

The

Bullenbong Hotel

Acknowledgments.

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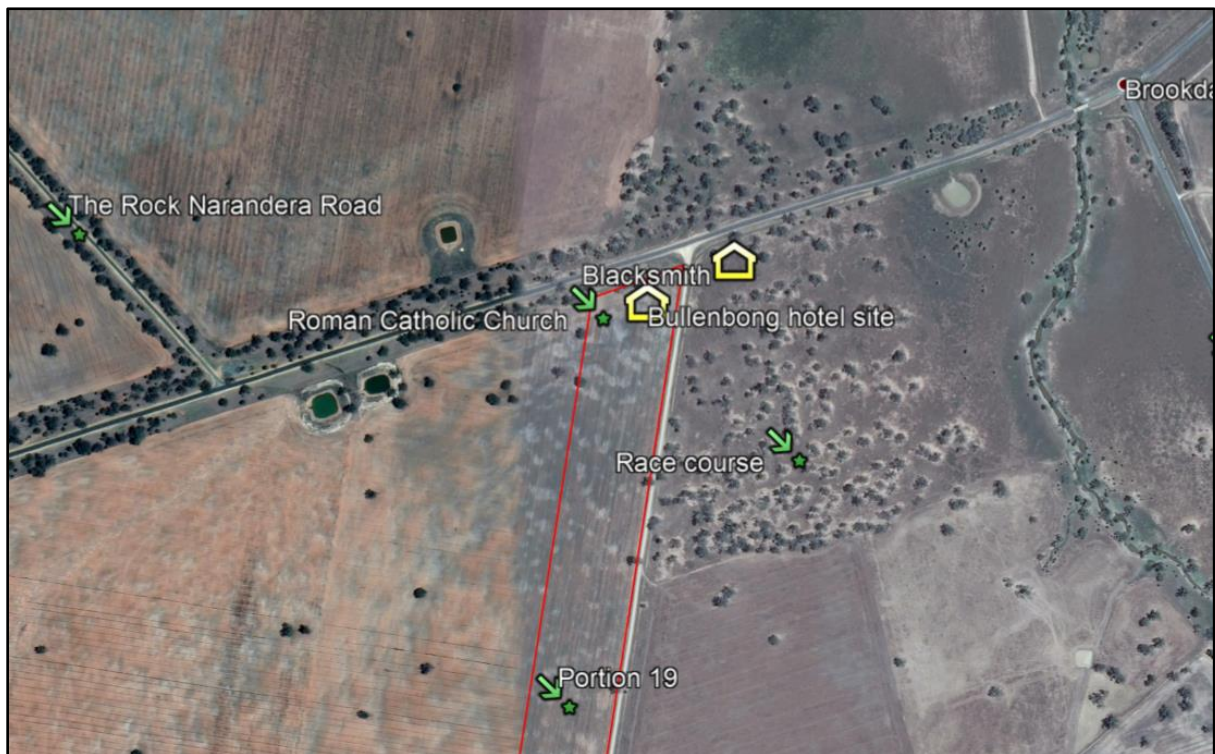
My thanks to the National Library and the NSW State Library for their support and development of the Australian Newspaper Digitisation Project. Trove continues to be the most fantastic resource.

My thanks also to NSW Land Registry Services, or the old Lands Department. Their digitisation of parish maps and other land records constitutes another invaluable resource.

The BULLENBONG HOTEL

Location:

The old Bullenbong hotel was located on portion 19, in the parish of Ashcroft – a forty acre lot.¹ This is now the south west corner of the T intersection where the French Park-Bullenbong Road meets the Lockhart Road.



Above: An aerial view showing the location of the old Bullenbong hotel on portion 19, along with other historical sites, all in the parish of Ashcroft. Courtesy Google Earth.

[See Crown plan M.204.1888]

Freehold History

The original crown grant was to Alexander Davidson on 8th May 1873, for the sum of forty pounds – a conditional sale without competition.²

On the 15th September 1886, a part of the property was transferred from Davidson to the Rev. William Lanigan, a Catholic bishop of Goulburn, the Rev. Patrick Byrne of Wagga Wagga, and James Bolger, a landowner of Bullenbong.³ This was a one acre block occupying

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 581, folio 242.

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 581, folio 242.

³ NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 581, folio 242.

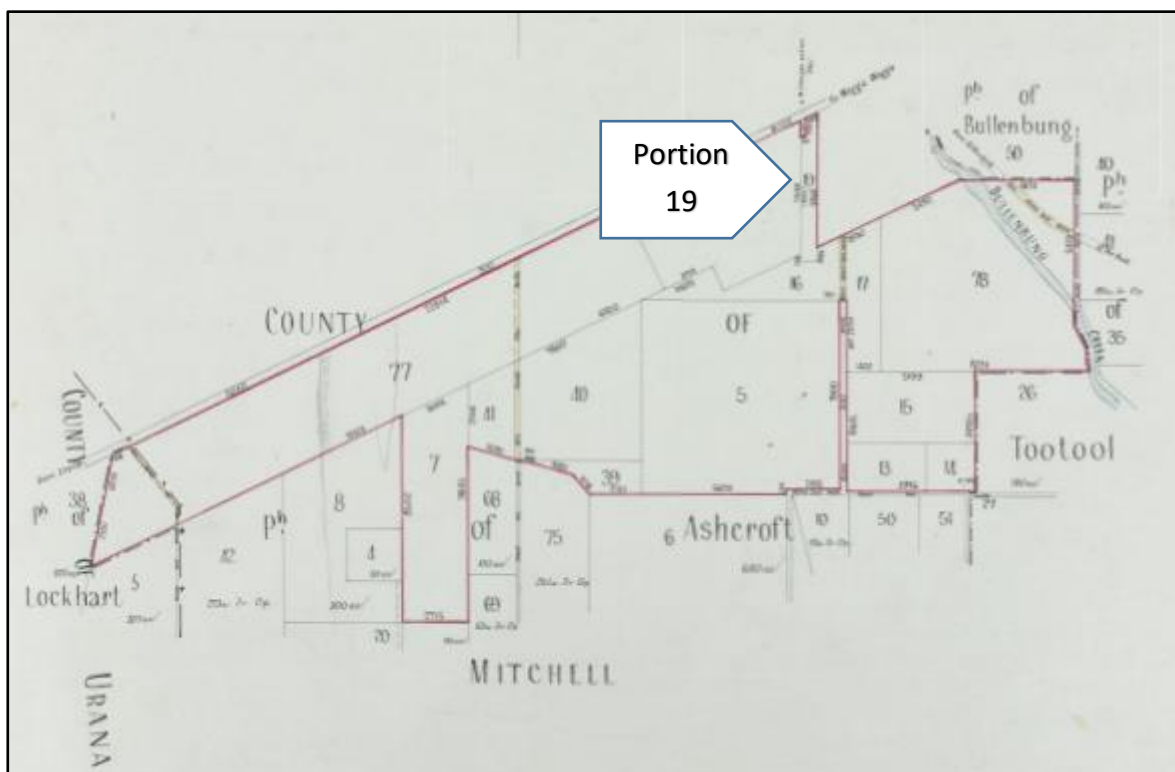
the north western corner of portion nineteen, and is where the Catholic Church was subsequently erected.⁴ The current title is DP.1.909633 > volume 812, folio 91.

The remainder of portion 19, now 39 acres and including the hotel, was retained by Davidson.⁵

In February 1893, Alexander Davidson, Ann Davidson, Henry Thompson Davidson and Charles McCallum Davidson became the legal owners of the property, as executors named in the will of Alexander Davidson (snr).

In September 1903 the executors transferred the title to Alexander Davidson and Henry Thompson Davidson and Charles McCallum Davidson.⁶

In June 1906 the title was transferred to Alexander Davidson, Henry Thompson Davidson and William Davidson and portion 19 became part of a larger holding totalling some 3,566 acres, all in the parish of Ashcroft.⁷



Above: An extract from title deed showing holdings by the Davidson family in 1907, including portion 19. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

Portion 19 is now [2019] part of DP.31.819098 > DP.3.214393 > 9378-77.

⁴ NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 812, folio 91.

⁵ NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 812, folio 98.

⁶ NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 812, folio 98.

⁷ NSW Land Registry Services. Title deed, volume 1753, folio 114.

The Licensees [1881-1903]

The first license for a hotel at Bullenbong was issued to Edward Luckie [or Lucky] in August 1881,⁸ by the Wagga Wagga Licensing Court. It was called the Bullenbong hotel (sometimes the Bullenbong Inn). The property was owned by Alexander Davidson,⁹ and the hotel was built by him.¹⁰

A coach service operated between The Rock and Urana in the early 1880's and the hotel was one of the stopping places.¹¹

The license was renewed by Luckie in June 1882, for another year.¹² A short time afterwards, in August 1882, the hotel was destroyed by fire, at around 5:30pm on a Wednesday morning. According to a press report the hotel was, "*better known to travellers on the Urana Road, as Claxton's.*" Edward Luckie and his family escaped without harm, and the property was insured.¹³

Thomas Claxton was a selector who occupied land some four miles from the hotel, on the boundary of the Brookong and Bullenbong Runs.¹⁴

Luckie renewed the license in June 1883, so presumably he had re-established some sort of structure by that time.¹⁵ It was renewed again, by Luckie, in 1884,¹⁶ but he was late in renewing the license in 1885, by some two or more weeks. The licensing court sat on the 9th July and granted what was described as, "*a new license,*" to Edward Luckie, for his Bullenbong hotel.¹⁷ No explanation was given as to why the application had been delayed or why it was referred to as a new license. It may have been that the hotel was technically closed for a short period?

Edward was lucky to be alive in 1885. On the 25th January of that year, he was one of the passengers on the ill-fated train travelling from Wagga Wagga towards Sydney, which crashed near Cootamundra, killing seven people and injuring nineteen more. Edward escaped unharmed.¹⁸

On the 12th February 1886, Luckie's hotel - a wooden structure - burnt down again.¹⁹ Not so lucky. The fire started when a kerosene lamp was knocked over. Fortunately for Luckie the building and the stock & furniture were all insured. The hotel was located on the main road from The Rock to Urana at a point some fifteen miles from the former. It was still, at that time, a stopping place for the mail coach.²⁰ Another report confirmed that the property was

⁸ NSW Government Gazette. 1881, p4840.

⁹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th February 1886, p2.

¹⁰ AR Davidson. C.1950. Recollections. p5. CSU Regional Archives. RW.2893/2/29.

¹¹ Lockhart Review. 4th April 1933, p1. / Albury Banner. 19th February 1886, p16.

¹² NSW Government Gazette. 1882, p4752.

¹³ Albury Banner. 11th August 1882, p13.

¹⁴ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 14th December 1886, p3.

¹⁵ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th June 1883, p3c4. / NSW Government Gazette. 1883, p4753.

¹⁶ NSW Government Gazette. 1884, p5895.

¹⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 11th July 1885, p2.

¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald. 5th February 1885, p4. / Daily Telegraph. 28th January 1885, p5.

¹⁹ Sydney Morning Herald. 16th February 1886, p10. / Albury Banner. 19th February 1886, p16.

²⁰ Albury Banner. 19th February 1886, p16.

owned by Alexander Davidson, and that it was a brick building, only recently constructed.²¹ Unfortunately there are no known photos of the hotel, or detailed descriptions, so it is not possible to know for sure if it was a timber or brick building. There are certainly a lot of broken brick pieces scattered around the site in 2019, but these could have come from the chimney. It is more likely that the building was a timber structure with a brick chimney.

Edward was able to use an adjoining building as a temporary hotel,²² and on the 23rd February 1886 the Wagga Wagga Licensing Court granted Luckie a temporary license for that purpose.²³

In August 1886 it was reported that the Bullenbong hotel, lately burnt down and then rebuilt, had changed hands – from Edward Luckie to Joseph Ormond Thompson.²⁴ This was the same Thompson that conducted the Pomingalarna Inn from 1880 till 1886. He also held the license of the Mangoplah hotel for a short time in 1883.²⁵

In April 1887, the Honourable W Halliday, MLC, toured the region, but not without problems. The road through the Bullenbong Plains was very wet and the travelling party were delayed for about five hours. Mr C Davidson lent some horses to overcome the problem and the entourage moved on to Green's Gonyah. The group also visited Thompson's Bullenbong hotel where they partook of lunch, before heading to Brookong.²⁶

Thompson held a ball and dinner shortly after taking over the hotel and later followed this up with a program of races, one such event coming off on the 2nd January 1888, at the hotel.²⁷ In that same month, some two weeks later, fire engulfed much of the surrounding district, and burnt out some 60,000 acres of grass, and then came within 200 yards of the hotel.²⁸ According to AR Davidson the race track was, "*just near the hotel.*"²⁹

From January 1887,³⁰ races on New Year's Day became a regular fixture at the hotel,³¹ up until 1896,³² a period of nine years.

²¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th February 1886, p2.

²² Sydney Mail. 6th March 1886, p512.

²³ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 25th February 1886, p2.

²⁴ Albury Banner. 13th August 1886, p17. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 25th March 1886, p2c4.

²⁵ NSW Government Gazettes. Publicans' Licenses. 1880-1886.

²⁶ Albury Banner. 22nd April 1887, p22.

²⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 15th December 1887, p3.

²⁸ Albury Banner. 20th January 1888, p17.

²⁹ AR Davidson. C.1950. Recollections. p7. CSU Regional Archives. RW.2893/2/29.

³⁰ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 24th December 1886, p2.

³¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 22nd December 1888, p4. / 19th December 1889, p3./9th December 1890, p2.

³² Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th November 1895, p2.



Above: A rare photo of Alexander Davidson. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina. [BGS.2015-537]

By mid April 1890 John H McMullen was advertising that he had taken over the hotel,³³ but it was not until the 9th July 1890 that the license was officially in his name.³⁴ Thompson, for his part, had taken over the Criterion hotel at Narandera, where he remained until 1900.³⁵

On the 21st January 1892, Alexander Davidson, senior, passed away at Wagga Wagga, aged seventy four.³⁶

On the 11th August 1892, the license of the hotel was transferred from McMullen to Samuel Rea.³⁷ Rea had been licensee of the Royal George hotel in Wagga Wagga for a year, in 1890, and before that he held the license of the Bird's Head hotel at Wantabadgery from 1887 till 1889.³⁸

The month after McMullen took over, the dead body of John Upton was found at the rear of the hotel. There were no suspicious circumstances surrounding his death, and evidence suggested he had been suffering from poor health. He was said to be fifty nine years old and a native of England. His primary possessions were his horse, a saddle and bridle, and a swag. The district coroner ruled that there was no need for an inquest into the circumstances of his death.³⁹

A reporter toured the area in February 1894, and commented that aside from the hotel, the only other building was the church.⁴⁰

In May 1894 Rea advertised for sale the goodwill, lease and furniture of the hotel, highlighting its location on the "*coach line from The Rock to Urana*,"⁴¹ but there were no takers, and Rea remained as the licensee.

On the 23rd July 1895, Samuel was granted a two month leave of absence from the hotel, by the Wagga Wagga Licensing Court.⁴² He and his wife were staying at the Carrington hotel in Wagga Wagga during August,⁴³ while Samuel was being treated for an illness.⁴⁴

In April 1896, Samuel again tried to off load the hotel, but yet again there were no takers.⁴⁵

³³ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 17th April 1890, p3.

³⁴ NSW Government Gazettes. Publicans' Licenses. 1890, p6649.

³⁵ NSW Government Gazettes. Publicans' Licenses. 1890-1900

³⁶ Wagga Wagga Express. 23rd January 1892, p3.

³⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 13th August 1892, p2.

³⁸ NSW Government Gazettes. Publicans' Licenses. 1887-1889.

³⁹ Wagga Wagga Express. 3rd September 1892, p3.

⁴⁰ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 17th February 1894, p6.

⁴¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 29th May 1894, p3.

⁴² Wagga Wagga Express. 25th July 1895, p2.

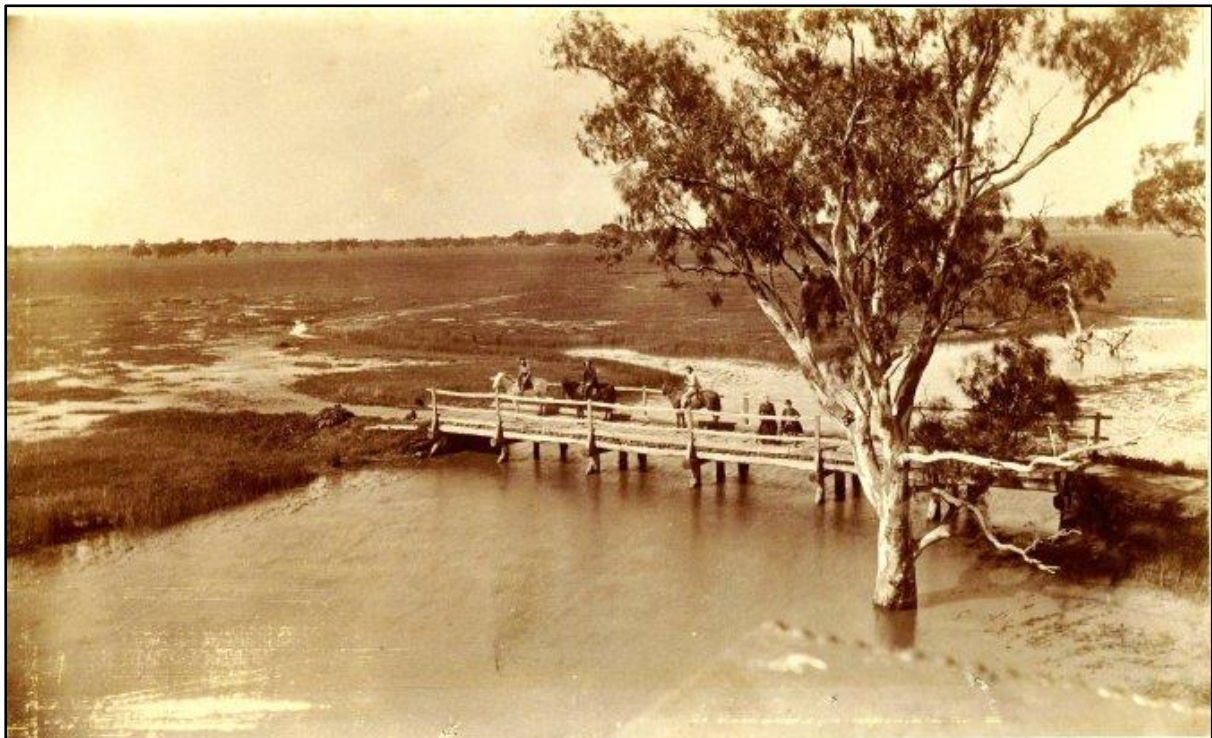
⁴³ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 13th August 1895, p3.

⁴⁴ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 10th August 1895, p4.

⁴⁵ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th April 1896, p3.



Above: Bricks in the ground at the old Bullenbong hotel site in 2019.



Above: An early bridge [built 1876⁴⁶] near the Bullenbong Homestead. Courtesy CSURA [RW2893/313].

⁴⁶ AR Davidson. C.1950. Recollections. p3. CSU Regional Archives. RW.2893/2/29.

Shearers Take Possession

There was a serious conflict at the hotel on the 3rd October, 1896, when a group of shearers and roustabouts visited the hotel on that Saturday evening and forced their way into the bar. They demanded drinks but did not having the funds to pay for them. When Mrs Rae refused the men became violent and moved outside and threw stones at the windows, breaking a number of them. During the altercation Mrs Rae was knocked about and had her clothing torn. Her daughter who came to her rescue was also roughly treated. It was another shearer who diffused the situation by threatening the others with a double barrelled shot gun. The police attended the scene and on the Sunday accompanied Mr Rae to the Bullenbong wool shed. The men conceded their guilt and agreed to pay for the damages, which offer was accepted by Mr Rae, and no charges were laid.⁴⁷

In November 1897 evidence at a trial confirmed there was a blacksmith's business, close to the hotel, but it was not being conducted by Rea.⁴⁸

In December 1898, Francis McCulloch advertised that he had taken a lease of the hotel from Samuel Rea,⁴⁹ but the official transfer of the license was not recorded until the 9th July 1899, when it was renewed for the following year.⁵⁰

Samuel Rea

In 1881, Samuel Rea was a blacksmith & wheelwright in Jerilderie, but had placed the business up for sale, along with an adjoining residence, and the half an acre of land on which they both stood.⁵¹ Samuel had been conducting the business for some years, including 1879, when in February of that year the Kelly gang held up the town and robbed the bank. It was Samuel who shod a couple of horses for Kelly.⁵²

In December 1882 Samuel Rea was the licensee of the Commercial hotel at Urana, and was also conducting a blacksmith, wheelwright and coachbuilding business, across the road from the hotel.⁵³

Samuel passed away on the 20th November 1905, at Geelong, Victoria, aged sixty. He was described as, "*late cab proprietor.*"⁵⁴

On the 7th June 1901, the license of the Bullenbong hotel was transferred from McCulloch to John Tangney Hillary,⁵⁵ for the period from the 9th July 1901 to the 8th July 1902.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Wagga Wagga Express. 6th October 1896, p2.

⁴⁸ Wagga Wagga Express. 9th November 1897, p3.

⁴⁹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 10th December 1898, p3.

⁵⁰ NSW Government Gazettes. Publicans' Licenses. 1899, p6355.

⁵¹ Albury Banner. 6th May 1881, p24.

⁵² Jerilderie Herald. 15th August 1913, p1.

⁵³ Albury Banner. 1st December 1882, p18.

⁵⁴ Geelong Advertiser. 23rd November 1905, p1.

⁵⁵ Wagga Wagga Express. 8th June 1901, p2.

⁵⁶ NSW Government Gazettes. Publicans' Licenses. 1901, p7295.

McCulloch [spelt McCulloch, McCullagh, or McCullough, at various times] shortly afterwards took over the license of the Farmer's Home hotel at Wagga Wagga.⁵⁷

Tragedy struck for Hillary on the 25th July, 1901, when he and his wife, along with their three and a half year old son Roy, were returning from Wagga Wagga, where the boy had been receiving medical treatment for an injury to one of his ears. About seven and a half miles from Wagga Wagga it was necessary to adjust the load on the spring cart and while Hillary and his wife were in the process of doing this the horse bolted, with their son, and collided with a fence, overturning the cart. The boy was pinned to the ground by the side of the cart resting on his neck. Hillary lifted the cart and pushed the boy out with his foot. The lad's body was limp, but responded to a dose of water, and his parents conveyed him back to the hospital at Wagga Wagga. He appeared to recover during the day, but by evening his condition was critical.⁵⁸ No death notice could be found, so it is assumed the young boy survived.

Sheep on the Race Course

The Bullenbong Jockey Club hosted a race meeting on the 1st January 1902.⁵⁹ The final race on the card, the Farewell Handicap, was won by *Banker*, but it was during this race that two horses, *Snowy* and *Invermorn*, collided with a mob of sheep, causing both horses to fall, and resulting in the death of *Snowy*. *Banker*, and another horse, *Gambier*, were able to ride through the sheep, without making contact. The two riders, of the fallen horses, were both young men - one was W Davies and the other was named Devlin. Davies dislocated his shoulder, while Devlin broke his wrist. Both young men were badly shaken by the event.⁶⁰

Hillary renewed the license in June 1902,⁶¹ but not in 1903. He continuously advertised the hotel up until February 1903, but ceased doing so before March 1903. In that month he was charged with abandoning the hotel. Constable Cahill testified that he visited the hotel on the 7th March and found that all of the furniture had been removed. He was informed that Hillary had left the premises on the 2nd March. There was one occupant in the house, a man, who was looking after the premises and a small amount of furniture, on behalf of the owner of the property. Hillary did not attend the hearing and the licensing court (Wagga Wagga) ordered that the license be cancelled.⁶² This was the end of the hotel. It never traded again.

John Hillary took up farming after leaving the hotel and at some time selected a block not far from Henty, near the Pleasant Hills Road. On the 1st July 1914 he departed from Henty to travel home, but never made it there. He was thrown from his horse, and some two hours later was discovered laying on the road, unconscious. He was taken to his home, but succumbed to the injuries two days later.⁶³ This would have been a terrible blow to his wife,

⁵⁷ Wagga Wagga Express. 13th July 1901, p2.

⁵⁸ Wagga Wagga Express. 27th July 1901, p2. / Daily Telegraph. 31st July 1901, p9.

⁵⁹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 24th December 1901, p3.

⁶⁰ Wagga Wagga Express. 4th January 1902, p3. / 4th January 1902, p3.

⁶¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 10th June 1902, p2.

⁶² Wagga Wagga Express. 10th March 1903, p2.

⁶³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 12430.

especially as their only daughter [Lucy] had been killed in a similar incident, at the same location, in the previous year.⁶⁴

The freehold was still in the hands of the Davidson family when the hotel closed. The breakup of Davidson's Bullenbong estate did not take place until 1910, well after the demise of the hotel.⁶⁵ By that time the Bullenbong property had been in the hands of the family for sixty six years.



Above: Bricks and broken glass from the site in 2019.

Peter Carn can recall a part of the old building in his younger days, in the 1950's and perhaps into the 1960's. There was a galvanised iron building (walls and roof) which looked like it was the kitchen or part thereof.⁶⁶ According to Alec Davidson (in 1950, or thereabouts), the old hotel had been pulled down years ago, but, "*the old stables were there until recent years.*"⁶⁷

The old church, a timber building, was relocated to Lockhart, by the Catholic Church, to serve as a hall for the church, at that place.

⁶⁴ Darling Downs Gazette. 8th July 1914, p4. / Henty Observer. 4th July 1914, p2. / NSW BDM's. Death registration # 17665.

⁶⁵ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th July 1910, p2c3.

⁶⁶ Peter Carn. 1st July 2019.

⁶⁷ AR Davidson. C.1950. Recollections. p5. CSU Regional Archives. RW.2893/2/29.



Above: The French Park-Bullenbong Road at its intersection with the Lockhart Road in 2019.



Above: The corner in 2019 - where the old hotel once stood.

Bullenbong Station c.1890. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina. [BGS.2008_1362]

