

WWDHS NEWSLETTER No. 434 Dec 2018 – Jan 2019 ISSN 2207-1016

Next Meetings:

Monday 21 Jan: Committee
Wagga and District Family History
Rooms @ 6:15pm

Monday 18 February 2018
Committee Meeting @ 6.15pm
General Meeting @ 7.30 pm
Museum of Riv, Willans Hill

GUEST SPEAKERS

18 February 2018: Graham McKenzie will be talking about Varcoes, his father's mother's family who came from Cornwall to Hillston via Dandenong, Hindmarsh Island, Mount Gambier and Deniliquin. Museum of Riverina, Willans Hill.

18 March 2018: Sue Weekes (WWDHS-CSURA Joint Scholarship winner) will be speaking about her research

Other activities: The Last Drinks Walk by Peter Cox and Stephen Holt: A historical and hysterical pub crawl

Book now at the Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre Booking Office or on-line @ \$25, plus \$2 booking fee. Enjoy a two-hour, leisurely stroll down Fitzmaurice Street, with the odd stop for a cleansing ale or wine at discount prices. Immerse yourself into an entertaining history of the hotels at that end of town! Headphones and receivers provided. Leaving from the Hampden Bar Cellar, Romano's Hotel, sharply at **4pm**. \$25 includes the ticket to the performance and headphones.

Any drink and food purchases are at your own cost, but there will be discounted drink prices available along the way. Bookings can be made for Wednesday, 12 December, Saturday 15 December, Sunday, 16 December, Wednesday 19 December.

WWDHS Patron: Michael McCormack, Deputy Prime Minister
and Federal Member for the Riverina

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Committee meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
6:15pm at MOR, Willans Hill site (Feb-March)

General meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
7:30pm at MOR, Willans Hill site. (Feb-March)

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

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Redevelopment of the Museum of the Riverina, Willans Hill site.

By Geoff Burch

As many members will be aware the Wagga Wagga City Council have received a grant of some \$3.2 million dollars for an upgrade of the Museum of the Riverina, Willans Hill site. More specific details of the development will unfold as the project progresses. Primary objectives of the redevelopment are to substantially increase internal storage space, to improve accessibility and to enhance the museum's role as a major visitor attraction.

To enable these modifications, it will be necessary for this site to close for an extended period. From the 29 January 2019 the site will be closed to the public. Museum staff will remain at the site until the end of July 2019, in order to move all items from the site and to store them elsewhere off site. These will be at a number of locations.

At some time during the period January to July, the society will be required to also remove all of the material in our archives. The MOR will assist by storing the majority of this material on our behalf. Once construction starts some of the museum staff will relocate to the Historic Council Chambers.

At some point in time our meetings will move from the Willans Hill site to the Historic Council Chambers. A date for this change is yet to be set, but it will fall within the period March to July 2019.

Architects have been chosen and the WWDHS has a representative on a new committee – the Museum Redevelopment Stakeholder Group - which will provide a means for the Society to be kept abreast of progress, and provide an opportunity for our opinions to be voiced.

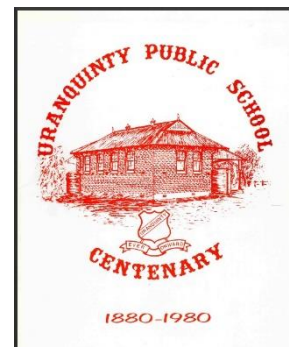
As part of the process of relocating all items held in store at the existing site, each item is being checked to ensure that it is registered in the MOR database, and assessed to determine whether it needs to be kept or disposed of. There will be a number of items that will be de-accessioned. The WWDHS has three representatives on a small committee that considers these matters who are able to keep us advised of which items are being recommended for de-accessioning.

It is envisaged that the MOR, Willans Hill site, will reopen in late 2020.

URANQUINTY PUBLIC SCHOOL CENTENARY, 1880-1980

A history of Uranquinty and its School

This book has now been reprinted and is available at the Uranquinty Store/ Post Office @ \$20 each.



Anita Buswell, Member of Wagga and District Historical Society

Anita Buswell was born in Wagga Wagga on 22 September 1922 and lived in Galore with her husband, Don, for many years. She later moved to North Wagga.

Anita was a poet, a teacher and a delightful character. Intelligent and creative, she was very interested in history and wrote her own family history. She was involved in many community activities including the CWA, Bomen Action Group and a long-time member of the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society.

She died on 5 October this year at the age of 96.



HUTHWAITES PROJECT

The Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society, Museum of the Riverina and Charles Sturt University Regional Archives have each agreed to contribute \$5000 towards the research and transcription of interviews involved in the publication of a book on Huthwaites, to be written by Danielle Gamble.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY GRANT

Peter Gissing reported on the Royal Australian Historical Society Conference at Port Macquarie which he attended on the Society's behalf. While there, he was presented with the cheque for a grant which had been awarded to our society and CSU Regional Archives to convert Dr Keith Swan's collection of audio records (approximately fifty audio cassettes and reel to reel recordings of interview and seminar talks into a digital format).

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

Vice President, Geoff Burch, on the Society's behalf, protested about the proposed changes to the Notice of Intention to Marry form and the Marriage Certificate and sent copies to Federal and State Members of Parliament, Michael McCormack and Joe McGirr.

MEETING JOE MCGIRR

Vice Presidents, Geoff Burch and Peter Gissing, met with our new Member for Wagga Wagga, Joe McGirr, to let him know about our society's aims, activities etc.

CENTENARY OF THE SPANISH FLU, 2019

Our society is willing to assist Museum of Riverina.

AMPLIFY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Wagga Wagga City Library in partnership with the State Library of New South Wales is using an innovative online tool called Amplify to allow anyone to search, listen to and transcribe local audio collections. As part of this project, interviews such as the 2012 Floods and the 2WG interviews (over 400 hours in total) have been transcribed and are available on-line. Corrections can be made to the transcripts in the same way as the TROVE National Newspaper collection. See amplify.sl.nsw.gov.au/waggawagga.

AN ATROCIOUS, COLD-BLOODED MURDER

By Sherry Morris

In April 1890, the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* reported that the head of a murdered man had been found at Houlaghan's Creek at Old Junee. The remainder of the body was retrieved nearby after the arrival of Captain Battyne from Albury and two experienced Aboriginal trackers. The newspaper described the horrific crime as 'one of most atrocious and cold-blooded murders ever recorded in annals of Australian crime'.

The murdered man was soon identified by Mr King of 'Cunningdroo' as his friend, John Young ('Jack') Taylor, a miner aged about 55. Taylor had stayed at King's home for a few days after traveling from Rushworth in Victoria with his two retriever dogs, his two horses, a cart and a very distinctive wagonette which was vivid red in the body and covered with a white tilt. After leaving King's, he had travelled into Wagga Wagga to spend Easter at James Kerr's Hotel in Edward Street near the railway station.

Taylor had been accompanied from Rushworth by a man named Alfred or Alexander (or 'Alick') Schmidt, a native of Potsdam, Prussia, who had been in Australia for about eight or nine years. A young man aged between 22 and 30, Schmidt was about five feet seven inches in height (160 centimetres), of slight build and sallow complexion. He had sharp, regular 'not unpleasant' features, a light brown beard and a moustache.

On Easter Monday (7 April), Taylor and Schmidt commenced a pub crawl, visiting the Viaduct Hotel, run by the Juppenlatz family, the Farmers' Home Hotel in Tarcutta Road, licensed by the Tillets (where they had arrived about 12.15 p.m.) and Alfredtown Hotel, fourteen kilometres from Wagga Wagga.

Not long after the two men had left Alfredtown Hotel, Schmidt had been seen by Brigid Curran hurtling along the Tarcutta Road (where Brigid resided) back into town in the wagonette. One witness, Caroline Jane Homer, had even noticed blood dripping from the wagonette when Schmidt had stopped to ask her if there was a route to Junee which would by-pass Wagga Wagga but she thought it must have been from meat. That evening two men, John Mephan and Patrick White, observed Schmidt trying to change the markings on the wagonette and later noticed bloodstains where the wagonette had been.

Early the following morning (Tuesday 8 April) Schmidt continued to leave a trail of blood stains as he drove to a lane that ran parallel to Tarcutta Road and about 5 a.m. was seen crossing the Wagga Wagga lagoon bridge. At 7 a.m. Schmidt called at O'Donnell's Hotel on the Junee Road, about five kilometres from Wagga Wagga, and one of Taylor's dogs was seen in the back of the wagonette. At Old Junee, Schmidt bought a shovel from storekeeper, Samuel Storey, then proceeded to bury the body of Jack Taylor in one place and the head in another place in the bed of Houlaghan's Creek opposite Storey's residence.

Constable Dixon was on the murderer's track and overtook him near J. C. Maloney's farm. He noticed blood on Schmidt's boot, on the cart (although it had been washed down) and on his spade and his tomahawk. Schmidt claimed he had been shooting hares and that he had left Taylor on the road because he was drunk and wanted to walk to King's.



*Left: Kerr's Wagga Hotel near the Railway Station
Right: Farmers Home Hotel, visited by Jack Taylor (victim) and Schmidt (murderer) on 7 April 1890*

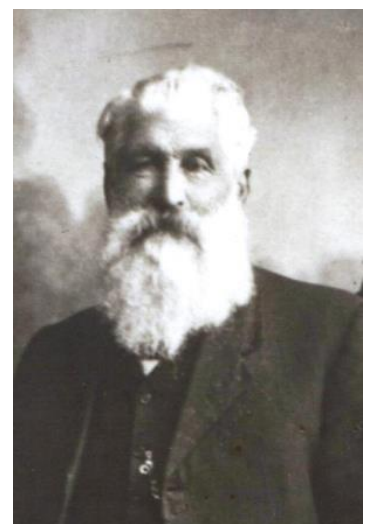
*Alfredtown
Hotel, visited by
Taylor and
Schmidt, 7 April
1890*



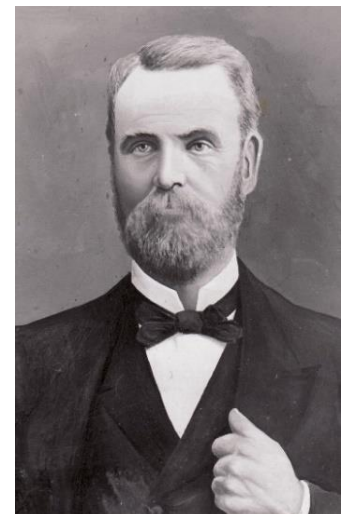
Storey's General Store at Old Junee where Jack Taylor purchased a shovel to bury his victim



Posing for photographs, re-enacting the finding of the body of Jack Taylor in Houlaghan's Creek on April 1890. Sam Storey who sold Schmidt a spade is on the right in both photographs



L. A. Fosbery, District Coroner (left); W. C. Hunter, juror (middle); R. S. Heydon, juror (right).



P. Rae, juror (left); W. J. Daley, juror (middle); and H. B. Fitzhardinge, local barrister instructing Whitford who was defending Alf Schmidt (right).

However, Schmidt knew he was a doomed man. He tried to cut his own throat and attacked the constable with a razor when he tried to prevent him. He then obtained a gun (a pinfire revolver) and shot himself but once again he was unsuccessful. It was only a 'toy' gun and the bullet was no bigger than a pellet! The distraught man was then taken by the Constable to the Wagga Wagga Hospital in Tarcutta Street.

On 11 April 1890, the head of Jack Taylor was found and identified by King and by Homer, the cook at Kerr's Hotel. The inquest was held at the Wagga Courthouse by the District Coroner L. A. Fosbery on 14 April 1890. The jury included some of Wagga Wagga's most prominent businessmen – storekeepers, W. C. Hunter (the foreman), J. Fox, J. Lupton, J. K. Paton and W. J. Daley, stock and station agents, C. K. Horwood and C. J. Tompson, wheelwrights and coachbuilders, P. Rae and R. S. Heydon, and publicans, H. Millenet and J. Manton. It also contained retired businessman, P. S. F. Stephen, music teacher, F. C. Burry, J. G. Bourne and J. B. Wood.

The jurors had the unpleasant task of viewing the remains of the decomposed body and examining the bloodstained wagonette. The inquest was then postponed a week to allow time for Schmidt to recover from his wounds. It was further adjourned when the prisoner developed an abscess in the throat in the region traversed by the small revolver bullet.

By this time, Schmidt had confessed, explaining that he and Taylor had quarrelled over his driving. Taylor had used abusive language and Schmidt had struck him with a tomahawk. Schmidt thought he had killed Taylor but Doctor Thomas Hillas and Doctor St Clair Long later testified he had died from the bleeding – probably after Schmidt had slit his throat.

The inquest eventually continued on 26 April. Evidence was given by the licensees and employees of the various hotels visited by Taylor and Schmidt – James Kerr, licensee, Thomas William Cleton, the cook, and Thomas Bromley, the groom at the Railway Hotel; Grace Darling Tillet, licensee of the Farmers' Home Hotel; Hannah Mary Costello, the wife of the licensee, and Hetty Mephan, domestic servant, at Alfredtown Hotel. The other witnesses included William Reardon, farmer and wood carter of Gumly Gumly; Brigid Ellen Curren of Tarcutta Road; Hugh Rankin of North Wagga Wagga; Geo King; Caroline Jane Homer of Tarcutta Road; John Mephan, a labourer who had been camping on Lake Albert Road; and Patrick White, a labourer. During the inquest the prisoner spoke in too low a tone to be audible in court. He claimed he had no intention of killing Taylor but thought he had died after he hit him with a tomahawk. The jury returned after only twenty minutes and decided he had a case to answer. Schmidt was then transferred to Goulburn for safe keeping and brought back to Wagga Wagga on 23 September 1890.

On 29 September 1890, the Wagga Wagga Circuit Court was packed for the trial and a small crowd remained outside when they were unable to get standing room inside. Schmidt was neatly attired in a white-coloured coat which was buttoned and dark brown trousers with a white handkerchief round his neck. He pleaded not guilty. The Justice was Geo Innes. Schmidt was defended by Mr Whitfield instructed by local barrister H. B. Fitzhardinge who had been assigned by the crown. The foreman of the jury was the well-known saddle manufacturer and alderman, John Joseph McGrath. The remaining jurors were less well known – a cordial manufacturer, Richard Patrick Davoren, farmers, Joshua Rapley, William Mathews and Henry Metcalfe and Charles Stuart, John Kember, Jas Lord, Hugh Turner, Geo Turner, Thomas Power and John Mecon. Schmidt was found guilty and sentenced to hang. Throughout the trial and even when informed by the jailer, Samuel Adair, that he would be executed on 18 November,

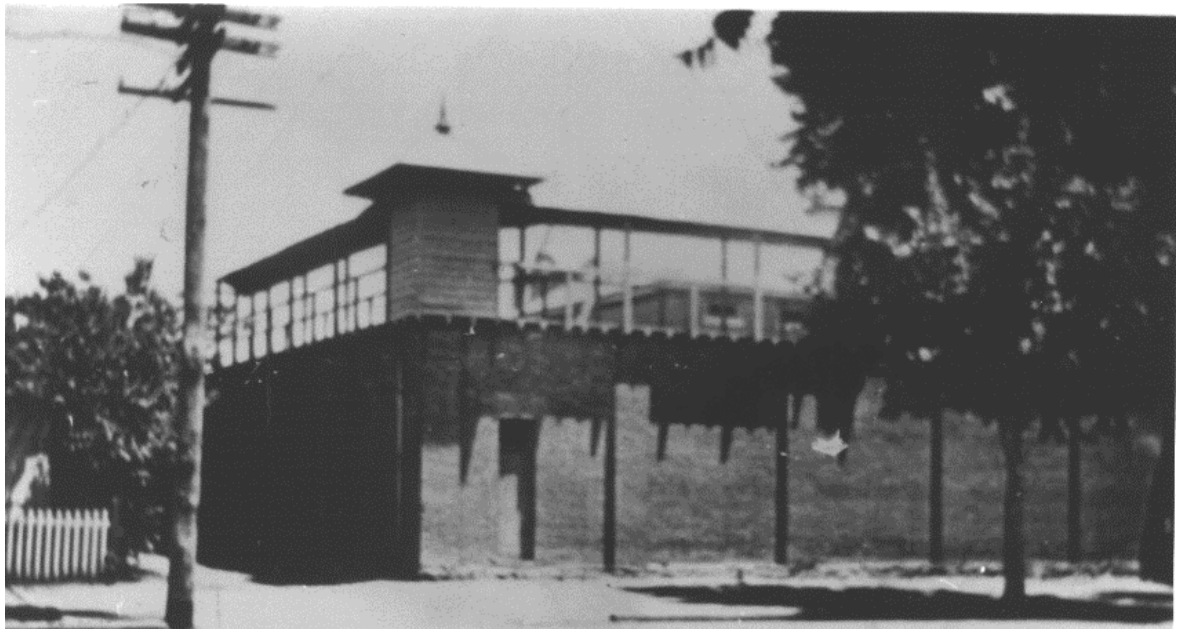
he remained calm and unemotional. Nevertheless, he was kept under surveillance day and night to prevent him from taking his own life.



After his trial, the condemned man became very attentive to the preaching of Archbishop W. H. Pownall (pictured on the left). He read the bible and apparently repented. The hangman named Howard and his assistant came down from Sydney and had to be accommodated at the jail as none of the hotels would give them rooms. A scaffold, composed of heavy timbers and painted black, was erected. After businessmen complained about the proximity of the place of execution to the busy centre of the town, a wide canvas screen was placed around the jail walls on two sides to shut out the scene as much as possible from the windows of adjacent buildings.

The execution took place as planned on 18 November 1890. Archbishop Pownall had been in attendance from an early hour. Schmidt was humble and contrite but his face on the scaffold was 'of woeful appearance' from the intense mental suffering. According to the local newspaper, the public to its credit showed very little morbid curiosity. Yet no voice was raised in pity or sympathy for the murderer who was considered a scheming cold-blooded assassin about to have his fitting end. The town consoled itself that, like most murders committed in Wagga Wagga, neither the murdered man nor the murderer was a Wagga Wagga man!

Archbishop Pownall had the final word about capital punishment: 'As a man, a citizen and a Christian, I am constrained to say that the parsimony that hangs men under such circumstances is barbarous, revolting and deserving of the severest condemnation.'



Wagga Wagga Jail where the hanging of Alf Schmidt took place, 18 November 1890

BILLS MEMORIAL HORSE TROUGHS

By Sherry Morris

In the early 20th Century horse transport and haulage were predominant and horses were still used extensively by the man on the land. Horse troughs were therefore common and were dotted around the town of Wagga Wagga. Most were outside the local hotels but users were expected to patronize the hotels since the hotelkeepers had to pay the water rate.



Left: Kerr's Wagga Hotel near the Railway in the late 19th century

Below: Carrington Hotel in the early 20th Century (left) and in the 1920s (right)



Right: A horse trough at Council Chambers in Morrow Street (on the right of the photograph)



Cars and trucks became more popular from the 1930s although horse transport was used in Wagga Wagga until the 1960s. Horses were still used to a large extent for haulage; and horse-drawn transport was used by the garbage contractors, William and Percy Nelson, until 1962 while Kelso Bakery's horse-drawn vans made their final run in August 1964 and the last horse-drawn milk delivery was 31 December 1964. Horse troughs gradually disappeared until there were only eight well-used troughs in Wagga Wagga in 1959 including the horse trough later donated to the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society and later located at the Museum of the Riverina.



Above left: Ideal Dairy horse-drawn van in the 1940s. Source: Museum of the Riverina.

Above right: Horse-drawn garbage cart used by garbage contractors, William and Percy Nelson until 1962

Right: Kelso Bakery's horse-drawn vans on their final run in August 1964. Source: The Daily Advertiser, 6 August 1964.

Right: Hardys' horse teams hauling logs



George and Annis Bills

George Bills (right) was born in Brighton, Sussex, England, on 11 March 1859. He was the fourth of the fourteen children of Richard Hardy Bills and his wife Elizabeth nee Harper. When George was aged about eleven, the family migrated to New Zealand. Then two years later they moved to Echuca, Victoria, Australia, where his father worked under contract to the government. His father, a naturalist, had a great love of the Australian bush and its wildlife. George and his brothers were involved with their father in trapping and trading in birds and George developed a great love for all animals. The family later moved to Moama in New South Wales.



In 1882 George opened a bird dealers' shop on the corner of Queen and Edward Street in Brisbane. He also started wire weaving and began making wire mattresses with his brother Richard (Dick) who had a treadle wire mattress machine invented by his brother Walter. This business became very successful. In 1884 George moved to Sydney and with his brother Henry (Harry) established a factory initially in Liverpool Street and by 1890 in larger premises at 60-62 Harbour Street. Until 1898 they had traded as Henry Bills and then as Bills Brothers Beds (and later Bills Better Beds). In August 1900 they registered the trade mark 'Lethe' which is a Greek word meaning 'sleep well'. After further expansion of the business, on 22 January 1901, the business was moved to Kent Street where they made mattresses with wire inserts. Harry retired due to ill health in 1903 and George carried on until 1908 when he also retired although he maintained an interest in the business.

While in Brisbane, George had met Annis Elizabeth Swann who had been born in Sheffield England on 25 September 1859. They were married on 18 May 1885 at the General Registry office in Brisbane. They had no children but they both loved animals and were keen philanthropists. Having become quite wealthy, the couple donated large sums of money to charities and needy individuals. They also became Life Members of the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) which was formed in Melbourne in 1871 and were regular contributors to animal welfare charities. George was made a Life Governor of the RSPCA in 1924.



George and Annis' main concern was for the well-being of the all too neglected and ill-treated horses. They both felt that there were inadequate facilities for the watering of horses which were then the mainstay of commercial transportation.

After George retired, he and Annis travelled overseas. Annis died while they were holidaying in England on 20 June 1910. She was just fifty years of age. George moved to Melbourne and lived in Leslie Street Hawthorn. Because of his love of horses and fears that water was not always available for them he began to have troughs installed around Melbourne.

George died on 14 December 1927. He reputedly left £91,000. After providing for various personal bequests (including one of £2000 to his friend, William Henry Brown, an employee of Bills Brothers), his will directed the remainder of his income (probably about £60,000-70,000) be used to provide troughs for horses ‘and other dumb animals’ where necessary and for the purpose of preventing cruelty and alleviating the sufferings of animals in Australasia, the British Isles or any part of the world subject to the consent of the proper authorities.

His executors of the will were Daisy Clara Crook and William Henry Crook, both of Auburn, Victoria while the solicitors were Wynne and Riddell of Melbourne. The Bills Trust was thus formed to construct and erect and pay for horse troughs. Requests began arriving from local Councils and were made and installed whenever they were requested.

Originally each trough was individually designed and contracted. One of the first was a granite memorial trough, hewn in one piece, in Barton Street, Hawthorn, in Melbourne. By the early 1930s a relation of the Bills, Jack Phillips, became the contractor to the Estate and a registered design of pre-cast concrete became the standard for subsequent troughs. The troughs were manufactured at Phillips’ site in Auburn Road, Hawthorn, and dispatched throughout Australia. Each council which applied for a trough had to ensure that there was a sufficient supply of water and prepare a foundation at Council’s expense ready for the trough’s erection. Later Rocla Concrete Pipes took over the manufacture but continued to use the standard Phillips’ design. Rocla supplied hundreds of troughs in Victoria and NSW. Each cost about £13 plus transport and the cost of installation. The cumbersome steel and concrete moulds were later moved to a Rocla factory at Junee, NSW. About thirty-eight troughs were made there in 1938. The moulds were then transferred to Sydney where about 200 troughs were constructed.

By 1983 hundreds, perhaps thousands, of troughs had been constructed in Australia, mostly in NSW and Victoria and about fifty in overseas countries – England, Ireland, Switzerland (for donkeys) and Japan. Most were erected from 1930 to 1940 and provided employment in the Depression years. Many are still in existence today.

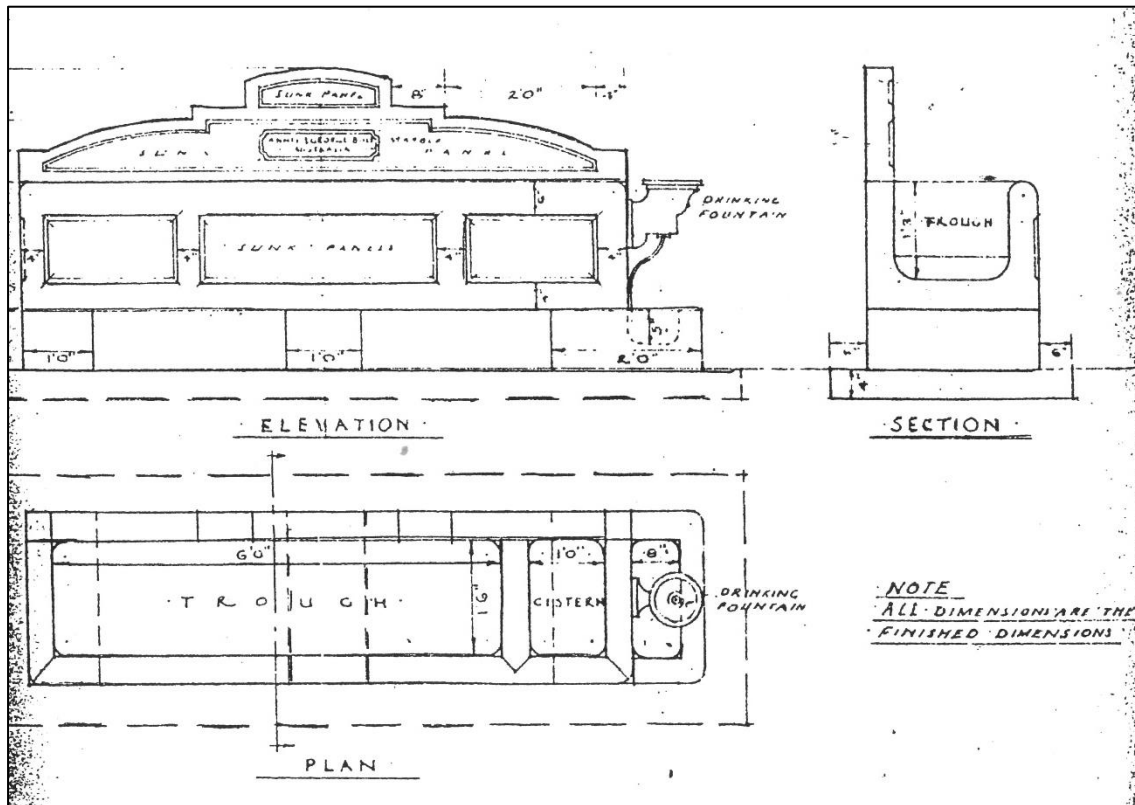


Left: Bills Horse Trough photographed at the Museum of the Riverina, Botanic Gardens Site, in 2009. It had been erected in Bourke Street, Wagga Wagga, in the 1930s on the footpath outside the showground opposite Coleman Street near the level crossing. It was transferred by Wagga Wagga City Council to the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society on 21 February 1972.

When this Bills Horse Trough was constructed, a stock route ran from Coleman Street into Bourke Street and around into Chaston Street. It was therefore a popular drinking spot for the horses, dogs and stockmen travelling along the route on their way into town. The horse trough and the adjacent water fountain were also useful for people and horses using the showground particularly at the Annual Show usually in September or October each year (except the war years). It was the largest and principal show in the Riverina with displays of horses, sheep, cattle, pigs and poultry as well as machinery and agricultural products. Thousands attended each year (20,000-30,000 each year in the 1930s and 1940s).

With the increasing use of cars and trucks particularly after the Second World War, the demand for the troughs ceased. Since then the Bills Trust has contributed to other causes to benefit thousands of horses, cattle, dogs, cats and other pets. For example, the Bills Trust in co-operation with the RSPCA established the Rest Home at Tally Ho in Victoria for dogs, cats and other pets and a Rescue Centre in Burwood, Melbourne, for the treatment of injured strays with the cost borne by the Bills' estate. It was officially opened by His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, Sir Rohan Delacombe, on 23 June 1964.

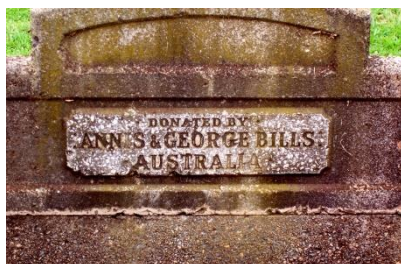
The executors of the Bills estate died in the 1950s. The estate was finally wound up about 1981.



Above: Proposed Design by J. B. Phillips for Memorial Trough for Annis and George Bills, Australia. Source: Bills Trough folder at Museum of the Riverina.



The Bills Horse Trough at Henty on display and in excellent condition



Bills Horse Trough at Livestock Marketing Centre, Bomen, Wagga Wagga

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND

A HAPPY NEW YEAR