

**WWDHS
NEWSLETTER
No. 439
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MEETINGS Oct-Nov 2019

Monday 21 October 2019

Committee Meeting 1.30 pm

General Meeting, 2.30 pm

Venue: Mt Erin Heritage Centre

Guest Speaker: Patrick Donoghue

Monday 18 Nov 2019: HCC

Committee Meeting: 6.30 pm

General Meeting: 7.30 pm

Guest Speaker: Darron Watt from
Riverina Environmental Ed Centre

**MEETING 21 October 2019 will be held at
the Mount Erin Heritage Centre.**

Guest speaker is Patrick Donoghue, the Manager of the Centre, who will give a presentation on the history of Mount Erin. He will also give us a tour of the Mt Erin Museum and of the beautiful Monks & Hardy Chapel.

Parking can be gained from an entry off the northern end of Kildare Street.

Coffee, tea and biscuits will be available.

Meeting Formats – Feedback Welcome

To make meetings more attractive to members, over recent months, the society has been experimenting with holding meetings in the day time, instead of evenings, and in choosing a variety of venues. The Willans Hill site is now closed for meetings, and the Historic Council Chambers is now the default meeting venue. Alternative venues, such as the Mates Gully restaurant and the Mount Erin Heritage Centre, were selected as places that would be of interest to members. The management committee would be interested to receive feedback from members as to how they feel about these changes. Comments can be directed to Geoff Burch [email: geoffrey.burch@bigpond.com, or mobile 0417 277 592], or to other members of the committee.

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

**WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
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Committee meetings: 3rd Monday of the month

General meetings: 3rd Monday of the month

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

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Patrick Donohue, Manager of Mount Erin Heritage Centre

The Mount Erin Heritage Centre was established to record the history of the Presentation Sisters' arrival in Wagga Wagga in 1874 and the development of education at Mount Erin. Patrick will be talking about the history of Mount Erin and give us a tour of the Mt Erin Museum and Monks and Hardy Chapel.



Left: The beautiful chapel. Right: One of the many displays in the Museum.

Darron Watt, Principal of Riverina Environmental Education Centre

Darron Watt will be the speaker at our meeting in November. He is the Principal of the Riverina Environmental Education Centre. This is a school for school children and on other days for indigenous persons wishing to join the army. It helps them understand and appreciate the environment and their connection to and impact on it. It involves respecting and valuing the achievements of the past and supporting the preservation of those aspects of the built environment which remind us of those achievements.

Excursion to Broom Factory at Tumut, 38 Adelong Road

Our Excursion organiser, Geoff Haddon, is organising an excursion to the Broom Factory at Tumut. Established in 1946, this factory is one of the last original broom factories in Australia. Date to be advised.



NOTE: PLEASE SUPPORT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

This helps reach a wider audience of people, other than just our immediate members. If members can “Like” or “Follow” our posts it will help to broaden our audience and promote our objectives.”

The society's Facebook address is <https://www.facebook.com/wagga.history/>

CELEBRATION OF THOMAS BEST BICENTENNIAL

By Jo Hambrett

A celebration of the bicentennial of settlement at Middle Dural by Thomas Best, his wife Mary Becket Best and little daughter Esther was held at *Glenroy Cottage*, Middle Dural, during History Week, on 8 September 2019. Around eighty Bests attended, from interstate and country NSW, as well as sending their best wishes from the United Kingdom. Most were relations of Thomas Samuel, the eldest son of Thomas, however we had representatives of Thomas' siblings, Peter (Gunning), and Robert Holt (Wagga Wagga) present as well as representatives of his daughter, Sarah Best Hancock. Elizabeth Pellinkhof welcomed us to *Glenroy Cottage*, named in memory of the original house of James Frederick (*Glenroy*) on the corner of Cranston's Road and Old Northern Road which burnt down in mysterious circumstances following its sale (after the death of the last family member, Roy Spencer Best).

Michael Bell, president of Dural and District's Historical Society gave the first speech in front of the guest of honour, the Mayor of the Hills Shire Council. He spoke eloquently of the joys and difficulties of defending and maintaining heritage buildings in the Hills District; nearby photographic displays of the last remaining Best houses, *St Elmo* and *Springhill*, on the Old Northern Road ridge (between Cranston's and Middle Dural roads) illustrated his point. As well, he noted the importance of the educational role of Historical Societies within the community and the fact that their wealth of information needs to be utilised with greater frequency.

Jo Hambrett spoke on the recent restoration of three of the Best graves in St Jude's cemetery. Sisters, Shirley Best Clark and Barbara Best Churchill, daughters of Fred and Ness Best, sponsored the restoration project. The graves and obelisks of Thomas Samuel and wife Mary Anne and his sons, William Alfred and James Frederick, and wives are now an asset to the historic little cemetery and represent the pride the extended Best family feel for their ancestors.

Thomas Best and his brother John rest in Gunning Church of England cemetery in a family vault. Thomas left Middle Dural upon the death of his wife in 1857 and moved to Tangmangaroo in the Yass-Gunning area. There he became a pastoralist along with his brothers, Peter, John and William and their respective families. His sister's son (Sarah Best Pye) also moved to Gunning, marrying local lass, Sarah Reynolds. The Best vault is in dire need of repair; to this end, we have applied to the Upper Lachlan Council for a grant to help us restore it. \$3500 will still need to be raised even if successful. We are hopeful that many Bests will rally to this worthy cause.

Rod Best, a family historian on the Best Family for many years, followed my rather sombre talk. He gave a very colourful and highly entertaining talk on the changing of social attitudes in the years between George and Martha and their grandchild Thomas Samuel and his children.

The formalities ended and the Best clan was free to enjoy the displays and partake of afternoon tea. We wished we had a tape recording of every single conversation on the day. The generosity of the descendants of Thomas Samuel was staggering – displays of a sword and a branding iron, wonderful photographs, a suitcase of letters and a family Bible to mention a few. Our thanks to Pam Lang, Dawn and Len Best and Lynne Higson. Sarah Best, now from Orange and

Leslie Shore, now from Tumut were incredibly illuminating and generous. I would also like to thank Ken Bradley and Valerie Smith from the DDHS for their kind assistance.

The Display will move to the Pennant Hills Library at some time in the remaining year. Hopefully visitors there will find enjoyment in the life and times of one of the very early settler families in the Hills District. We are delighted that Hornsby Shire Council remains such a supporter of local history.



Some of the Best relatives attending the celebration of the Thomas Best Centennial

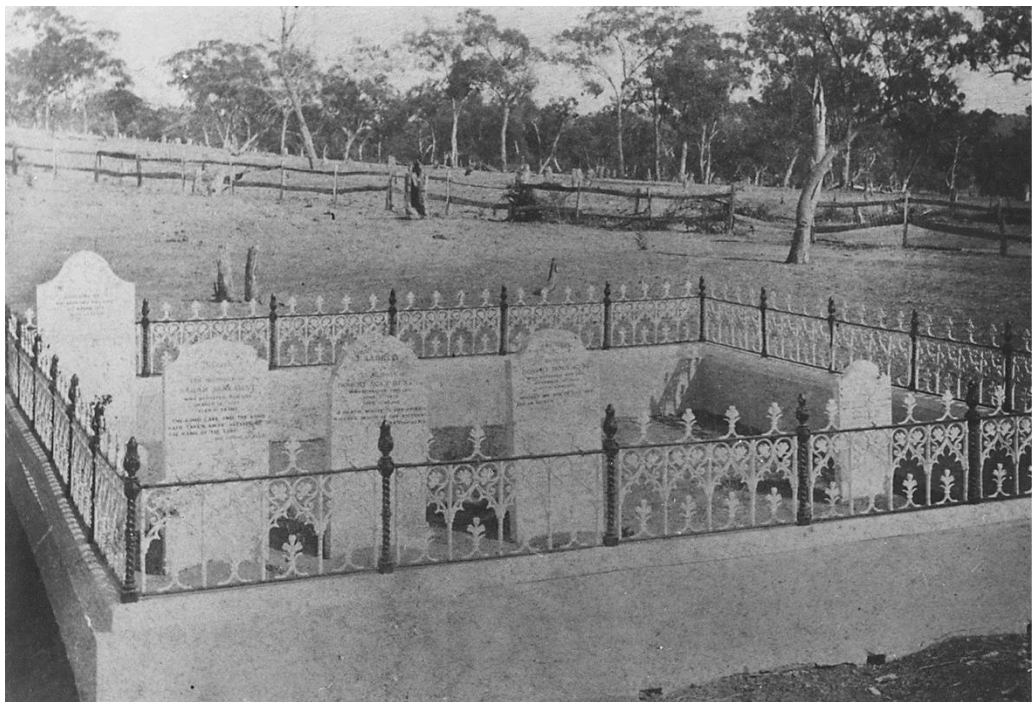
WAGGA WAGGA BEST FAMILY

The Best family was the first family to take up land in the Wagga Wagga area south of the Murrumbidgee River and one of the first to 'squat' in the Riverina Region – at 'Wagga Wagga' and at 'Buckingbong' (in the Narrandera area). The head of the family was George Best, one of the leading emancipists in the colony of New South Wales. His son, Robert Holt Best (younger brother of Thomas), brought his family to live on the 'Wagga Wagga' run in 1846 and they went on to forge relationships with the most influential pastoral families in the region including the Tompsons at 'Eunonyhareenyha', the Nixons of 'Gregadoo', the Bourkes (of 'Gumly Gumly' and 'O'Brien's Creek') and the Rudds (of 'Wagingoberembee').

Like most of the pastoral families, the Best family established a small family graveyard near their homestead. The Best Family Cemetery contains the graves of Robert Holt Best, his wife Clara, their children, Robert Holt junior, Adalena (or Adelaide), Sarah, Bertie, Ben and Frank and Clara's second husband Edward Charles Pearson and their son, Edward.



Robert Holt Best and his wife, Clara



The Best Family Cemetery

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The Wollundry Lagoon

By Dame Mary Gilmore

There came a cry from far away,
And then a shadow crossed the moon;
There was a movement scarcely seen,
Swift turning toward the dark lagoon.

And like a knife that sloping fell,
And like a bolt in swift release,
The black duck, with his whistling wing,
Dropped by a trail of midget geese.

Once nested there the pelican,
And there the swan sailed stately by;
By day the ibis stalked, by night
Was startled by the curlew's cry.

There slashed the whipping plover's wing,
And there the mopoke haunted low,
At dawn the sauntering emu stooped,
And drank unhindered long ago.

And when the river floods were out,
And when within the waters leapt
The great fish shining in the moon,
There came the tribes and Bora kept.

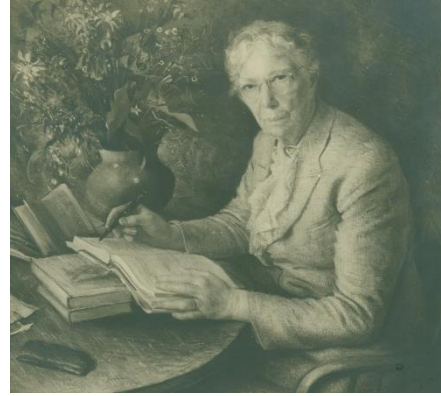
And once again I see the fires,
Flicker and flame upon the night,
The shadows darkling on the trees,
The bodies gleaming in the light!

And I remember how, a child,
I trembling caught my father's hand,
Hearing the massed bull-roarers roll
Traditioned runes across the land.

Mighty the rote, now swift now slow;
Now high, now deep, now with a sound
Like all the winds upon the earth,
Drawn in and held in one great round.

And there each day the hunters came,
Home with the chase upon the back
Youths whom the elders sent abroad,
To prove their skill by craft and track.

And oft I stood while swimmers slept
Beneath the lines of duck and teal,
Or noosed the swan, or slid beneath
The pelican's slow paddling heel!



Dame Mary Gilmore, photograph of a portrait by Joshua Smith

And there I saw the spearman stand
Where sprang the fish toward the fly;
So still his shadow, that the deep
The stiller seemed where it would lie!

Where long ago the kangaroo
Loped to the water's edge to drink,
A wall of willows later stood,
Root-fastened on the townward brink.

And there I saw the stars within
The waters lace like golden bees,
Or watched, enchanted, as the moon
Rose like a shield amid the trees.

And I remember how, a child,
I felt a glamour there enfold
Even the huge black logs the floods
Swung out, where swift currents rolled.

O lovely, lovely were the curves
Wherever bird arched neck and drank,
And lovely was the arrowy track
Where swan and duck sailed, rank on rank;

O lovely, lovely as he stood,
And lovely as he stooping bent,
The kangaroo, that dainty-lipped
Sipped of the waters ere he went.

But memory dies with those who go
And I am lonely in the vast,
Where, in their myriads, went the slain,
Spoke in full panoply the past;

Yet it may be, the old lagoon
Remembers those who came; and keeps,
Within its deeper depths the watch,
Where their lost history buried sleeps.

Wollundry Lagoon



Right: Wollundry Lagoon with the ever-popular ducks swimming in the foreground

Wollundry Lagoon. The bridge over Wollundry Lagoon in Baylis Street (erected about 1860) can be seen on the left and the old boat shed and Council Chambers on the right.



Left: The view looking east from the Baylis Street Bridge. The lagoon was a popular recreation area.

LEGGOS' LANZ BULLDOG TRACTOR

By Sherry Morris

In the 1920s and 1930s, tractors, combine seeders, harvesters and headers slowly replaced the horse teams for ploughing, sowing and harvesting. Although tractors were slowly replacing horse teams, there were still heated debates about their relative merits into the 1930s and according to many sources only about half the farmers in the Riverina had acquired tractors prior to the Second World War. Even some of those farmers who did have tractors only used them to run their chaffcutters and continued to put their crop in and take it off with a horse team (or two horse teams). Horses required more effort. Farmers had to rise before daylight, feed and prepare their horses and repeat the procedure at night. Cutting the chaff to feed the horses was always an onerous chore. However, tractors were considered unreliable and expensive.

By the late 1930s, tractors were becoming more acceptable and in 1938 the Leggo family decided to purchase one. The family had lived at 'Blackwood' in Uranquinty since the early 1900s. This property was once part of the original 'Wagga Wagga' run taken up by the George Best, a convict, and his sons and was taken up by the Leggo family when large pastoral runs were being broken up into smaller units and more family units were settling in rural areas of New South Wales. It was a small mixed farm, run by William Leggo and his son, Frank. It produced mainly hay and oats and fattened sheep.

The tractor had been manufactured by Heinrich Lanz Mannheim – Aktieng Sellschaft in Germany. The first Bulldog tractors, according to tractor historian, Ian M. Johnston, were 'so basic, so simple and so rugged that its squat appearance resembled a Bulldog'. Its designer, Dr Huber, always referred to it as 'Mein Bulldog' and the name stuck. The sole agent for Lanz Bulldog Tractors in Australia in the 1930s was a subsidiary of Geo W. Kelly and Lewis Pty Ltd, K.L. Engines and Tractors Pty Ltd. It distributed Lanz tractors throughout Australia. The Leggo family purchased their Lanz Bulldog from M Rava and Co, district agents for Geo Kelly and Lewis Pty Ltd of Melbourne, in 1938.

Frank Leggo, then aged in his early twenties, agreed to drive the tractor from Melbourne to Wagga Wagga to officially test the amount of kerosene used. On 20 December 1938, he left KL Engines and Tractors Pty Ltd in Melbourne and arrived home in twenty hours. According to an article in *The Daily Advertiser*, 4 February 1939 (virtually an advertisement of the agents, encouraging farmers to buy the low-cost low-maintenance Lanz tractors), the tanks were filled with fuel and oil and sealed by the Vacuum Oil Company prior to Frank and the tractor leaving Melbourne.

At Albury they were inspected and resealed and when they arrived in Wagga Wagga they were opened by the officials of the Vacuum Oil Company and the fuel measured so that there was no doubt about the costs. These costs showed the saving that farmers could obtain by running one of these tractors (instead of horses).

The article pointed out that not only was the running cost low but the maintenance was 'practically nil' since it was a single cylinder engine and thus only a few moving parts to wear. As the price of wheat was currently low, farmers were expected to give serious consideration to the tractor.



Above: Frank Leggo on the 35 hp Lanz Bulldog about to leave Melbourne, December 1938. The tractor had three forward speeds and one reverse and a two-stroke, single cylinder motor. Normally this tractor would have had steel tyres but according to this tractor's Instruction Book, and the Spare Parts Book kept by the owner it was 'converted' to rubber tyres prior to purchase.

These were two main drawbacks with the Bulldog Lanz tractor. It had to be started with a blowtorch to heat up a cast iron bulk on the end of the cylinder. They proceeded with a steady jerking movement each revolution the heavy single cylinder slow running motor made, and were very rough on the driver on his steel seat. They were also fond of blowing sparks and set a lot of fires alight, so one had to be careful when and where one used them.

The Daily Advertiser, 4 February 1939 p.8

Tractor Records

MELBOURNE TO WAGGA FOR 13/

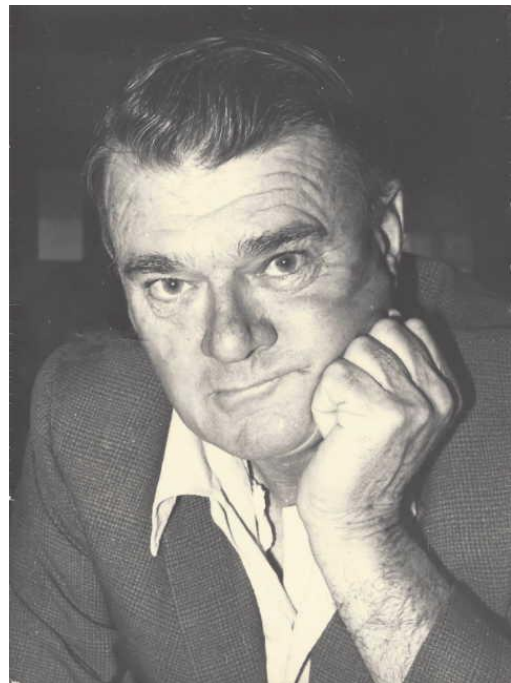
This record was put up by the two "Lanz" Bulldog Diesel tractors sold by M. Rava & Co. of Wagga to F. Leggo of Uranquinty and Mr. Fraser of Wagga. Fitted with six speed gear boxes these tractors were driven up from Melbourne by Mr. Leggo, the time taken being 20 hours. Prior to leaving Melbourne the tanks were filled with fuel and oil and sealed by the Vacuum Oil Co. At Albury they were inspected and resealed, and when they arrived in Wagga were opened by the officials of the Vacuum Oil Co. and the fuel measured, so that there is no doubt about the costs. These costs go to show what a saving farmers can effect by running one of these tractors. Not only is the running cost low but the cost of maintenance is practically nil. Being a single cylinder engine there are only a few moving parts to wear. Some users maintain that over a period of ten years their costs have only been a few shillings for spares. With the present low price of wheat it will pay farmers to give serious consideration to this tractor as it is only by using same that they can hope to keep their cost of production down. Full particulars are obtainable from M. Rava & Co., of Wagga, the district agents.

Frank Leggo and his wife moved to Meurant Avenue in Wagga Wagga in the early 1970s. The tractor remained in the Leggo family until after the death of Frank in 1981. His widow donated the tractor to the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society on 17 April 1982.

Members of Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society restored the tractor and replaced two tyres in December 1988. In 1989 Mrs Leggo donated \$50 for a plaque bearing her husband's name. It was a working exhibit at its annual fetes from Saturday 22 April 1989.



Left: Lanz Bulldog when it was donated to the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society Museum by Mrs Leggo, 20 June 1982. Right: Lanz Bulldog at the Museum of the Society (now the Museum of the Riverina) after its restoration.



*Left: Lanz Bulldog at the fete in 1993, driven by the late Norm Hopwood
Right: Frank Leggo in 1976. He died in 1981.*

According to Ian M Johnston,

The torque characteristics of the Lanz two-stroke low-compression (7 to 1 ratio) valveless crude-oil engine were similar to those of a steam engine. When the hot-bulb ignition of the fuel took place, it was not in the form of an abrupt detonation as experienced with petrol and high-compression diesel engines. The low-volatility fuel detonated with a 'whoosh' rather than a 'bang' and the resultant released energy pursued the piston on its exhaust stroke. Accordingly, a graph of the performance curve of a Lanz engine reveals that the high torque and low fuel consumption levels tended to remain nearly constant throughout the rev range of the engine.

What all this means to a farmer was that his Bulldog would 'hang on' to a load, long after a petrol or (to a lesser degree) diesel tractor of similar horsepower would have required a change into a lower gear. Under such conditions as encountering a heavy patch of soil during ploughing, the Lanz governor would open up, the thumping sound of the motor would increase in intensity, pulsating clouds of sooty smoke would belch from the chimney in rhythm to the slow beat of the motor, the revolutions would decrease from around 600 rpm to a rate that could almost be counted, but invariably the machine could be depended on to negotiate the difficult terrain without a gear change and then go on its way, merrily putt-putting across the paddock.

However, in the 1930s, despite its crudeness, its vibrations, oily smoke and lengthy blow lamp starting procedure, it was a popular tractor because it was reliable and economic to run.

As a result of the tests and the records, M. Rava and Co were able to show farmers that the tractor could prove a great saving to them, not only because of the low running costs but also because the cost of maintenance was 'practically nil' since it was a single cylinder engine with 'only a few moving parts to wear'. It claimed that some users had maintained that over a period of ten years their costs had only been a few shillings for spares. The report concluded,

With the present low price of wheat, it will pay farmers to give serious consideration to this tractor as it is only by using same that they can hope to keep their cost of production down. Full particulars are obtainable from M. Rava & Co., of Wagga, the district agents.

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