. At this point many of the spectators could stand no more, and hurriedly retreated out of sight of the scaffold. One awful moment of suspense ensued, the usual shaking of hands between the executioner and the doomed man took place, and a sudden jerk the bolt was withdrawn, the trap descended, and a dull heavy thud announced the fall of the victim and the close of a painful scene. The body descended with such force that the neck was immediately dislocated, and death must have been instantaneous. A few convulsive twitches followed the fall, and then the body swung motionless in the well which had been excavated beneath the gallows, with the head but a few inches above the level of the earth. After hanging about twenty minutes, a shell which had been prepared for its reception was moved across the mouth of the well, and the body was raised and deposited in it, Dr. Morgan first feeling the wrist, heart, and neck, and pronouncing life to be extinct. When the cap was removed the features appeared without the slightest distortion, and the expression of the face was perfectly calm and peaceful. The lid of the shell was screwed down, the certificates as required by law were duly signed, and thus ended the first execution that has ever been carried out in Wagga Wagga, and we trust that many a long day will elapse before another will take place.³⁵



Above: The Wagga Wagga Court House with the Wagga Wagga Gaol in the background.

³⁵ Evening News. 13th January 1871, p3.