

# Some Early History of Fellmongeries, Tanneries, and Wool Scourers at Wagga Wagga.



Photograph by Charles Kerry Studio, about 1900. Tyrrell Collection, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. 85/1284-141, 00g01559

**Above:** Wool scouring c.1900.  
Photo from the Tyrrell Collection, courtesy of the Power Museum, Sydney.

## Wool Scouring at Wagga Wagga.

Wool scouring, as a manufacturing process, existed long before Australia became a prominent producer of wool.

The earliest scouring was more accurately described as washing, but the process evolved to include the use of hot water along with the addition of soap and an alkali, and involved more mechanized agitation of the wool fibres. The increasingly technical process was more the realm of dedicated manufacturing plants.

The evolution in Australia was no different - to begin with the sheep would have been shorn without any washing and the wool would have been sold in the greasy state.

The next step would have involved washing the wool while still on the sheep's backs and this would have taken place on the individual runs/stations. Increased volumes, along with the development of colonial expertise and increased investment in equipment ultimately led to the establishment of dedicated wool scouring plants across the country.

Dedicated wool scouring plants were evident in the major metropolitan areas by the mid 1840's, but it would be some years before any such plants were established at Wagga Wagga.

No doubt in the early 1830's the local Riverina' squatters would have shorn their sheep without any form of *washing* or *scouring*, and the wool would have been carted to Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide, in the greasy state. Cattle were still prominent in those early days with the large increase in sheep numbers set to occur in the 1850's, 1860's and onwards.

An early report (1823) in the Hobart papers perhaps summarized the general custom at the time:

***Management of Sheep, as to Cleanliness of Wool.***-Although washing the wool on the sheep's back is always to be urged when it can be effected, yet being a troublesome and generally a difficult operation, in a new Country, it is likely to be too much neglected.. When this is impossible, though most important, the next best mode of management, in respect to cleanliness, the good effects of which have come under the observation of several breeders of stock, is suggested to be-

1st. Let the stock-yards be kept sufficiently large, so as no crowding is necessary.

2d. Let the spot fixed upon be dry and airy, and if possible, sloping gently from the centre; at all events having one slope.

3d. Let the stock-yards be kept bedded with dry grass, fern, or leaves, so as no kind of filth from the yard can adhere to the wool.

By attending to these simple rules, washing will not only be rendered less necessary, but both sheep and fleece will be greatly improved ; and this being a gradual operation, can be accomplished without any additional establishment.-It is scarcely necessary to add, that air and cleanliness prevent scab in sheep. <sup>1</sup>

The earliest scouring plants were commonly established on the existing sites of fellmongeries and tanneries, for obvious reasons, and the three businesses were commonly operated collectively at the one site. They had a lot in common – their source base was the same, and export markets were similar; they all required access to a good water supply, and they all produced waste effluent. Nowadays they would all be termed *noxious industries*.

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<sup>1</sup> Hobart Town Gazette. 4<sup>th</sup> January 1823, p2.

Early scouring plants were spread all around the colonies. James Stokes was operating a scouring works in Perth by November 1844.<sup>2</sup>

There was a scouring plant in Tasmania by August 1846, which was described as follows:

*To the Editor of the Colonial Times & Tasmanian.*

*SIR,-Perhaps there is nothing of equal importance to the vital interests of the colony as a steady eye to our exports, in increasing quantity and quality, so as to afford ample and equitable returns; and, since I see your columns so much devoted to this important object, I would beg to offer a few observations, which I have lately made, for your consideration. I observe that the several Wool Factors, Fellmongers, &c, are now laudibly endeavouring to send the wool to Britain without the dirt, so that the speculation of buying in England will be less complex, and will depend on the staple and the market only. In the first essay, I have seen, I was exceedingly pleased, not only in beholding the pure, white, clear, and clean perfection to which some very dirty wool had been brought, but in a very ingenious invention for the purpose of effecting this, which, I was told, had been perfected by Mr. John W. Graves, an artisan of this place. These you may see at Mr. J. S. Butler's Fellmongery, Elphinstone-street, Macquarie-street west; and, if you should have equal curiosity or interest with myself, you will go for the purpose; and if you do, I would thank you to guard the operators as to what alkalis they may use, for, in all decomposition for scouring, they must be mindful that the staple may be more or less injured; and, if, with the heat of shipment, the wool should once be found attenuated, that once will cast suspicion on the wool generally; and, you know, you may as well hang a dog as give him a bad name. However, I leave the matter to your better discretion.- Your obedient servant, STAPLE.<sup>3</sup>*

**BOTANY WOOL WASHING ESTABLISHMENT.** — Flockmasters, merchants, and the public in general, are respectfully informed that the undersigned, having made several additions and improvements to the above establishment, is now prepared to wash and get up as many as sixty bales of wool weekly.

Most satisfactory references can be given, if required, to the flockmasters and merchants in Sydney, as to the manner in which wools have hitherto been got up by the undersigned, as well as to the prices realized in the English market.

The following is the rate of charges on washed wool:—

Spout washing, with water only, 1d. per lb.  
Ditto, with hot water, soap, and soda, 1½d. per lb.  
Fellmongering and spout washing, 2s. 6d. per dozen skins  
Ditto ditto, and scouring, 2s. per dozen  
Wool-sorting, 4s. per bale.

All wools carted from Sydney to the establishment, and returned to any part of Sydney without any additional charge.

Orders will be promptly attended to on application at the offices of Mr. William Hindson, or Mr. John Lord, Macquarie-place; or to

**ROBERT LORD,**  
At Botany.

6473

Early scours in Sydney included one at Botany by November 1847,<sup>4</sup> and another in Bourke Street, Surry Hills, by March 1848 (a fellmongery, tannery, & wool washing plant).<sup>5</sup>

Whilst there were scouring plants in Melbourne, the Geelong area also exhibited strong growth for this industry sector. There was a scouring plant at Breakwater, Geelong, by June 1850<sup>6</sup> and in 1866 the WWE reported that the quantity of wool scoured on the Barwon River at Geelong this year would exceed that of any previous year, and that “several hundred bales have also been forwarded from Riverina and Upper Murray” for scouring.<sup>7</sup>

**Left:** Advertisement for the Botany Wool Washing Establishment (SMH. November 1847).

<sup>2</sup> Inquirer (Perth). 27<sup>th</sup> November 1844, p2.

<sup>3</sup> Colonial Times (Hobart). 18<sup>th</sup> August 1846, p4.

<sup>4</sup> Sydney Morning Herald. 18<sup>th</sup> November 1847, p4.

<sup>5</sup> Sydney Morning Herald. 9<sup>th</sup> March 1848, p3.

<sup>6</sup> Geelong Advertiser. 21<sup>st</sup> June 1850, p2.

<sup>7</sup> Wagga Wagga Express. 17<sup>th</sup> February 1866, p4.

An adjoining article, quoting the Melbourne Argus, noted that a society had recently been formed, which was called *The Australian Woolsorters Protective Association*.

Its purpose was twofold:

*“On the one hand, to protect stock masters, merchants, and others in the wool trade, from the injury frequently suffered in consequence of incompetent persons palming themselves off as skilled wool-sorters and wool-classers; and on the other hand to save the well-skilled tradesmen from competition with persons who have no right to call themselves wool-sorters.”*

Furthermore:

*“The society, it was distinctly stated, was not formed for the purpose of obtaining an increase of prices, but simply with the view of affording mutual protection to wool-growers and wool-sorters. It is proposed to issue a certificate of competency, duly stamped, to all members of the association; and it is presumed that the squatters will, in their own interest, decline to employ any wool-classer who is unable to produce this proof of efficiency. All qualified wool-sorters, such as those who have served seven years apprenticeship in England, will be admitted to membership. Tradesmen in the neighbouring colonies will be invited to join; and the entrance fee will be a trifling sum, to cover working expenses. It is expected that the association will number fifty members by next shearing time.”*

An article extracted from the *Australian* appeared in the local press in 1868<sup>8</sup>. Several wool washing establishments in and around Melbourne had been inspected and the article attempted to set out some basic instructions for those on the land. It pointed out that the wool could be washed either whilst still on the sheep, or alternatively when it had been removed from the sheep.

In the former instance the live sheep were soaked with a hose before entering a hot bath. The sheep could only tolerate about two minutes in the hot bath.

In the latter method the fleeces were placed straight into a hot tank containing *soap and soda* and were stirred around for about four minutes.

The article concluded that:

*“According to the system adopted by our most successful growers, the hot tank is emptied of all dirt and foreign matter four or five times a day, but in this they are guided entirely by the character of the land upon which the sheep have been running. If the animals go into the soaking pen pretty clean, twice a day is sufficient to empty it, and with the command of well-arranged taps and supply spouts this emptying and refilling ought not to be at all a serious matter.”*

In 1869 the Albury Banner reported on the prowess of an itinerant scouring contractor, Mr John Sugden, who travelled about *“from station to station with portable scouring apparatus.”* The article commented on several samples of wool from Woomargama, which had been scoured by Sugden. They were *Snow-white 1<sup>st</sup> combing, Pure-white 1<sup>st</sup> clothing, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lambs*. Experts asserted that the wool had been carefully scoured so as to leave a small amount of oil on the fibres, due to the presence of the yolk, and that this was an attribute valued by manufacturers. The secret was said to be in controlling the amount of ammonia applied, which acted as a solvent on the yolk. The report noted that the amount of yolk and the type of soil within the fleeces was very much related to the country on which the sheep were run. The contractor’s price for scouring the wool was 2d. per pound.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that the levels of technical expertise and the levels of automation & mechanisation were continuously improving in these early days.

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<sup>8</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 18<sup>th</sup> November 1868, p3.

<sup>9</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1869, p2.

The process was still very much dependant on a good water supply, with the local press claiming in February 1869 that an increased demand for wool was due to recent rains that had "filled the dams at wool-washing establishments, thereby affording greater facilities for scouring."<sup>10</sup>

In April 1869 the Dubbo Dispatch gave an account of the wool scouring process as it was then commonly carried out. It was a detailed account and is reproduced hereunder:

*EXPERIENCE confirms the theory that " hot-water-soaking" and so-called " dry-spouting" is by far the best mode of cleansing wool. The plan for carrying out this operation must, of necessity, depend upon the site purposed to be used; and the appliances to hand, or intended to be called into play, for lifting the necessary water.*

*Supposing the site to be on a creek with a sloping bank, I suggest to sink a water-tight tank five feet deep, square at one end ; eight feet long at the bottom, and for two feet up the other end, then gradually sloping up to the top until twelve feet long ; sunk four feet, lengthways, near its edge. If the bank of the creek be steep, one side of the tank will necessarily be sunk in the bank, the other exposed; therefore, it should be necessarily so made. The slope at one end of the tank is for sheep to walk out on to a platform or stage, twelve feet long by, five feet wide ; one side of which is to rest on the bank, the other are supports rising from the edge of the water. This stage or platform should be horizontal, and made of slabs or batters sufficiently open to allow water to drain through, and be erected one foot lower than the tank before mentioned, from which there should be a slide to the stage. Parallel with the stage, standing on supports over the creek, the bottom four feet above the level of the stage, and overhanging it a foot, a tank eight feet long by four feet wide and six feet deep, with two apertures low down at the side over the stage, to allow jets of water eighteen inches wide and half an inch through to run out; and having slides, as stops, to prevent waste when not in use. This is the "cold-water-spouting tank" and platform.*

*At the square end of the tank, sunk in the bank as close as safety will permit, fix two or more, according to the number of sheep to be washed, square iron tanks (now so common in these colonies), placed so that water can be heated in them; and from the taps of these tanks a spout to convey the heated water into the " hot-soak-tank."*

*Then, at as convenient a proximity as the nature of the site will permit, erect a "Californian Pump," worked by horse or steam power - on a station having a small number of sheep, a pump of the same description, worked by two men, will answer the purpose,- and from a small, water-tight box, fixed to receive the water from the pump, a pipe for supplying' the iron tanks, and afterwards filling and keeping full the " cold-spouting-tank."*

*On one station in Queensland, where upwards of 200,000 sheep are shorn , the distance between the " washing place";' and the shed is about two miles and a half, over which the sheep travel along a fenced path laid down with battens, and divided at intervals, so as to separate each day's washing, and having troughing run along one side, for watering the sheep. By this plan the sheep do not go on to grass from the time they leave the spouts until shorn. It is, of course, very trying to the sheep; but it is thought that this can be mitigated by giving them a supply of pumpkins, cut up, or other artificial food that can be grown abundantly in ordinary seasons, and that the outlay will be reimbursed by the condition secured to the wool in being kept free from dust.*

*Having given a slight sketch of a plan of operation, I will proceed to say that the next first thing at which to arrive is the quality of the water to be used. If soft, nothing need be added to the hot water intended for soaking; if hard, soft soap and soda, in quantities according, to its*

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<sup>10</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 17<sup>th</sup> February 1869, p2.

hardness; but, care must be taken not to use too much soda, as it has the effect of shrinking and discolouring the staple if not thoroughly washed out by the spouts. It is hardly necessary for me to touch on the subject of forcing yards, beyond saying that the greater the curve the better up to the catching-stage off which the sheep are thrown into the "hot-soak-tank." At the edge of this platform or catching-stage, facing the soak-tank, there ought to be a sliding screen hung on weights, like the sash of a window, to prevent the sheep on the station from seeing the water.

The hot-soak-tank should be filled up to within a foot of the top, and kept at a temperature of 110 degrees. Then the cold-spouting-tank filled and kept full during spouting.

The mode of proceeding then is, to force the sheep on to the catching stage, push up the screen, and throw in eight or ten at a time; these should be kept in the soak one minute and a half, and well crutched; a man ought to be stationed at the gangway (the sloping side of the tank) to help the sheep out and pass them on to the stage under the spouts. Care must be taken not to let the wool cool before coming under the action of the spout, as the yolk will become hardened and be difficult to spout out. Upon the sheep coming to the spout, one man should take it by the fore, another by the hind quarters, and bring it under the jet, work it from side to side, turn it on its back so that the jet will come against the natural lie of the wool; turn the sheep end-for-end, and serve the other side in the same way; all dirty, discoloured spots should be carefully spouted before the sheep is let go, and is passed along the stage onto the battened path-way to the shed. Three clear days ought to be allowed for the wool to dry before being put the night previous to shearing, into the sweating shed or penn. I would suggest, if practicable, that, for some weeks previous to washing, the sheep be camped out, for the purpose of avoiding, as much as possible, the stains consequent on being folded in old or dirty yards.

The article continued with advice for shearers:

Every shearing shed ought to be provided with a wooden table or screen and a wire screen; the latter for screening "nibs," "nails," or locks; also bins for the various classes of wools, and large round baskets. The baskets should be placed conveniently on the "shearing-board" to receive the belly-wool and large pieces, which ought to be baled by themselves. Too great attention cannot be paid to the shearing of a sheep. Of late years, shearers have taken to what is called "slumming." Much of this is attributed to the inability of the persons in charge of sheds to judge whether a sheep has been properly shorn or not. Most good shearers commence by taking off the belly-wool before opening the fleece; some after finishing. A few, and these are mostly men who go in for what is termed "running," commence by taking off half the belly-wool first, the other half as they finish on the "whipping-side." This, is decidedly bad, as it affords an opportunity to the shearer for what, in shearer's phraseology, is termed "keeling." The belly-wool ought to be taken off whole, and thrown aside for the "picker-up" to place in the basket; along with the big clean pieces. The top-knot or forehead-wool should be taken off whole, not in chops, as this wool is used in a particular class of manufacture. Care should be taken to make the shearer regulate his blow over the back-bone, so as not to split the fleece at its most tender part, viz., between the shoulders. Having got the wool off the "opening-side," the shearer ought to fan out the fleece, and have it so that when finishing and about to let go, the head of the sheep will be pointing for the "let-out pan" and free from the fleece. No pushing or dragging from the shears ought to be allowed. In some Victorian and Riverine sheds if a shearer causes his fleece to be broken twice he is ordered to hang up his shears. These remarks, of course, refer to sound-woolled sheep. We are fully aware that there are fleeces which the greatest care will not prevent from falling asunder. Each fleece ought to be picked up by the breech, carried to

*the skreen, and thrown out gently, so as to spread it out with the inside or skin, side next the table. The "roller-up," under the supervision of the classer, ought to skirt it, taking off the points, all stained bits, burry parts, the top knot, if hanging, and the frill. The classer will pass it to the bin, according to class, in which the fleece ought to be carefully stacked not thrown, there to remain twelve hours or more before being carried to the press. The fleeces of sheep that may have missed the spouts, through weakness, or have become dirty, out to be put away by themselves, to be dealt with after, shearing. When pressing, the fleeces ought to be carried carefully to the press-not caught up and flung towards it - and handed to the packer inside, who should pack them evenly, and be sure to fill the corners of the bale. The weight of a bale of a clean fleece wool ought not to exceed 3 cwt. 2 qrs. The bales ought, to be distinctly branded with the station brand and numbered on one side, and again the same number on each end. The numbering on the ends is a great convenience when the bales are being "dumped." Ten or twenty bales of one quality ought to be numbered consecutively; for example, Nos. 1 to 10, or 20, ewes ; 2nd, clothing, or numbers 31 to 40, wether hoggets : 3rd, combing, or numbers 51 to 60 ; wethers, 1stI combing, according to class. The shipping of the bales has much to do with the condition in which the wool arrives in the London market; but I fear that anything I am able to say on this subject would be of little use.*

*After shearing, the discoloured and dirty fleeces ought to be sorted and scoured on the station; the nails, &c., skreened and scoured. Every particle of wool can be made available; but these are things the sorter or classer, who may be employed, will understand.<sup>11</sup>*

In June 1869 Messrs Mort & Co. reported that greasy wools (as distinct from scoured wools) were difficult to sell, and that it was difficult to get skins fellmongered as a consequence of "all the wool-washing establishments being so fully occupied".<sup>12</sup> This confirms that fellmongering and scouring commonly took place at the same location.

The preference for scoured wool would no doubt have been due to the reduced freight cost from Australia to England – scoured wool would weigh considerably less than the equivalent greasy wool – half or less, commonly.

In January 1870 the local press reported that the squatters had learnt from previous failures and that every effort was being made to improve stocks [genetics] and adopting "better appliances for the washing and getting up of wool." The article lamented that there were no local woolgrowers exhibiting at the recent Sydney wool show, but that the prize for the best scoured wool was won by "a Murrumbidgee wool-washer, Mr Catton, of Hay."<sup>13</sup>

Variations in the quality of scoured wool was still an issue for manufacturers in England and in June 1870 the press reported a circular issued by Messrs Southey, Balme, and Co. (wool brokers) of London, entitled "Suggestions To Colonial Flockmasters", which read , in part, as follows:

*"MESSRS. SOUTHEY, BALME, AND CO., wool brokers, of London, have issued a Circular under the above heading, giving the result of their experience of the wool most in demand in the London market. They commence by stating that the policy of washing in the fleece, in the case of wools of high class breed and character, is unquestionable. The use of soda is deprecated, as having a tendency to render the fibre brittle and harsh, and to produce loss of weight in the process of working. It is stated that the temperature of the water employed*

<sup>11</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1869.

<sup>12</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 9<sup>th</sup> June 1869, p2.

<sup>13</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1870, p2.

*should be restricted to the lowest point absolutely necessary for thorough cleansing; and, in the case of all but certain flocks which are excepted, should under no circumstances exceed 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The soap should consist of oil and potash – the chemical constituents of the protection of wool provided by nature, viz., the yolk - but no soda should be used in any form. If oil cannot be cheaply or readily procured, a soap - not so slightly in appearance, but possessing all the necessary qualities, may be made by the substitution of beef or mutton fat. Care should be had that the yolk do not "set" in the staple during washing, which results in the wool becoming caked and hard when packed, and appearing to considerable disadvantage when exposed for sale..This is more likely to occur in cold than in hot water washing. "When it happens in hot water, it is caused by keeping the sheep too long in the pool of cold water before passing the animal under the spout to be rinsed. A cold day will also cause it. A very small but sufficient proportion of the yoke should be retained in the fleece to preserve the fibre soft and elastic; and it is, moreover, absolutely essential that all wool, however conditioned, should be packed perfectly dry."*<sup>14</sup>

English processors had long expressed concerns about the quality of scouring in the colonies and the evidence suggests that excessive, or ill defined use of hot water, soaps and alkali removed too much of the natural grease and yolk, which made it more difficult for the processors to card, comb, and spin the wool.

*Washing on the sheep's back* became less popular because there was uncertainty as to when they would be dry enough to shear, and by mid 1870 this trend towards scouring *post shears* was being adopted by many of the larger sheep runs.<sup>15</sup>

It was by no means universal though with many still choosing to ship their wool in the greasy state, the main influence being the current market price.<sup>16</sup> It appears that despite the action of some sheep owners, scoured wool still delivered a premium over and above the additional costs. No doubt there were a number of factors in play that influenced the decision of wool growers.

The argument was well presented in an 1883 article originating in Queensland:

*"Generally speaking, on the Barcoo the "scouring process" seems to find more favour with managers than the washing. Instead of washing before shearing, the sheep are shorn just as they come in out of the paddocks, and the fleeces are scoured and cleaned either by hand or by machinery.*

*The arguments pro. and con. appear to an outsider to be pretty evenly balanced. The supporters of washing as against scouring maintain - first that there is a gain in the weight of the wool, because there is a certain amount of natural oil always oozing out of a sheep's back into the wool, and as a couple of days elapse between washing and shearing there must necessarily be a slight increase in the weight of the fleece, whereas by the scour process there can be no increase, as the fleece is washed after it has been taken off; secondly, the expenses of scouring are heavier than washing, because the process is more intricate; thirdly, it is much easier to sample fleeced wool in the market than scoured, because the latter gets so mixed up in small pieces in the bales that it is not easy to know whether the sample produced is a true one or not. On the other hand believers in the scouring process assert—first, that the constitution of the sheep is considerably impaired by the steaming process referred to ; secondly, that scoured wool fetches a higher price in the London market*

<sup>14</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 1<sup>st</sup> June 1870, p4.

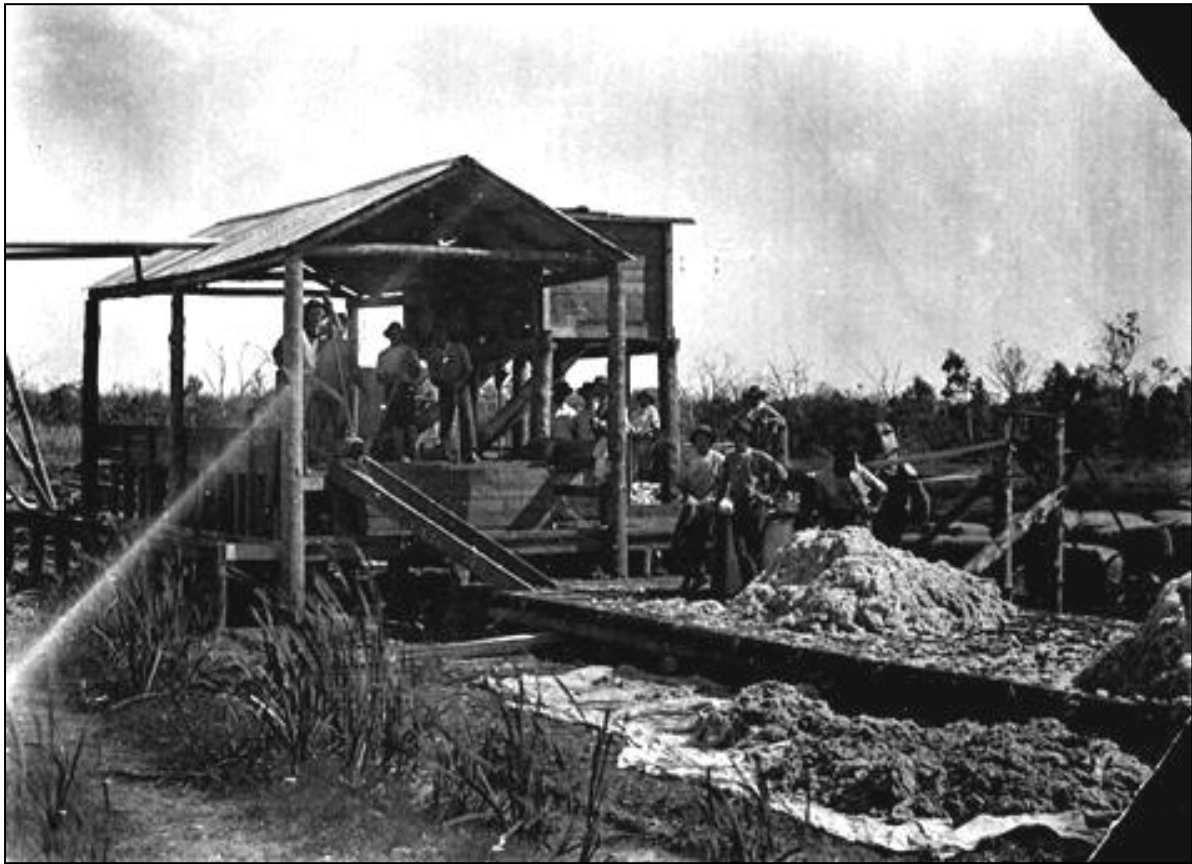
<sup>15</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 30<sup>th</sup> July 1870, p2.

<sup>16</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 4<sup>th</sup> October 1871, p2.



*than washed fleeces ; thirdly, that the wool of sheep shorn after washing is always more or less tinged and has to be re-washed at home ; fourthly, that more value in pounds shillings and pence can be carried by teamsters if the wool is carted by quality in merit rather than by quantity in weight. The question, important as it is, seems an open one, and in the western districts at all events is a matter of sufficient importance to be the theme of general conversation.*

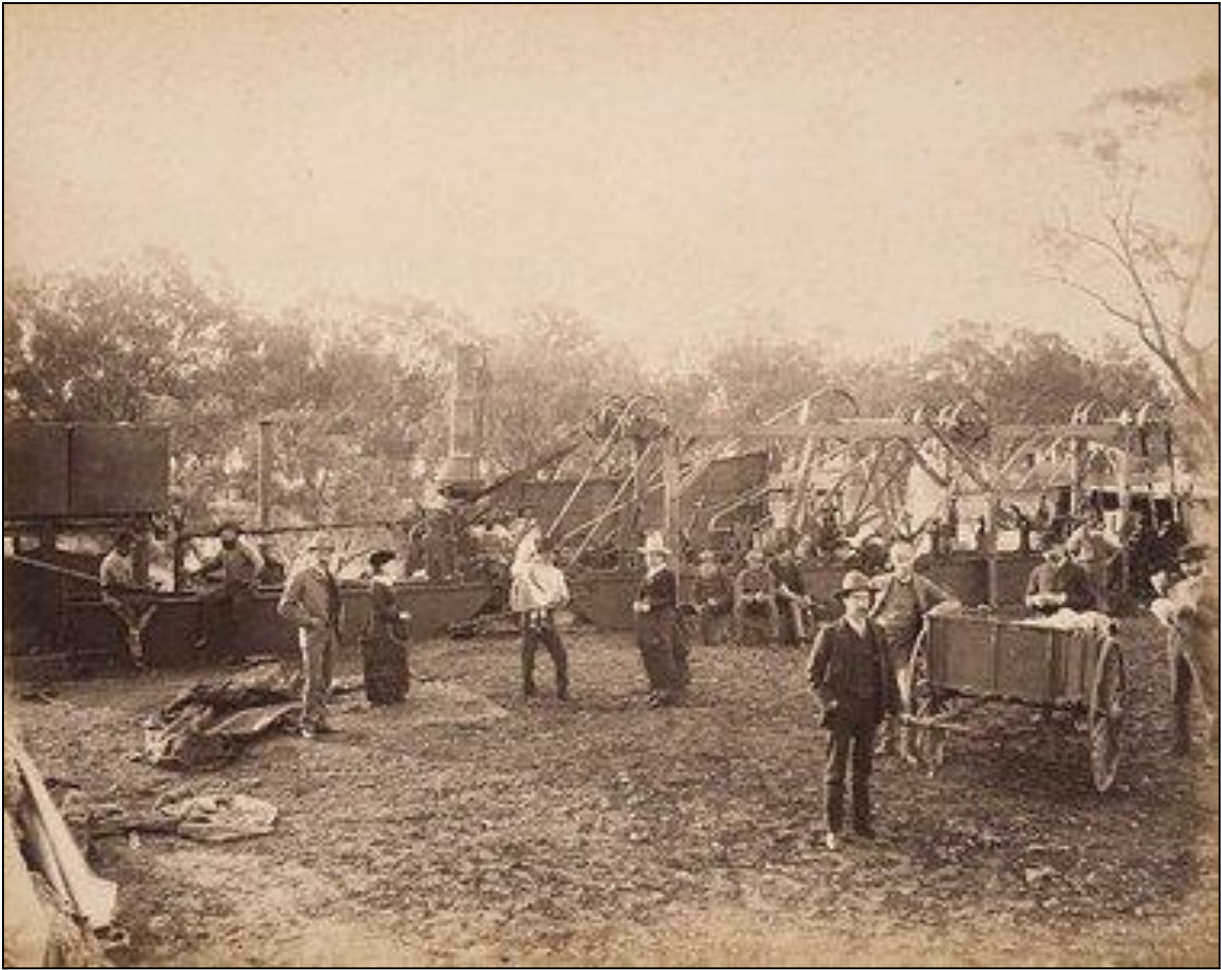
*There is of course a third method of dealing with wool, by doing things on the "cheap and nasty" principle, no machinery required—take the fleeces off the sheep dirty and send them to England ditto, or as it is termed "in the grease," and get what you can for the wool at the least possible cost in Queensland."<sup>17</sup>*



**Above:** Wool scouring plant on Weilmoringle station, Brewarrina District, c.1900.  
Photo courtesy Museum Victoria (copied from John Keats, 1988).

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<sup>17</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 8<sup>th</sup> November 1883, p3.



**Above:** Washing wool on Gundabooka Station, Darling River (1886).  
Photo courtesy Art gallery of NSW.

### **Earliest Wagga Wagga Fellmongery, Tanning and Scouring Plants.**

In Wagga Wagga, as elsewhere, fellmongeries and tanneries preceded scouring plants. The earliest reference found to either of the former, at Wagga Wagga, was an advertisement in June 1859. George Forsyth, an agent, offered a Wagga Wagga property for sale by private contract. It was described as follows:

*“The premises used as a Tannery, with 10 Pits, Curriers’ Shop, and Shed, together with all the necessary tools for carrying on business; also a quantity of kip leather, at present in the pits. Adjoining the above is a comfortable cottage and out premises, suitable for a Dwelling House.”*<sup>18</sup>

The location of this establishment is yet to be determined.

The next reference is some seven years later, in May 1866, when William Beeson advertised for a courier, promising *“constant employment to steady men.”*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wagga Wagga Express. 25<sup>th</sup> June 1859, p4.

<sup>19</sup> Wagga Wagga Express. 5<sup>th</sup> May 1866, p3.

In September 1866 the local press reported that Mr Beeson had made a pair of Wellington boots from leather processed at his tannery, from the hide of a kangaroo killed in the district.<sup>20</sup> In October 1868 it was reported that Mr Beeson's recently established business was "now in full working operation." The article claimed he had invested in excess of £500 in the venture.<sup>21</sup>

Another early tannery was the Wagga Wagga Tannery (W. Riley & Co.) in April 1869. The following description was provided by the local press:

*"THE WAGGA WAGGA TANNERY. - (W. RILEY AND CO.)*

*To welcome new industries or the extension of old ones, is one of the most pleasing duties of a journal in a young community. In one point of view there is, doubtless, nothing very pleasing in the aspect of a tannery, but in another as an indication of enterprise and progress, where enterprise and progress are so much wanted, even hides may become interesting, and sheepskins odorous. Wagga Wagga already possesses a certain fame in connection with leather. Her saddles are known and prized wherever there are good riders to appreciate them, and we have heard of one enthusiastic artist who attained to some fame as a worker in this material by the happy manufacture of a leathern medal. It is natural under such circumstances that establishments should spring up for the supply of the raw material, and for sometime, as all the world knows, Mr. Beeson has carried on a tannery with considerable success. His example has now been followed by others. Messrs. Riley and Co. have lately established a tannery on the right bank of the Lagoon, near the Pound. The establishment is now in full working order, and yesterday, in company with a gentleman of considerable experience in such matters, we paid it a visit. The situation is everything that could be desired, there being an abundant supply from the lagoon of the soft water so necessary; for tanning purposes, while in case of accident in dry seasons, an adjoining allotment has been secured on which is a large and never-failing water-hole. The "plant" at present on the ground consists of a large and very substantial shed, filled, at the time of our visit, with the material in every stage of preparation, from the pile of salted, but anything but savoury, hides, neatly folded like soldiers' blankets, to the highly-polished, huge side of harness leather, hanging like a gigantic side of bacon, remarkably well smoked. In this shed; also, are the bruising and "bait," or shaving boards, while, in the up-stairs department, as yet only partially floored, is an extensive assortment of sheepskins, for future treatment by the fell-mongering process. Outside the shed are the two breaking boards, upon which the hides, after being well soaked in the lime-pits, are scraped, and the pits. Of these there are, in all, twelve - two lime-pits, a cleanser, seven tan-pits, and two soak-pits. The pits are supplied with water from the lagoon, by a pump of rather ingenious construction. A well was first sunk in the bank, which is rather high at this point, and a tunnel was then driven so as to let in the water of the lagoon. The water is thus pumped up into troughs, which feed the pits as required. In cold weather, however, the mere soaking of the bark is not sufficient to draw out its full strength, and a large copper boiler has been: erected at considerable expense, in which the bark is boiled, and the strong decoction thus obtained is then run off into the pits and allowed to cool. The whole art and mystery of tanning was very clearly explained to us by Mr. Roach, the intelligent foreman of the works, but, as everyone does not want to know how to make leather, it may be as well to keep our newly acquired knowledge to ourselves. It is sufficient to say that all the appliances of the new tan yard are of a first-class order, and that the whole establishment bears evidence not only of considerable outlay, but of the*

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<sup>20</sup> Wagga Wagga Express. 1<sup>st</sup> September 1866, p2.

<sup>21</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 31<sup>st</sup> October 1868, p2.

*practical skill and knowledge of men who thoroughly understand their business. We do not, of course, profess to be judges of leather, but the several samples we saw of Messrs Riley & Co.'s handiwork, from the delicate kid to the substantial sole, certainly seemed, very fine specimens of the art. The side, of harness leather before referred to was without flaw, and seemed the perfection of that very useful material. In the shed were also some fine sides of calf and kip leather, the latter stout and strong as the boots that will some day be made out of it, and the former soft and glossy as a glove. The "best" evidence, however, of the goodness of the leather turned out by the new firm is, the large number of orders they have already received. Particular attention is paid to the manufacture of leather for saddles, &c., a branch of the business from which the firm confidently expect very satisfactory results. At present, they are turning out about twelve hides a week, but, of course, this number will soon be largely increased. One of the greatest difficulties of the enterprise is the supply of bark, which is both precarious and expensive. The bark, chiefly wattle and sheoak, is at present obtained from the neighbourhood of Murrumburrah, at a cost of about £5 per ton, but it is intended, in future, to make use of chemicals to some extent, and thus reduce this heavy item of expense. Altogether the Wagga Wagga tannery must be pronounced a credit to the town, and we are sure that everyone will join with us in wishing the plucky proprietors all the success that they deserve.*<sup>22</sup>

As fellmongering (the removal of the hair or fibre from the hide) precedes the tanning process it can be concluded that both Beeson's & Riley's establishments were combined fellmongery/tannery establishments.

The leather produced by these local tanneries would have been used by local saddlers, boot & shoe makers, and others.



In September 1869 the local paper listed two *Tanners & Curriers* – W. Beeson, in Fitzmaurice Street, and W. Riley & Co.'s Wagga Wagga Tannery, near the pound.<sup>23</sup>

The Wagga Wagga Tannery also offered *plasterer's hair*, for sale.

**Left:** Advertisement for the Wagga Wagga Tannery. [1869]

By mid January 1870 Riley & Co. were no longer listed as *Tanners & Carriers* in the local press and it is assumed that Riley had ceased paid advertisements. There is a lack of evidence to show that the company was still operating during 1870, but certainly by December 1871 William Denning had taken over the tannery, with the WWA noting that Mr W. Denning, of the Wagga Tannery, had submitted several samples of leather, for judging, at the first ever show held by the Wagga Wagga Agricultural and Horticultural Society. Unfortunately for Denning his were the only samples so no prize was awarded.<sup>24</sup> The WWA Business Directory of March 1872 listed Denning as a *Tanner and Currier*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 14<sup>th</sup> April 1869, p2.

<sup>23</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 8<sup>th</sup> September 1869, p1.

<sup>24</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1871, p2.

<sup>25</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1872, p1.

In February 1872, the Wagga Wagga Borough Council wrote a letter to a Mr Robert Monks “conveying assent of the Council to the establishment of a fellmongering business on the river.”<sup>26</sup> It is assumed the business commenced in that same year.

So by the first half of 1872 there were three fellmongering/tannery establishments operating at Wagga Wagga:

1. William Beeson’s establishment.
2. William Denning’s establishment – the Wagga Wagga Tannery.
3. Robert Monks establishment.

All of them were on the south side of the river – there were no establishments at North Wagga Wagga at that time. It is not known if any of these were on the same site as the 1859 Wagga Wagga tannery.

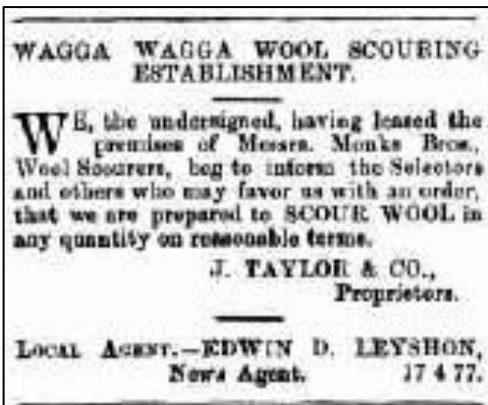
In July 1872, under the caption of *Local Industry* the WWA declared that local enterprises, such as the tannery establishment of Mr Denning, deserved to be given a fair trial. The report noted that:

“In the tannery establishment of Mr. Denning, we are informed leather of all descriptions is being manufactured, capable of competing with the productions of much more pretentious works ; and that his skill is of no mean order, we have evidence in the fact of his having obtained the praise of the Pastoral Association for this class of manufactures.”<sup>27</sup>



Denning placed a paid advertisement in the same edition.

**Left:** Advertisement for the Wagga Wagga Tannery [1872].



The Monks Bros operated their plant until January 1877 when it was leased to Mr J. Taylor & Co.<sup>28</sup> By this time it was called the Wagga Wagga Wool Scouring Establishment.

**Left:** Advertisement for the Wagga Wagga Wool Scouring Establishment [1877].

<sup>26</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 17<sup>th</sup> February 1872, p2.

<sup>27</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 10<sup>th</sup> July 1872, p2.

<sup>28</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 31<sup>st</sup> January 1877, p3.

In February 1882 Denning's residence, tannery and sheds, were threatened by a fire. These structures were situated in Dobbs Street, on the banks of the Wollundry Lagoon. A Chinaman who worked at the tannery had given some fireworks to Denning's children who gleefully let them off. It appeared that a spark from the fireworks was carried, by the prevailing strong winds, to a heap of stringy bark adjacent to a shed at the rear of the brick cottage, and this shed had burst into flames. The children had by now gone to school, while Mr Denning and his employees were away from the site. Mrs Denning was the only person home and she threw two tubs of soap suds on the fire, and at the same time called for help. Harry Green responded to her calls and they were able to quell the fire before it could spread any further.<sup>29</sup>

**TANNERY**  
AND  
**Wholesale Boot Factory,**  
Near the Star Hotel,  
DOBBS STREET, WAGGA WAGGA.

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To Storekeepers, Hawkers, Station-  
holders, and Others.

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**THOMAS DENNING,**

**H**AVING PURCHASED the whole of the extensive BOOT and SHOE MAKING MACHINERY of Mr. R. HOWARD, has entered upon the Manufacture of all kinds of BOOTS and SHOES upon the largest WHOLESALE SCALE, and is carrying on the new business in connection with his long-established TANNERY.

T. D. has secured the services of some of the best Workmen from the large Factories in Sydney, and having had a long experience of the trade, a thorough knowledge of the mode of manufacturing the various kinds of Leather, and an extended acquaintance with the special requirements of the Local Market, he is convinced that he will be able to give every satisfaction to the public according to their support.

All kinds of LEATHER always ON SALE at lowest rates.  
HIDES BOUGHT at Highest Market Price.

**THOMAS DENNING.**

In 1883 Thomas Denning expanded his business interests when he purchased the boot & shoe making machinery of Mr R. Howard, and incorporated a Wholesale Boot Factory into his existing site.<sup>30</sup>

**Left:** Advertisement for Denning's new Boot factory [1883]. In February 1884 it was reported that Thomas was about to open a retail establishment in Gurwood Street, next to Mr Moran's, to compliment his leather & boot manufacturing works.<sup>31</sup> An advertisement in April confirmed that the business was now open, "*in those central buildings known as Mr Leyshon's old shop.*"<sup>32</sup>

**Tannery at Wagga Wagga.**

WELL-SITUATED half-acre of LAND in this active town, part of No. 1 of Section 34, having 3 CHAINS 10 LINKS to SIMMONDS-STREET, with a great depth. On it is the well-know Tannery Property of Mr. Beeson, comprising Cottage, Trade Premises, Pits, &c.

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BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE.

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Preliminary Notice.

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FRIDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER.

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**R**ICHARDSON and WRENCH have received instructions as above to sell by public auction, at the Rooms, Pitt-street, Sydney, on Friday, 3rd September, at 11 o'clock.

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The above to be fully described hereafter.

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Messrs. Stephen, Laurence, and Jaques, Pitt-street, Sydney, are Solicitors for the Mortgagee.

In 1886 Beeson's tannery was advertised, for sale.<sup>33</sup>

**Right:** Advertisement for sale of Beeson's tannery. [1886]

<sup>29</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 21<sup>st</sup> February 1882, p2.

<sup>30</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1883, p4.

<sup>31</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 12<sup>th</sup> February 1884, p2.

<sup>32</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 5<sup>th</sup> April 1884, p1.

<sup>33</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 28<sup>th</sup> August 1886, p3.

**WAGGA WAGGA**

**Woolscouring**

**Establishment.**

**T**HE above Works will be in complete working order by the 1st September, and will embrace all the latest improvements necessary to ensure first quality work. Consignments may rely upon their consignments meeting the most prompt and careful attention.

Sheepskins fallmongered at current rates, but no cartage charged. Wools Classified and repacked.

Wool delivered at the Wagga Railway Station will be carted to and from the Works free of charge.

**M'GEORGE and O'BYRNE.**

**WAGGA WAGGA.**

By October 1887 the Wagga Wagga Wool Scouring Establishment was being operated by McGeorge & O'Byrne.<sup>34</sup> Presumably it was purchased from Mr J. Taylor & Co., but this is yet to be verified.

**Left:** Advertisement for McGeorge & O'Byrne's Wagga Wagga Wool Scouring Establishment. [1887]

By October 1887 Denning's manufacturing establishment was being advertised as the Riverina Tannery.<sup>35</sup>

Denning was to suffer a severe setback in November 1887 when at 3am in the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> a fire destroyed an area of his tannery – the currying section - and all of the contents of that section. Denning's home, which was described as being "*situated within a few yards of the tannery,*" escaped harm thanks to a dousing with buckets of water. The latter kept the flames at bay until the local fire brigade arrived and took control of the site. Denning was insured for £200 but he valued his loss (building, tools, and stock in trade) at £500. The tannery itself was described as being situated "*at the head of the Wollundry Lagoon, in Docker Street.*"<sup>36</sup>

Denning paid for a Thank You notice to appear in the local press, in which he expressed his sincere thanks to "*his neighbours and fellow townsmen,*" for their assistance in putting the fire out.<sup>37</sup>

An inquest was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, at the Star hotel, and a witness, Thomas Robinson, gave the following account, in part:

*"I looked up and saw a great glare of fire; rose, dressed, and ran over to Denning's, from which direction the reflection of the light came, and then I saw that a portion of Denning's building was on fire; as I came near the place I saw young Mr. Denning coming towards me; he said, "Come, and give us a hand," or words to that effect; he had no coat on, being in his shirt and trousers; at this time a portion of the building was on fire; went through the gate, and saw Mrs. Denning, who asked me to run into the house and save the furniture; went*

<sup>34</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 11<sup>th</sup> October 1887, p3.

<sup>35</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 11<sup>th</sup> October 1887, p3.

<sup>36</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1887, p2. 24<sup>th</sup> November 1887, p2.

<sup>37</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 24<sup>th</sup> November 1887, p3.

*round the back, where I saw Mr. Denning, who had nothing on but his shirt, and appeared very much excited ; he said, "Try and save the house, if possible." I said, "I think we can;" the end of the main shed, which was composed of wood, next to the house, was at this time in flames, and a portion of the dwelling-house itself had just caught fire; we extinguished this with water carried in buckets; believe nearly all the furniture of the house was removed, as I saw a good deal of it in the front; it was impossible to save anything from the shed, the fire being too fierce; the only portion saved was the small portion at the back ; saw the Fire Brigade; they did a little towards saving the house ; they were playing on the flames, and not upon the dwelling-house, as there was no necessity for it at the time they arrived ; the whole of the shed was then in flames; this is all I know about the matter."*<sup>38</sup>

Thomas Denning gave evidence at the inquest and testified that he was the proprietor and that the property was insured for £200; he had owned the property for some fourteen years and had gradually built up the infrastructure over that time; about two years ago he had leased the property to Mr A. T. Bolton, for a period of twelve months.<sup>39</sup>

He further stated, in relation to the fire, that he:

*"heard the dogs barking, and the moment I opened my eyes saw a red flickering light: got up and ran to the window, and saw everything lighted up round the house for some distance ; looking further I saw that the main shed was on fire, and as I could not find my clothes immediately I ran out in my nightshirt, calling up my son as I went; when I got outside the fire appeared to have taken possession of the building, as it could be seen coming up through the roof the whole length of the shed; my son came out immediately after me, and I asked him to come and assist me; we got out three rolls of leather and a currying table; was cooeing and shouting for help all this time ; told my son to go for assistance and I think he met Robinson and others; Thos. Robinson was the first arrival I noticed; nearly all the furniture of the dwelling-house was taken out; it was replaced again after the danger was over; premises;*

The jury found: *"That the tannery premises, occupied by Mr. Thomas Denning, and situate in Lower Gurwood-street, Wagga, became destroyed by fire on the morning of the 22nd day of November, 1887, but there is nothing in the evidence to enable the jury to determine whether the same was caused accidentally or otherwise."*<sup>40</sup>

For reasons yet to be fully determined, although low demand was clearly a factor, the various establishments were all subject to financial pressures around this time and in March 1888 a letter to the editor confirmed that there was now only one tannery operating in Wagga Wagga.<sup>41</sup> This was the Riverina Tannery in Dobbs Street – Thomas Denning's establishment.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 26<sup>th</sup> November 1887, p2.

<sup>39</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 26<sup>th</sup> November 1887, p2.

<sup>40</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 26<sup>th</sup> November 1887, p2.

<sup>41</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 20<sup>th</sup> March 1888, p3.

<sup>42</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1888, p1.



**WAGGA WAGGA  
FELLMONGERING  
ESTABLISHMENT.**

**JOHN JOHNSON—PROPRIETOR.**

**TO THE PASTORALISTS OF THE  
MURRUMBIDGEE.**

**H**AVING secured those centrally situated premises known as Marrar Lodge, the undersigned has started a **FELLMONGERING ESTABLISHMENT.**

The Plant is thoroughly new, and a competent staff has been engaged, so that Squatters wishing their wool scoured can have it done locally, instead of having it to the Metropolis.

Highest Cash Price given for **HIDES, SKINS, and KANGAROO SKINS** in any quantity.

J. J. having been for many years doing business with all the leading inhabitants of town and district should be sufficient guarantee for his carrying out his undertakings.

All Skins consigned to him will be taken delivery of at the Railway Station, or at the Works, sampled, a fair valuation given, and paid for at once.

**NOTE.**—Any information can be obtained on application to **BRAIM, DAVIDSON, and STEVENSON, Agents, Wagga.**

**JOHN JOHNSON.**

**Above:** Advertisement for John Johnson's new fellmongery [1889].

Within a year Johnston was making plans for a grander future, when he joined with C. T. W. King, the former manager of Grubben Station, to establish a new wool scouring plant at Wodonga, titled, simply, Wodonga Wool Scouring Works.<sup>44</sup>

**Right:** Advertisement for the new Wodonga Wool Scouring Works of John Johnston & C. T. W. King [1890]

In March 1889 an advertisement appeared for another, new, fellmongering establishment. The proprietor was Mr John Johnson, and the establishment was to become known as the Marrar Lodge Wool Scouring Works.<sup>43</sup> This was the first works to be established at North Wagga Wagga.

**WODONGA  
WOOL SCOURING  
WORKS.**

**JOHN JOHNSTON,**

Wool Scourer, late of Marrar Lodge,  
Wagga Wagga, and

**C. T. W. KING,**

Late Manager of Grubben Station,

**H**AVE erected a large Wool Scouring Establishment at Wodonga, with all the latest improvements, capable of doing 50 bales per day.

In course of conversation with several pastoralists J. Johnston has been informed that wool scouring did not pay. He agrees with them in certain respects, namely: In giving wool to inexperienced hands who know nothing about scouring; also in having it scoured in creeks, rivers, or lagoons so, notwithstanding how careful men are, a quantity is lost—at the owner's expense.

On the other hand, wool scouring will pay the pastoralists well if done properly by experienced hands. In all probability this will be done in Sydney, Melbourne, London, or any other market in transit thereto.

The Proprietors respectfully request the patronage of woolgrowers (large and small), and ask them to consider the great saving effected by having it done in a skilful manner in their own district.

One of the firm (J. Johnston) has scoured wool for no less than 50 gentlemen in the Wagga Wagga district last season, with the result that each one personally acknowledged the very satisfactory manner in which the work had been carried out, and informed him that a large profit had been made when they got their returns, owing to having undergone scouring.

Gentlemen entrusting their wool in our charge to be scoured, may rest assured that there will be as much interest and care taken in it as if it were our own property.

Consignments will be taken delivery of at Albury and Wodonga railway stations, and carried to and from free of charge. After undergoing operations, we will consign to Sydney, Melbourne, London, or any market the owner may desire.

**N.B.**—On and after the 1st day of September, 1890, under no consideration will there be any wool or skins purchased by the proprietors.

All communications addressed to Messrs. **JOHNSTON and KING, Wodonga,** will receive immediate and careful attention.

<sup>43</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 9<sup>th</sup> March 1889, p3.

<sup>44</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1890, p3.

Despite being the only tannery in 1888, Denning must have met some problems as by May 1890, Mrs Denning was advertising the sale of her household furniture, the reason being that she was leaving the district.<sup>45</sup> A similar advertisement appeared in August 1890 – the sale to take place at the tannery in Dobbs Street - but it is not yet known for sure if the business had ceased operating at that time. [In 1893 a Mrs W. Barnes advertised the sale of her household furniture, on site, at Denning’s old tannery – it is assumed that the tannery closed around 1890].

Even in those days the effluent from such establishments was an issue. In November 1890, the North Wagga Progress Committee asked the proprietor of the Marrar Wool Scouring Works not to return process water to the lagoon. A citizen pointed out, in a letter to the editor, that there were several wool-washing establishments along the lagoon, and questioned why only one was singled out. The writer was suggesting that some of those on the Progress Committee had a conflict of interest in the matter.<sup>46</sup>

**MARRAR LODGE,  
NORTH WAGGA WAGGA.**

**T**HE undersigned wishes to call the attention of the Pastoralists of the Murrumbidgee, who wish to have their Wool Scoured here instead of sending it to the metropolis, that he has purchased the Marrar Lodge, Wool Scouring Establishment, from the late proprietor, Mr. John Johnston. The Establishment has been enlarged, and a new Wool Shed, one of Williams' latest improved Wool Presses, a 12-horse-power Engine and Boiler, and Tangye Pump have recently been erected, making it one of the most complete works out of Sydney. Another important fact to which particular attention is drawn is that no wool is scoured in the river or lagoon, it is all done by spents in boats, one of the latest improvements.

Any further information can be obtained from the proprietor, Messrs. Braim, Davidson, and Stevenson, and Goldsbrough, Mort, and Co., Sydney.

**H. E. BROUGHAM,  
Proprietor.**

**NOTE—All Wool taken delivery of at the Railway Station will be carried to and from works free. After this date no wool or skins will be purchased at the works under any consideration.**

The matter may have also been influenced by the fact that the Marrar Lodge Wool Scour had recently changed hands, the new owner being Mr H. E. Brougham who had purchased the same from John Johnston.<sup>47</sup>

**Left:** Advertisement for the Marrar Lodge Wool Scouring Works [1890].

The local paper ran an editorial article in the same edition titled, “*Wool Scouring in Wagga Wagga,*” which read as follows:

*“One of the most important local industries of Wagga is, undoubtedly Mr. Brougham's wool-scouring establishment at Marrar Lodge, North Wagga. The situation is an excellent one for wool-scouring, being situate within a mile from the town on the north bank of the river. These works, which were for a number of years were successfully carried on by Mr. J. Johnson, changed hands some few months ago, are now the property of Mr. H.E. Brougham. The present proprietor has had considerable experience in wool, and is an expert classer. Since the establishment has changed hands there have been many improvements effected,*

<sup>45</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 20<sup>th</sup> May 1890, p3.

<sup>46</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 6<sup>th</sup> November 1890, p2.

<sup>47</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 4<sup>th</sup> November 1890, p1.

*noticeable amongst which is the creation of another powerful pump, and a largo men's hut, capable of accommodating twenty workmen. There are now two pumps (one almost completed), capable of throwing up 16,000 gallons of water per hour. These large water raisers are driven by a Tangye engine of 24 horse power, with 12 horse power boiler, the two being worked with a pressure of 50lbs to the square inch. The water is pumped into a large tank or reservoir with a holding capacity of 1,300 gallons. The reservoir is built about 12ft above the sluice boxes, of which there are three, and the water fed into them by means of large leather shoots. The wool in the first instance is put into a scouring box, and there for a time well soaked. It is then placed in the sluice boxes, and the water turned on, the force being great enough to keep the wool continually worked about in such a manner that it is impossible for it to rope, or the staple to be injured in any way, as is often the case where machinery is used. There is no cleanser used in this process but soap and water, chemicals being strictly avoided. After being worked in the sluice boxes until properly clean, the wool is put on the drainers, where it remains from 12 to 24 hours. It is then spread on sheets in the sun where it is well teased and constantly turned until dry enough for the press. The pressing is done by one of Price William's improved wool presses.*

*The wool turned out at this establishment is thoroughly cleansed from all dirt, and is put into bales in as white a color as it is possible to make it. The management of the works is under the control of Mr. D. J. McDonald, who for many years was employed in some of the leading wool scouring establishments of Geelong, which town is noted for industries of this kind. Fourteen or fifteen hands are engaged at Marrar Lodge, and are kept constantly at work the output being on an average of 14 to 15 bales a day equal to one bale a man. The work sheds are covered in, and everything is erected in a manner that facilitates each operation being carried out most satisfactorily. The drying ground is large and clean, nothing being allowed to exist that would tend to injure the wool in any way. The grass is particularly short, and there is a total absence of grass seeds in the vicinity that would be likely to blow amongst the drying wool. Two large "sweat houses" have been erected for fellmongering purposes, but these are at present used only as storehouses for wool. The fellmongering branch of the business may be carried on later in the season, the proprietor not having the time to attend to this portion of the works at the present time. There are two large paddocks, one on each side of the works, into which all the waste water is drained. Those paddocks are now under cultivation, and with the constant stream of water irrigating them, it is needless to say, the crops are magnificent. The proprietor estimates that these paddocks will absorb all the water, and by being thoroughly and regularly irrigated they will produce any kind of crop. It is the intention of Mr. Brougham to experiment on this land in the culture of various products, amongst the first of which will be currants. It will thus be seen that the Marrar Lodge wool-scouring establishment is one of the most complete to be met with in any country town in the colony."<sup>48</sup>*

Regional establishments were often categorised as being inferior to the larger capital city establishments and proprietors jumped at any opportunity to challenge such beliefs. Mr Brougham no doubt had something to do with a report that appeared in the local press in March 1891. It noted that wool scoured at Marrar Lodge had topped the market in Sydney recently and that one owner had split his wool between a Sydney scourer and the Marrar scour and that the locally scoured wool had earned "*three farthings per pound more*" for the same style of wool.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 4<sup>th</sup> November 1890, p3.

<sup>49</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 14<sup>th</sup> March 1891, p2.

## Waratah Wool-Scouring Works,

NORTH WAGGA WAGGA,

**T**HE undersigned begs to announce that he is open to receive Wool for Scouring. The Plant consists of steam power, with a lifting capacity of 100,000 gallons per day. New Wool Press and all appliances for getting up wool in a satisfactory manner. Wools scoured here last season topped the market in Sydney (twice) and Melbourne (once). Over 20 years practical experience in England and the Colonies. Wools selected by Mr. Hayes for the London Exhibition, 1886, received special mention from Dr. Bowman, the highest authority on the wool fibre in England.

References may be submitted locally to Geo. J. Mulholland, Esq., Ours; J. C. Hawkins, Esq., Eunonyharenyha, and the leading Sydney Brokers.

**NO WOOL BOUGHT.**

Wools carted to and from the Railway free.

**JOSEPH HAYES,**  
Proprietor.

There was another scouring & fellmongering business adjoining the Marrar Lodge establishment by 1891. It belonged to Mr. Joseph Hayes, and it was called the Waratah Wool-Scouring Works.

In August 1891 Hayes advised that, "*Since last season several alterations and improvements have been effected, and the establishment is in splendid working order.*"<sup>50</sup>

It is believed that the business started in 1890, as the Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books do not list a business, at this site, in earlier years.

**Left:** Advertisement for the Waratah Wool Scouring Works [1891]

## Wool - Scouring Establishment.

**MARRAR LODGE,**

**NORTH WAGGA WAGGA.**

**T**HE undersigned wishes to call the attention of the Pastoralists of the Murrumbidgee, who wish to have their Wool Scoured here instead of sending it to the metropolis, that he has purchased the Marrar Lodge, Wool Scouring Establishment, from the late proprietor, Mr. John Johnston. The Establishment has been enlarged, and a new Wool Shed, one of Williams' latest improved Wool Presses, a 12-horse-power Engine and Boiler, and Tangye Pump have recently been erected, making it one of the most complete works out of Sydney. Another important fact to which particular attention is drawn is that no wool is scoured in the river or lagoon, it is all done by spouts in boats, one of the latest improvements.

Any further information can be obtained from the proprietor, Messrs. Braim, Davidson, and Stevenson, and Goldsbrough, Mort, and Co., Sydney.

**H. E. BROUGHAM,**  
Proprietor.

**NOTE—All Wool taken delivery of at the Railway Station will be carted to and from works free. After this date no wool or skins will be purchased at the works under any consideration.**

Hayes was an experienced and competent operator who would have challenged his competitor.

Brougham was no doubt influenced by the new competitor when he re-ran an old advertisement promoting the Marrar Lodge Wool Scouring Works. His advertisement noted that "*no wool is scoured in the river or lagoon, it is all done by spouts in boats...*"<sup>51</sup>

**Left:** Advertisement for the Marrar Lodge Wool Scouring Establishment [1891].

<sup>50</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 1<sup>st</sup> August 1891, p2.

<sup>51</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 17<sup>th</sup> September 1891, p2.

There are no known photos of the early Wagga Wagga Scouring Works, but the photo below provides an example of an early Wool Scouring Establishment, albeit much larger than the Wagga Wagga enterprises.



**Above:** Example of a scouring establishment on a river. Photo courtesy of the Adelaide Northern Districts Family History Group.



**Above:** Scoured wool spread out to dry in the sun. Photo courtesy the Chermside & District Historical Society. This procedure would have been practised at each of the Wagga Wagga scouring works, it being an essential component of the scouring process.

**THE MARRAR LODGE**  
**WOOL SCOURING WORKS.**  
**WAGGA WAGGA.**

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**I**, THE Undersigned, late of Balranald, having Purchased the above works from Mr. Brougham, am now making great improvements, and will be in a position to receive wool sent to be scoured.

Wool coming by train will be received at the Wagga Wagga Railway Station carted to the Works and re-delivered at the Railway Station, Carriage Free.

(Signed) **THOMAS HONEYMAN.**

Winner of Certificate of Merit of the First Class, and of Gold Medal at the Calcutta Exhibition, for Scoured Wool.

**N. B.—On no account a buyer of Wool or Skins.**

Brougham may have found business to be much tougher with his new competitor, but for whatever reason, he sold the Marrar Wool Scouring Works to Thomas Honeyman in July of 1892.<sup>52</sup>

The decision may have been a consequence of poor health. Morris records that Brougham died in March 1893.<sup>53</sup>

**Left:** Advertisement for the Marrar Lodge Wool Scouring Works [1892].

Less than a year later Honeyman was in partnership with one Fritz Henry Darchy. A report in the local press provided the following report on the establishment:

*“WOOL-SCOURING AND FELLMONGRY WORKS.*

*MESSRS. HONEYMAN AND DARCHY ESTABLISHMENT*

*Wool is the most important of all animal substances used in manufactures, and ranks next to cotton as a raw material for textile fabrics. Its use as a substance for clothing is almost universal in the temperate regions of the globe. Long stapled wools are used for worsted goods, and short stapled for woollen goods. The British colonies are very important wool-producing countries, Australia, in this respect, standing far in advance of all other countries. The Australian wool has in general a beautiful, short, silky staple, well adapted for the manufacture of soft, pliable and elastic fabrics. It is stated by one authority that the breed of sheep in these colonies (which are well adapted to the growth of fine woolled sheep, and one of the most remarkable of the colonies' features is the extraordinary increase in tho flocks) has sprung from three merino rams and five ewes, brought out by Captain McArthur in 1797. In the manufacture, of woollen cloths, the first in the several chief stages of that process is the sorting of the fleeces into their various qualities and kinds. The scouring is the next step, and consists in immersing the wool in a preparation which forms a soap with the matreial grease of the fleece. This, of course, acts as a detergent, and cleans the wool thoroughly when it is washed in water. Upon the perfection with which the scouring is performed depends in great part the beauty of the dye. At this stage wool is often dyed, but sometimes not till it is woven, and for some purposes it is dyed in the yarn. Other operations are known as scribbling, carding, weaving, spinning, etc.*

*Messrs. Honeyman and Darchy, as partners, carry on the work of wool scourers and fellmongers at Marrar Lodge, North Wagga. The buildings stand on the northern bank of the lagoon, which receives water from the Murrumbidgee. The works were opened by the firm in*

<sup>52</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1891, p3.

<sup>53</sup> Sherry Morris – Biographical Listings.

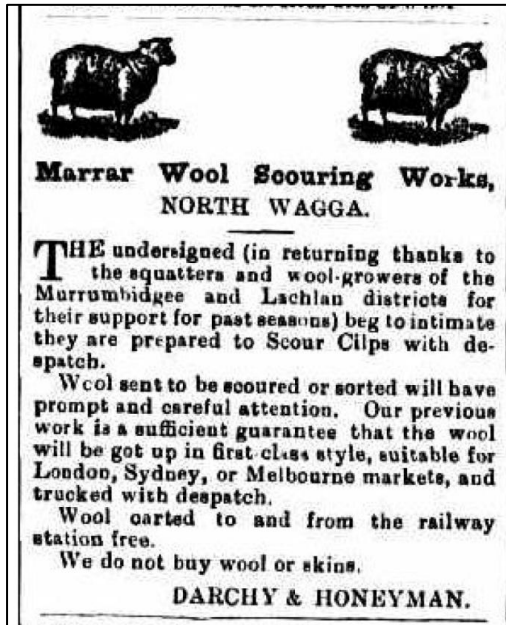
August, 1892, since which date the business of the partners has been steadily increasing. The plant of the works is sufficient to now allow of thirty bales being prepared in one day. Mr. Honeyman has had an extended experience in the wool-scouring business, having been engaged in it for 27 years. He built the Maude works, and for 20 years he owned and managed wool-scouring establishments at Balranald, Booligal, and elsewhere. That he is a highly efficient scourer is evident by the fact of his having been awarded a gold medal at the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1884 for his exhibit of wool, when he beat all comers. The prize wool comprised hogget fleeces from Oxley station, &c. Mr. Honeyman, the first year he was at Maude, scoured only 70 bales, but so rapidly did his trade increase that three years subsequently he put through his works 1,700 bales. He expects to have a large number of bales to scour in the forthcoming season, his partner (Mr. Darchy) having been receiving orders from the woolgrowers to have portions of their next dips scoured. The firm take delivery of wool and skins at the railway station and cart them from the works to the trucks free of charge. The plant consists of a 14 horse-power boiler and engine, manufactured by Mr. Munro, of Melbourne; two Tangye pumps, each of which lift 8,000 gallons per hour; a Price Williams press, &c. Considerable improvements are being effected at the works in order to have the next season's wool scoured with despatch. A sorting shed, which will be 45 feet by 35 feet, is now being erected. The wool and press will be kept in this building. There are two sweat houses on the grounds in which 2,000 skins can be kept and sweated. The wool is placed in the scour tubs, which are supplied with the scour by a pipe, the scour being placed in two 400 gallon tanks and kept at an even temperature. As soon as the wool has been soaked in the scour it is placed on tables and then taken up by the washers and put into tubs, when it is washed in a large quantity of cold water, which is run off into a drain. The washers next throw the wool into a draining trough and draining table. It is then put on sheets and dried in the open air. The wool is placed in a heap at night and wrapped up in the sheets. It is next pressed, made up into bales, and is ready for delivery. Wool received at the works is kept generally three days only. One day is occupied in washing, a second day in drying, and a third in pressing. The bales are branded by Mr. Honeyman, who supervises the whole of the arrangements. If necessary a largo clip is kept at the factory until the whole of it has been scoured, and then it is despatched altogether. The scouring of wool before it goes to market is growing in favor year by year, the higher prices realised by well scoured bales being a strong inducement to growers not to offer their wool for sale in the grease. Hogget combing wool, scoured by Mr. Honeyman, has realised 2s 6d per lb., and Oxley first pieces 2s 1d per lb. The wool is sorted and classed by Mr. Honeyman, and each kind is scoured and kept separate. There are various kinds of wool, such as: Super; first and second combing; ditto clothing; first and second pieces; locks, bellies, dingy, etc. Last season wool from Marrar, Bullenbong, Kinura, Mandamah, and other stations was sent to the works. In the next season a large number of bales (about 1,200) from various parts of the district will, it is estimated, be treated at the works. Scouring operations will commence early in September, and be continued for about four months. Fellmongering proceeds throughout the year. When the busy season sets in a large number of men are employed at the works. The water used for scouring purposes is procured from the lagoon, and is very suitable for cleansing wool. It is utilised in irrigating about eighteen acres of the land adjoining the works for growing vegetables. Sixteen acres of the garden produces various kinds of vegetables, such as cabbages, cauliflowers, potatoes, pumpkins, marrows, etc., and two acres is set apart for dry onions. Two acres adjoining the works is used as a drying ground for the wool preparatory to the staple being put through the press. Growers who have never had their wool scoured previously intend sending their clips to Marrar Lodge in the next season. The following are among the principal metropolitan wool brokers who can be referred to for the high qualifications possessed by Mr. Honeyman as

a wool-scourer, viz.:-The New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company, Messrs. Dalgety and Co., Younghusband and Co., John Bridge and Son.

The firm announce in our business columns that "all wool sent to be scoured or sorted will have prompt and careful attention. Their previous work is a sufficient guarantee that the wool will be got up in first-class style, suitable for either the London or Melbourne markets, and trucked with despatch."

Referring to Mr. Honey man's work, the Riverina Recorder (Balranald) on 22nd May, published the following remarks:-

"We have been shown some really fine samples of wool scoured at Mr. Honeyman's works at Queechy, close to this town. The wool was grown at Mulurulu, in the backcountry, and after looking at the sample of work done at Queechy we have pleasure in bringing its excellence before our readers who may be engaged in pastoral pursuits. We may say that at the Calcutta Exhibition in 1884 samples of scoured wool from Queechy secured one of the gold medals for quality of work executed."<sup>54</sup>



**Marrar Wool Scouring Works,**  
NORTH WAGGA.

**T**HE undersigned (in returning thanks to the squatters and wool-growers of the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan districts for their support for past seasons) beg to intimate they are prepared to Scour Clips with despatch.

Wool sent to be scoured or sorted will have prompt and careful attention. Our previous work is a sufficient guarantee that the wool will be got up in first class style, suitable for London, Sydney, or Melbourne markets, and trucked with despatch.

Wool carted to and from the railway station free.

We do not buy wool or skins.

**DARCHY & HONEYMAN.**

**Left:** Advertisement for the Marrar Wool Scouring Works of Messrs Darchy & Honeyman. [1893].<sup>55</sup>



**WARATAH WOOL WORKS,**  
WAGGA WAGGA.

**T**HE undersigned begs to announce that **EXTENSIVE ALTERATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS** have been made in the **SCOURING PLANT.**

The Steam Power exceeds 30 horse-power, being the largest in the district.

Wool Scoured here last season sold at highly satisfactory prices, both in the London and Colonial Markets.

The whole under the direct supervision of the owner—who has had 25 years' practical experience in Yorkshire and the Colonies.

**AMPLE STORAGE FOR GREASY WOOL,** and Growers may rely on quick despatch.

References may be made to the leading Brokers in Sydney and Melbourne, also to the Bank of New South Wales.

**JOSEPH HAYES,**  
Proprietor.

Hayes also made improvements to his establishment, which he highlighted to the public in November 1893.<sup>56</sup>

**Left:** Advertisement for Hayes's Waratah Wool Works [1893].

The relationship between Darchy and Honeyman must have been short lived as within a year advertisements for the establishment listed Darchy as the sole proprietor.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 18<sup>th</sup> May 1893, p2.

<sup>55</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 14<sup>th</sup> November 1893, p1.

<sup>56</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 30<sup>th</sup> November 1893, p1.



When fire destroyed the dwelling adjoining the scouring establishment, in February 1894, there was no mention of Honeyman, and it is assumed the business partnership had been dissolved by then. The fire was reported as follows:

*“A fire broke out in the dwelling house at the Marrar Lodge Wool-Scouring Works, North Wagga, about 10 o'clock on Saturday night, and in a short space of time the building was reduced to a heap of ashes. The alarm was raised by the fire-bells and the Spergin Hooter, and the fire brigade speedily turned out. There being no water supply close to the house, the brigade had not a sufficient length of hose to reach a lagoon some distance away, and their fire extinguishing appliances were consequently of no use to them. The brigade, however, stood by with buckets, prepared in case a stack of hay, standing close to the house, should take fire. Fortunately, the wind was blowing in a favorable direction, otherwise the stack must have caught fire. The premises were occupied by Mr. Darchy, who carries on the business of the wool-scouring works. Mr. Darchy is at present in Mooraro, a town on the Darling, whither he had gone to bring his wife and family to Wagga. The foreman of the works, Mr. John Tait, was left in charge, and used to sleep in the house, and several other men who had been in the employment of Mr. Darchy were awaiting his return to resume the works and resided in the men's hut near the house. Mr. Tait states he left the house securely fastened about 8 o'clock on Saturday night and came into town, and cannot give any clue to the origin of the fire. The house was built of wood with shingle and iron roof, and contained in all about 15 rooms. The main portion of the building was erected many years ago, but about five years ago considerable improvements were made to it by the then occupier Mr. H. E. Brougham. There was little or no furniture in it at the time of the fire, as Mr. Darchy, since he came into occupancy, had not furnished it. There was, however, stored in one of the rooms about £25 worth of onions. The building was insured on the 11th June last for £450, in the Royal Insurance Company's office, in the name of the Union Bank. The premises were visited by the local agent, Mr. Ferguson, and the Insurance Company's inspector on the 13th instant. The police made an investigation into the circumstances connected with the fire, and reported the matter to the coroner, who is awaiting the arrival of the Loss Adjuster of the company, who will visit the scene of the conflagration, before he decides whether or not he will hold an inquest.”<sup>58</sup>*



**MARRAR**  
**WOOL-SCOURING WORKS,**  
**NORTH WAGGA.**

**S**END your Wool to the above Works,  
and add 50 per cent. to its value.

**LARGE or SMALL QUANTITIES**  
**TAKEN.**

Wool carted to and from the Railway  
Station free.  
I am not a buyer of Wool or Skins.  
Testimonials from previous constituents  
on application.  
The Works are in full going order.  
Inspection Invited.

**F. E. DARCHY,**  
**Proprietor.**

**Left:** Advertisement for Marrar Wool Scouring Works – Proprietor, F. E. Darchy. [1894]

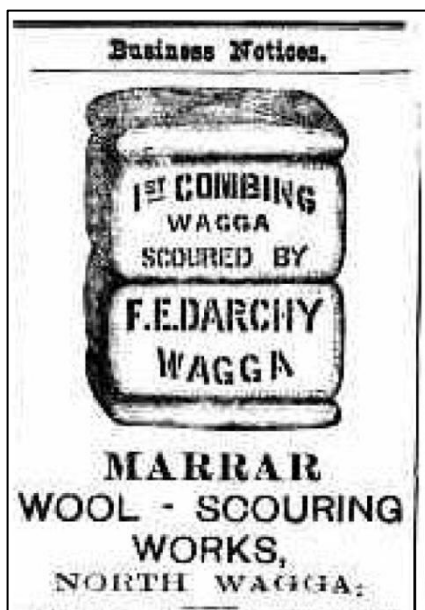
<sup>57</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1894, p1.

<sup>58</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 20<sup>th</sup> February 1894, p2.

In November 1894, the local paper included a report on the Darchy's establishment, as follows:

*“Amongst the local industries of Wagga at present in full work, none perhaps, call for special mention more than Mr. F. E. Darchy's Marrar Wool Scouring Works. A representative of this paper paid a visit to the establishment a few days since, where an hour or two was passed in watching the various processes wool undergoes whilst being cleaned. The present time is evidently the busy season with wool washers, and as this year there is a great increase in the quantity of washed wool sent into market, a large amount of labor is employed in the local industry carried on at Mr. Darchy's establishment. The Marrar Wool Scouring Works are situated at North Wagga on the northern bank of the North Wagga lagoon. The works are fitted up with all the latest labor-saving appliances, and amongst the machinery is a 15 h.p. Tangye engine and two 4-inch Tangye pumps. The water used is forced up from the lagoon into an elevated tank which holds 2,000 gallons. The water from this reservoir is laid on to the washtubs, and also reticulates the whole of the works. This tank is fixed up at a high elevation over the wash tubs, and the force of water from it into the tubs keeps the wool contained in them in continual agitation, thus facilitating in a great measure the cleansing process. Two large tanks contain hot water, heated by means of steam laid on from the boiler. This hot water is supplied to the soaks by means of piping, the different classes of wool being soaked indifferent temperatures. Nothing but soap and water is used in the first process the wool undergoes, and afterwards nothing but cold water. The buildings consist of a storeroom for wool, work sheds, engine room, offices, etc., and the whole of the works, with the exception of the drying ground, are under cover. The wool treated is first taken from the storeroom and opened out near the soak bins, and after being "teased" is placed for a while in the bins, which are kept filled with hot water. It is then put into the washing tubs (Geddes' patent boxes only being used). There are at present four washing tubs in use, and a staging on which is fitted up a "potstick" plant with two boxes. After being thoroughly cleaned in these boxes the wool is allowed to drain, and is then carried out into a paddock where it is spread out on tarpaulins to dry. During the drying process the wool is teased and frequently turned until it is quite dry. It is then carefully rolled up and carried into a high loft, from where it is dropped into large wool bins in the press room. These bins, which are capable of holding 70 bales of wool, are situated close to the presses, where the wool is refilled in bales, pressed and branded ready for despatch to the railway station or elsewhere, as the case may be. At the present time there are 18 hands employed at the works, and on an average 20 bales are scoured daily. At the time of the visit of the writer there were between 25 and 30 bales drying on the grass, amongst which was a quantity of first combing from the Marrar station, which presented the appearance of having been thoroughly cleaned. There was not the slightest sign of dirt visible on any portion of this wool, and from its appearance it had evidently lost very little in weight in the process of scouring. There was also drying a quantity of crossbred lambs' wool, the property of Mr. R. Gust, of "Lansdowne, "The Rock. This wool was of excellent quality, perfectly free from grass seeds, and as white as snow. There were also several bales of Lincoln rams' wool from the same grower, some of which measured nine inches in length and of a very superior quality, and amongst the different varieties was a quantity of black wool, which had also been through a thorough cleansing process. Noticeable amongst the numerous stacks of wool recently brought in for treatment were large quantities from Borambola, Mandamah, Marrar, Yalgogrin, Kindra, Boree Creek and Lansdown stations, besides a numerous collection of small lots. From the results of the sales of wool treated at the Marrar works, the scouring done there, appears to be equal to anything of the kind done in Sydney or Melbourne, and the establishment is capable of giving employment to a large number of hands, not only for the season, but for the whole year*

round. The scouring is all done under the direction of Mr. Reginald Meek, who also conducts the general management of the works. Mr. Meek is thoroughly proficient in all branches of his profession, as is evidenced by his credentials from Messrs. Goldsbrough, Mort and Co., and other large wool brokers and from a number of station holders, amongst whom may be mentioned Messrs. M. N. Willis (Brewarrina), G. Woods (Yaubaccona), D. H. Mackay (Noorama), and many others. Of the lots already sent away this season, the average shrinkage in fleece wools through the scouring process has been 33.45, and on lots consisting of locks and stained pieces, the locks being extremely daggy, the greatest shrinkage is stated to be 47.28. The wool is carted from and to the railway station free of charge, two lorries and a couple of drays used for the purpose forming part of the working plant. It is, we understand, the intention of Mr. Darchy to considerably enlarge the works before the approach of next season, this extra venture being warranted by the large increase in the business which has occurred this year.”<sup>59</sup>



The two North Wagga Wagga establishments were to coexist until 1903. In 1897 both Darchy & Hayes applied for a license to operate a wool scouring plant and they were each granted a ten year license, by the relevant statutory board.<sup>60</sup>

Left: Advertisement for Marrar Wool Scouring Works. [1895]<sup>61</sup>

In September 1903 Hayes advised he had purchased the Marrar Wool Scouring works from Mr. Darchy. He further advised that extensive improvements have been made at the Waratah Works and that all future scouring would take place at the Waratah Wool Scouring Works<sup>62</sup>

Right: Advertisement from Joseph Hayes advising he has taken over the Marrar Wool Scouring Works. [1903]

**WARATAH WOOLSCOURING  
WORKS,  
NORTH WAGGA.**

**T**HE above Works are now ready to receive Wool for treatment in any quantity.

Having purchased the Marrar Wool-scouring Works from Mr. F. Darchy, his former constituents are notified that extensive improvements have been made at the Waratah Works, where all future scouring operations will be carried on.

Woolgrowers are assured that all parcels of wool sent forward will have my best personal supervision and prompt attention.

Most satisfactory prices realised in the London and Colonial Markets last season.

References: The Bank of New South Wales, and Sydney or Melbourne Wool-brokers.

**JOSEPH HAYES, Proprietor.**

<sup>59</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 29<sup>th</sup> November 1894, p2.

<sup>60</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 12<sup>th</sup> June 1897, p2.

<sup>61</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 5<sup>th</sup> October 1895, p1.

<sup>62</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 17<sup>th</sup> September 1903, p3.

There are five confirmed sites for wool scouring/tannery/fellmongery establishments within the townships of North & South Wagga Wagga.

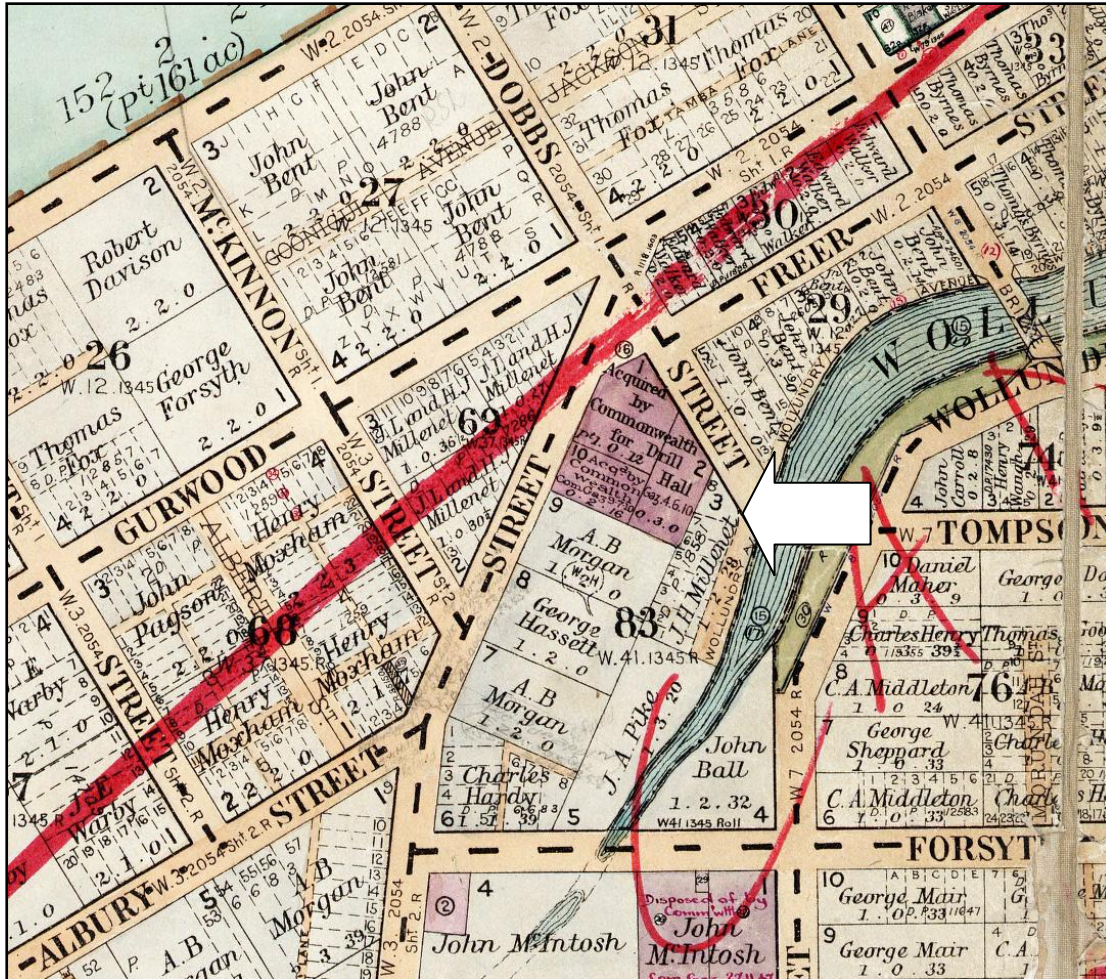
### 1. Wagga Wagga Tannery

William Denning: 1873-1875

Thomas Denning: 1875-1888<sup>63</sup>

Initially listed as Albury Street, then Docker Street, then Dobbs Street.<sup>63</sup>

This establishment was located on allotment 3 of section 83, South Wagga Wagga.<sup>64</sup>  
It relied on the Wollundry Lagoon for its water supply.



**Above:** Map showing allotment 3 of section 83, South Wagga Wagga.

Courtesy NSW Department of Lands, Historic Maps.

<sup>63</sup> Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 21<sup>st</sup> February 1882, p2.

<sup>64</sup> Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books. [1873-1879]

## 2. Beeson's Fellmongery & Tannery

William Beeson: 1866 (possibly earlier)-1886(or thereabouts).

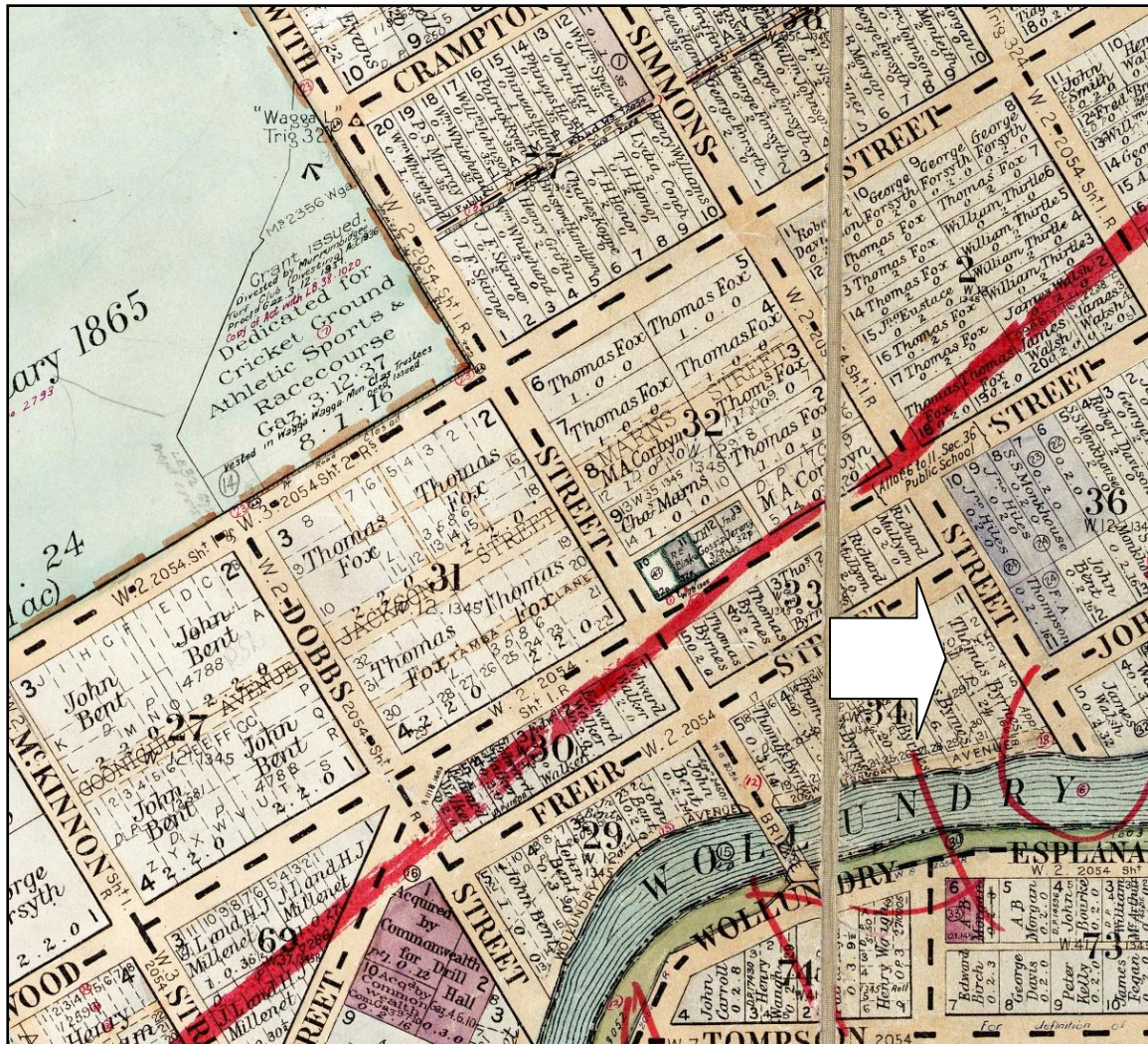
Originally located in Fitzmaurice Street – exact location not known.

Relocated to Simmons Street by 1873 or earlier.

These latter works were located on allotment 1 of section 34 South Wagga Wagga.<sup>65</sup>

They were also dependent on the Wollundry lagoon for a water supply.

Allotment 1 fronted Simmons Street but extended from Freer Street to the Wollundry Lagoon.



**Above:** Map showing allotment 1 of section 34, South Wagga Wagga.  
Courtesy NSW Department of Lands, Historic Maps.

<sup>65</sup> Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books. [1873-1879]

### 3. Wagga Wagga Wool Scouring Works

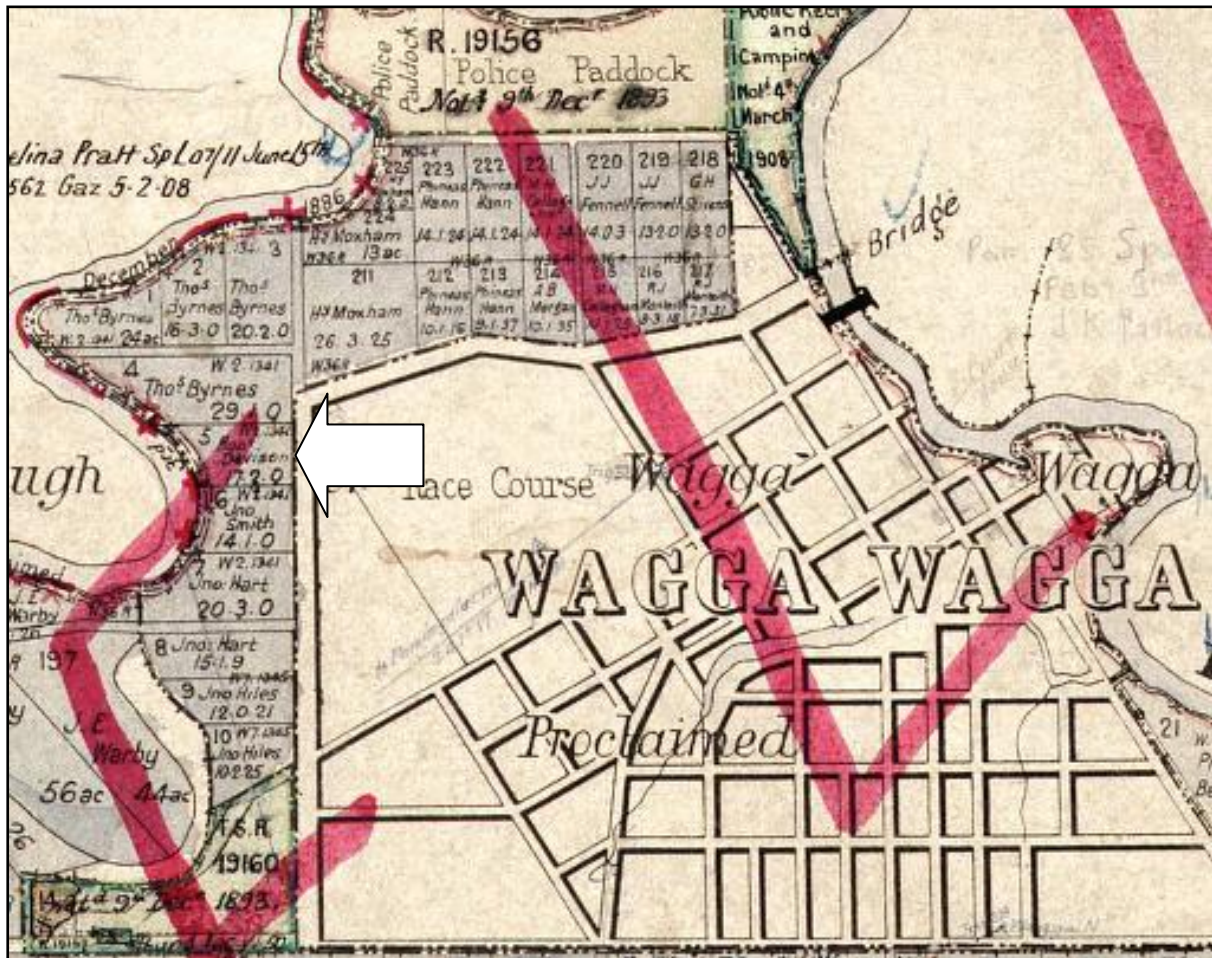
Robert Monks: 1872-1877

J. Taylor & Co: 1877-18??

McGeorge & O'Byrne: 1887 (or earlier)-1888.

These works were located on portion 5, South Wagga Wagga.<sup>66</sup>

Now Moorong Street, but referred to as Bridge Road in 1873 and subsequently Travers Street (up until 1879).



**Above:** Map showing allotment 5, Parish South Wagga Wagga. Courtesy NSW Department of Lands, Historic Maps.

These first three establishments were all located on the south side of the river, but by 1890 all three had ceased operation and two new establishments at North Wagga Wagga would dominate into the new century (20<sup>th</sup>).

As stated earlier this decline could have been influenced by a depressed market, but it was also likely that environmental factors were at play. A thriving town like South Wagga Wagga would not have appreciated *noxious industries* within, and close to, the town boundaries.

<sup>66</sup> Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books. [1873-1879]

#### 4. Marrar Lodge Wool Scouring Works

John Johnson (or Johnston): 1889-1890

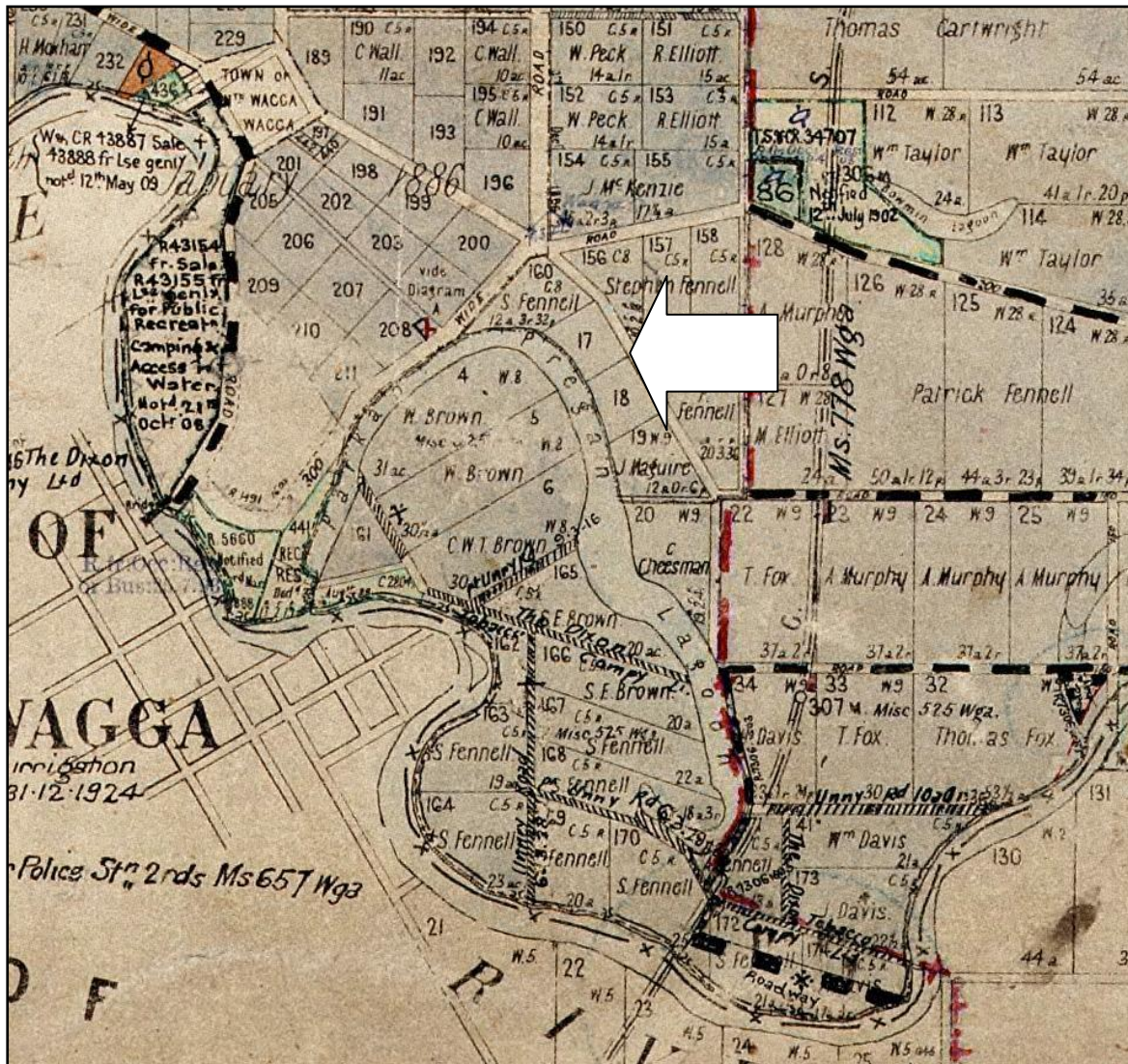
H. E. Brougham: 1890-1892

Thomas Honeyman: 1892-1893

Honeyman & Darchy: 1893-1894

Fritz Henry Darchy: 1894-1903.

These works were located within sections 17 & 18, North Wagga Wagga.<sup>67</sup>



Above: Map showing sections 17 & 18, facing Marrar Street, North Wagga Wagga. Courtesy NSW Department of Lands, Historic Maps.

<sup>67</sup> Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books. [1890-1904]

## 5. Waratah Wool Scouring Works

Joseph Hayes 1891-1908 +

These works were located within section 20, Marrar Street, North Wagga Wagga.<sup>68</sup>



**Above:** Map showing section 20, facing Marrar Street, North Wagga Wagga. Courtesy NSW Department of Lands, Historic Maps.

**Note:** This article is restricted to the period preceding 1908 and will require additional research (post 1908) at some time in the future.

<sup>68</sup> Wagga Wagga Council Rate Books. [1891-1908]



## Definitions:

**Currier:** A currier is a specialist in the leather processing industry. After the tanning process, the currier applies techniques of dressing, finishing and colouring to the tanned hide to make it strong, flexible and waterproof. The leather is stretched and burnished to produce a uniform thickness and suppleness, and dyeing and other chemical finishes give the leather its desired colour.

After currying, the leather is then ready to pass to the fashioning trades such as saddlery, bridlery, shoemaking and glove making.

**Fellmongering:** A fellmonger was a dealer in hides or skins, particularly sheepskins, who might also prepare skins for tanning. The name is derived from the Old English 'fell' meaning skins and 'monger' meaning dealer. Fellmongery is one of the oldest professions in the world and since ancient times, man has used the skins of animals to clothe himself, and for making domestic articles.

Today the term has become restricted to the person or the operator of the machinery which removes sheep's wool or the hair of other animals from hides in preparation for tanning. The process of fellmongering has to be done quickly after the animal is slaughtered to prevent the hides from decaying before tanning can begin. First they are trimmed of all unwanted pieces like legs, neck and tail then soaked in water to allow the skin tissues to distend. Next, a sodium sulphide solution is applied to the skin side of the fleece. The sodium sulphide soaks through the skin and destroys the follicles of the wool roots so that the fellmonger can then separate the wool from the skins. The wool is washed and dried. The skins are then soaked in a stronger solution of sodium sulphide and lime for 21 hours to remove small clumps of wool missed by the puller and to break down some internal proteins within the skin. The next process is called delimiting: the skins are soaked in a solution of water and ammonium sulphate. This is to remove all the sodium sulphide from the skin and degraded proteins. The next process is the bating which is to remove any remaining protein from the surface.

**Tanning:** Tanning is the process of treating skins of animals to produce leather, which is more durable and less susceptible to decomposition. Traditionally, tanning used tannin, an acidic chemical compound from which the tanning process draws its name (tannin is in turn named for an old German word for oak or fir trees, which supplied it). Colouring may occur during tanning. A tannery is the term for a place where the skins are processed. Tanning leather involves a process which permanently alters the protein structure of skin. Making "rawhide" (untanned but worked hide) does not require the use of tannin. Rawhide is made by removing the flesh and fat and then the hair by use of an aqueous solution (this process is often called "liming" when using lime and water or "bucking" when using wood ash (lye) and water), then scraping over a beam with a somewhat dull knife, then drying. The two aforementioned solutions for removing the hair also act to clean the fibre network of the skin and allow penetration and action of the tanning agent, so that all the steps in preparation of rawhide except drying are often preludes to the more complex process of tanning and production of leather.

Tanning can be performed with either vegetable or mineral methods. Before tanning, the skins are unhaired, degreased, desalted and soaked in water over a period of 6 hours to 2 days. To prevent damage of the skin by bacterial growth during the soaking period biocides are used.