

**WWDHS  
NEWSLETTER  
No. 446  
January– March 2021  
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**Meetings 2021**

**First Committee Meeting:  
15 February, 1.30 p.m.  
Historic Council Chambers**

**Details of other meetings  
will be provided by email at  
a later date**

**MUSEUM OF THE RIVERINA**

**The Museum of the Riverina's Historic Council Chambers have two new exhibitions on display which tell stories of some of Wagga Wagga's most iconic business objects:**

**Made in Wagga: Retrospective**

**Huthwaites: The Friendly Store**

**Geoff Burch** has posted three more articles on the Society's website on Wagga Wagga Breweries, Daniel Maher and Mount Pleasant and Westoe House. These can be viewed or downloaded at the following links:

<https://www.wwdhs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/westoe-20201025-publish.pdf>

<https://www.wwdhs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Daniel-Maher-and-Mount-Pleasant-publish-20201102.pdf>

[https://www.wwdhs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/wagga-wagga-breweries-20201206\\_ready-to-publish.pdf](https://www.wwdhs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/wagga-wagga-breweries-20201206_ready-to-publish.pdf)

**WWDHS Patron: Michael McCormack, Deputy Prime Minister**

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**Annual Subscriptions**

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## **Museum of the Riverina Redevelopment and the Entwine Project**

Wagga Wagga City Council have agreed to accept the tender of Cumnock Constructions for the Museum of the Riverina's \$3.2 million redevelopment at the Willans Hill site. The associated roadworks have yet to go to tender. However, both components are expected to be completed by December this year. The redevelopment includes an improvement in exhibition space, collection storage and staff areas; improved conservation of objects relating to the region's stories; landscaping of outdoor display areas mainly for agricultural machinery; and a new office for the historical society.

The Entwine project aims to connect the Botanic Gardens and the Museum of the Riverina and thus boost the visitations to each of these popular places. Low maintenance trails and gardens are to be installed; the zoo exhibits which share stories with museum displays will be upgraded; and more leisure areas with accessibility for everyone will be provided. The project is to cost \$924,000. The NSW Regional Growth, Environment and Tourism Fund has contributed a grant of \$739,366 and the remainder will be provided by Wagga Wagga City Council.

The Museum staff has been reviewing every item in its collections (21,500 so far), considering criteria such as condition, provenance and quantity (i.e. how many examples of the item are held). 131 items have already been listed for de-accessioning, each one having been approved by our society and signed off by the president, Geoff Burch. These items are offered to other museums (Junee, Temora, Gundagai and Ganmain), then to the donor (if known), then offered for sale and if all this fails the item is scrapped. 58 items were auctioned by Rundles and raised over \$13,000 (which the society as usual has donated to the Museum). More items are expected to be de-accessioned this year.

### **Les Dale, a keeper of Henty history**

Les Dale on 23 November last year celebrated his sixty years of trading since he and his late wife Mary began their grocery business in the main street. The Dale family became well known in Henty. Les Dale and his children own much of the main street including IGA and Liquor, Dale's Hardware and Dale's Electrical and his brother owns the Funeral Parlour. During the last sixty years, Les Dale has accumulated numerous artefacts which tell the history of Henty's development. These include a jinker (a two-wheeled wagon) which was the town's first Ambulance, an ornate old manual phone switchboard and a small wicker chair on top of a scale on which many of the town's occupants were weighed as infants. Les plans to donate his extensive museum collection to the town. Community members have formed a committee and are hoping to gain some funding to organise a new museum in the main street and then move Les Dale's collection from the store's basement to the museum. For more information see *Border Mail*, 21 November 2020.

### **Old Gundagai Gaol**

The Old Gundagai Gaol, situated at the corner of First Avenue and Byron Street in Gundagai, has been listed on the State Heritage Council of NSW on 30 October 2020. The gaol was constructed by Charles Hardy, a Wagga Wagga builder, in 1859 and was gradually added to over several years. It is surrounded by a high wall of local slate with sandstone capping. It also includes several structures including the gaoler's residence, an external kitchen block, a hospital and an exercise yard. Self-guided audio tours are available at the information centre.

# GUNDAGAI GAOL



An old photograph of the Gundagai Gaol



Part of the Gundagai Museum

No. 2170      Name *A. G. Scott alias Capt. Moonlight*      132

Date when Portrait was taken, *26<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1879*      8264 79

Native place *Ireland*      Where and when tried *Sup. Ct. Court 11 Dec. 79*

Year of birth *1845*      Offence *Murder*

Arrived in *Ship*      Sentence *Death*

Colony & Year *1879*      Remarks *Executed 26 Jan'y 1880*

Trade or occupation previous to conviction *Publican*

Religion *C of E*

Education, degree of *1877*

Height *5* feet *9 1/2* inches

Weight (On committal in lbs.) *143*

Colour of hair *Brown*

Colour of eyes *Grey*

Marks or special features

(No. of previous Portrait)

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS.

Where and When.	Offence.	Sentence.
<i>4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 70</i>	<i>False pretences</i>	<i>12 months, Concurrent</i>
<i>18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 71</i>	<i>Bank robbery under Arms.</i>	<i>18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 71</i>
<i>Ballantyne Dec.</i>		<i>10 years Roads</i>

Record of A. G. Scott (alias Captain Moonlite), dated 26 November 1879, after his arrest for murder. He was held in the Gundagai Gaol before he faced his trial in the local courthouse. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. He was hanged in Sydney in 1880 and buried in Rookwood cemetery. His remains were exhumed and transferred to the North Gundagai Cemetery in 1995 to honour his final wish to be buried there near his friends.

# WOMEN'S AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SERVICES (WANS)

By Sherry Morris

During the Second World War, Australian women were keen to 'do their bit', to participate in employment or voluntary work to fill the gaps left by the men who had volunteered for active service. Although reluctant at first the federal government eventually bowed to pressure and accepted the assistance of women but insisted that they would be subsidiary to men and that their assistance was only a temporary measure. By the end of 1940 there were many women's organisations including the Red Cross Society, St John's Ambulance Brigade and others affiliated with the Women's Australian National Services (WANS).

WANS was formed in Australia at a public meeting at the Sydney Town Hall on 25 June 1940 after an address by Lady Margaret Wakehurst (pictured right), the wife of the Governor of New South Wales. About 10,000 women had attended. Lady Wakehurst was appointed as the President and Ada Beveridge (President of Country Women's Association of NSW) was the Executive Chairman. Women were registered and classified by their qualifications in a Women's Voluntary National Register. WANS co-ordinated methods and directed the activities of the various bodies. In July, when a centre was opened for WANS, 4,431 women joined immediately.<sup>1</sup>



Wagga Wagga was the first country branch of WANS in NSW. Its inauguration was celebrated at a huge women's rally in the Capitol Theatre on 5 July 1940. Lady Margaret Wakehurst was enthusiastically welcomed. She was joined by Ada Beveridge and Lorna Berne, organiser of the women's section at the Agricultural Bureau (Department of Agriculture) which had released her so she could join WANS land section in an advisory capacity. These three women explained that, because of the shortage of men, women had to train to respond to any emergency that may arise including, for example, fires or air raids or work on a farm. Initially, the women would be trained in physical fitness (which was considered essential so that they could cope with any situation), first aid, elementary mechanics, domestic science and farm work.<sup>2</sup>

In October 1940, the WaggaWagga branch was officially formed at a public meeting at the Wagga Town Hall. Ada Beveridge, Linda Littlejohn and Lorna Byrne were present to explain details of WANS activities. The Mayoress, Ethel Maud Gissing, was appointed as Wagga District's Commandant with Kath Higgins as her assistant (and later the Commandant) and Dorothy Davidson, headmistress at Gurwood Street School, was the Area Officer. By November 1940, 55 members were enrolled.<sup>3</sup>

The enthusiastic members of the Wagga WANS attended the Drill Hall for physical culture and squad drill training to ensure that they were fit for farm work and other activities. Sometimes they ended the day with a camp fire and supper. Kath Harrod recalled:

*We were taught to read maps, drive heavy vehicles, first aid and home nursing. We went on a lot of bivouacs and were taught how to survive in the bush. We were young women from all walks of life trained to be ready if the need ever arose.*<sup>4</sup>

Marching was also practiced regularly and the ladies sometimes marched in processions through the streets with other groups and with local bands including Wagga Citizens Band and Salvation Army Band. Their first important march was on Anzac Day 1941 with the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) and Women's Emergency Signalling Corp (WESC). They also marched in church parades, recruiting rallies or patriotic events such as the Gymkhana at Wagga Wagga Showground on 30 August 1941. In December 1942, under the command of Kath Higgins, they demonstrated their skills to the Wagga public when they marched in their smart blue uniforms to the flagpole in formation, led by a bugler and drummers.<sup>5</sup>



*Members of Wagga Wagga's Women's Australian National Services (WANS).  
Commandant Kath Higgins is standing centre front.*

First aid classes were compulsory. Lectures were held at the Town Hall and the Presbyterian Hall in Coleman Street. M. P. Loth, Superintendent of the Wagga District Ambulance instructed the WANS and Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) together about stretcher bearing and home nursing. Many of these women then worked for the Ambulance in a voluntary capacity as stretcher bearers and drivers. Several members of WANS and the VAD passed their ARP (Air Raid Precautions) Certificate examinations conducted by St John's Ambulance Association.<sup>6</sup> Other women made camouflage nets or had life-saving classes at the beach and or trained in canoes. Many assisted with salvage collections.

WANS members also supported servicemen. Dances were held in the Patriotic Hut, which had been erected in the Town Hall Gardens just opposite the Town Hall, every alternate Tuesday for four years. Usually the Kapooka Band played and the entertainment was free to members of the fighting forces. WANS members were rostered for sessions on the All Services Club Canteen every Sunday between 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. In 1944, by 25 November, it was estimated that they had served 16,000 meals to members of the forces that year.<sup>7</sup>

Raising funds was also important. Dances and card parties were held regularly at various venues including the Masonic Hall, the All Services Palais and the Half Holiday Tennis Clubhouse. Stalls at market days were also popular.

## Transport Drivers

Ada Beveridge, Executive Chairman of WANS, saw the need for female transport drivers particularly when, in the event of an emergency, all rail facilities would be required for troop movements. On 13 November 1941 she made an inspired appeal to women who were prepared to learn the use and care of producer gas units to train as drivers for the transport of food.<sup>8</sup>

Members who had held a driver's licence for a full year and were of 'good physique' participated in a motor transport course which involved weekly lectures as well as practical work and lasted three and a half months. Local businessmen (including Cec Toy) and the Wagga Council lent trucks and the women were allowed to accompany regular drivers to gain experience. They were trained by locals including Mr Harvey from Browne Brothers Motors. At the end of the course those who passed the examinations were awarded a motor mechanic's certificate. When required they could be called up and would be employed at award rates.

*Right: Women's Australian National Service transport drivers: Dot, Peg, Honor, Nellie and Una.*



## Field Days

Field days were held when the various branches of training were put to practical use. The first one was held in October 1941. The women marched to the site, and on leaving town sang heartily through the bush to the riverbank. The cooks and transport drivers carted the gear to the camping site. The advance party lit the fire, erected a store tent, prepared dinner and had morning tea ready for the main party. Tents were erected, wood gathered and water drawn. It was reported that the cooks made great meals including a roast lamb with mint sauce. There was also practical work in first aid, lectures, an exam in map reading, a demonstration of knots and a quiz. Then there were camp fire songs, recitations, rounds, and finally singing of Auld Lang Syne.<sup>9</sup> A leadership camp was later held at 'Billabong', home of Ada Beveridge and her husband. The women received training which would fit them as leaders in the tasks which members of the WANS could be called upon to perform during the war period including farm duties.<sup>10</sup>

Six members attended a WANS Officers ten-day Training Camp at Kuringai-Chase near Turramurra, Sydney in August 1941. Kath Higgins described their experience:

*The camp site, which is seven miles from Turramurra, and deep in the bush above Bobbin Head, revealed itself as a bare clearing. No sign of tents or human occupation. Could it be the right place? After the first shock we saw a tin shed, a water tank, two showers and three taps. It must be the right place for there was Miss Smith, camp commandant, with her little band of WANS officers and in less time than it takes to tell she had given orders for us to get into working kit and get to work. It sounded alarming to the 50 or so tired Wans, most of whom had spent the night in the train. But lunch intervened – conjured out of the air apparently, but very good it tasted. Then followed an afternoon which even the most seasoned campaigner would admit was, to put it mildly, active.*

*The advance party – that is Miss Smith, officers and quartermasters – had opened up the shed, which revealed itself as a storehouse for tents and the necessary camp equipment.*

*The first move was to erect the tents. A demonstration was given of the correct procedure, after which we went to it. In a remarkably short time, the 50 odd WANS had changed the face of the camp site from a bare clearing to a well-populated, tented camp. There were even waratahs blooming at the back door of at least one tent, while boronia flirted among the guy ropes.*

*By evening two large marquees had been erected for the mess. An auto-tent, with hessian screenings dividing it into four cubicles, appeared for baths. More hessian screened the showers, and a tent housed the innumerable kitchen stores, henceforth known as the cookhouse. Nearby was the cooks' fire, which was merely an L-shaped trench in the ground with iron bars to support the 'dixies'. Every utensil used by the cook in camp, we learned, is a 'dixie' – kerosene tin to you. Another fire trench was dug near the bath tent to heat the half-dozen five-gallon oil drums used for hot bath water, the most welcome relic of civilisation in camp. An incinerator was built of stones for burning off rubbish, and a pit dug for vegetable refuse.*

*By evening, after an admirable dinner conjured out of the cookhouse and those primitive looking 'dixies', the camp had assumed an elfin look, the soft glow of the 25 lanterns adding to the charm. It was amazing what 50 girls and women had accomplished, all rookies at that particular form of sport.*

*After the first day, very tiring with its initial setting up, the work moved smoothly and to programme. Every camper shared the work, and each patrol of workers moved to a new set of chores each of 24 hours so that all shared the experience equally. Sometimes the air would ring with shouts from the cookhouse, which was the focal point of the camp; 'Wood and water patrol!' and the deficiencies in supplies of these two essentials would be pointed out, while 'mess patrol' seemed to have a fairly constant job cutting bread and butter. The two quartermasters in charge of all catering etc were models of cheerful helpfulness, and it would be a very dull Wan who did not learn from them.*

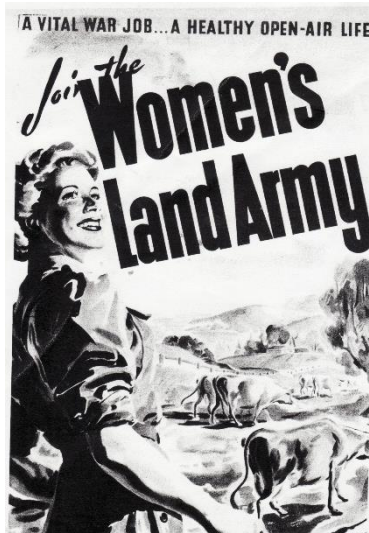
*Talks from visiting lecturers kept the mind alert, with special attention given to leadership. Squad drill and signalling also had their place in the day's work. The lighter side was not neglected, and every evening saw the whole party gathered round a camp fire. Entertainment was allotted to various Wans who showed a taste for initiatives. Some of the programmes were very good and included songs, skits, travel talks, a quiz and a really remarkable fire-dance to vocal accompaniment.*

*At the end of the 10 days the first day's work was reversed. The tents were safely packed in their proper bags, the trenches filled in, the ground raked. The site was left, in fact, for the next group of campers, exactly as we had found it – a bare clearing, with a tin shed, a water tank, two showers and three taps. The curious part is that we are all looking forward to the next camp.<sup>11</sup>*

## **WANS Land Army**

Ada Beveridge was appointed as the director of the WANS Land Army while Lorna Byrne organised the training. Women's Land Army members had to be over 18 years of age and willing to serve at harvesting, fruit picking, driving motor or horse-drawn vehicles, caring for poultry, pigs, horses and cattle and also at growing vegetables, pruning, mustering and tractor driving. There was an enthusiastic response to the call for recruits to the newly formed WANS Land Army. Ada Beveridge's station property 'Billabong' was made available for their training as early as June 1940. The first batch of trainees went into camp there under the direction of Lorna Byrne for a fortnight. The girls came from Gundagai, Junee, Wagga Wagga and surrounding districts. Expert men and women were their instructors.

Some were put to work in the garden, others in the poultry yards, some on the farm and others in the dairy. The rest were trained in cookery by Isobel Sutton, a graduate of the Kirribilli Memorial College of Household Arts and Sciences who was in charge of the cookery section of the camp. Special health exercises were conducted by Edith Cavanagh three times a day, held in the open air. A strictly balanced food diet was adhered to. Miss Ailsa Robertson of Gundagai instructed the girls in horse-clipping.<sup>12</sup> The women also underwent special training for general leadership so that they could later be placed in service sub-units in their own localities.



*Left: Women's Land Army Recruitment Poster, Australian War Memorial, V1062.*



*Right: Women's Land Army woman picking fruit*

### **Women's Fire Auxiliary (WFA)**

This section of WANS was formed to train for emergencies such as fighting fires or air raids. It was one of only three Women's Fire Auxiliaries in NSW (Lithgow and Wollongong were the other two). Three months' training was required. Weekly lectures by Substation Officer Paske, helped by Senior Fireman McHendry, were held. If Paske was not available, Substation Officer Pettit gave the lectures. Practical work with hoses, chemical extinguishers and other fire-fighting appliances were also performed; and they were also taught how to rescue people from burning aircraft.

The women still had to attend the physical exercises and drill at the Drill Hall each week as well as first aid classes and in addition had to attend to washroom duty at the Fire Station. They had two uniforms, navy blue overalls for their working gear and a grey two-piece suit, white shirt and tie for their dress uniform. Both uniforms had a WFA scarlet armband.

On 15 December 1942, the WFA held a display of rescue drill under the command of Captain Audrey Cameron. First they demonstrated how to drag a heavy person from a burning building. Second, they demonstrated gas mask drill, showing protection from poison gases. Third, they demonstrated their use of hoses connected to a hydrant. They used a length of 100 feet (30.48 metres) hose to spray over the ground in record time. Paske was pleased with them particularly as they used a 100 feet hose whereas in Sydney the girls only had to manage a hose that was a quarter of that size! In 1943 there were 20 members in the WFA but three left in the next twelve months so there were 17 members in December 1944. Lieutenant Joy White was then in charge.<sup>13</sup>



*Members of Wagga Wagga Women's Australian National Service (WANS), Wagga Fire Auxiliary (WFA) outside the Wagga Fire Brigade Station. Back, from left to right: Mary Sullivan, Joyce Graham, Olive Dunn, Marge Johnson, Enid Johnson. Front, left to right: May Peacock (behind extinguishers), Lorraine Davies, Elma Paul, Jean Weeks, Alma Collet, Marion Oxley, Joy White, Betty Morrow (behind steering wheel), Audrey Cameron, Miss Aberdeen, Elaine Bertram and Shirley Armstrong.*

Towards the end of the war WFA disbanded and women were excluded from paid fire-fighting work by government legislation.

WANS held a Christmas Party with dancing and games at Patriotic Hall in December 1945. Its final social was at the Soldiers Hall and service stars were awarded to each member by Commandant Kath Higgins.<sup>14</sup> WANS ceased to exist early 1946.

<sup>1</sup> Ann Howard, *You'll be Sorry!*, Tarka Publishing, Sydney and Melbourne, 1990, pp.14-15; *Daily Advertiser* (DA), 7 November 1940.

<sup>2</sup> DA, Wagga Wagga, 4, 5, 6 July 1940; Lorna Byrne, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 17, MUP, 2007; and National Archives of Australia, A B884, N278216, Lorna Byrne.

<sup>3</sup> DA, 19, 23, 25 October 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Kath Harrod, quoted by Troy Whitford, 'Wagga Women who fought from home', *Riverina Leader*, 9 August 1995, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> DA, 21 May 1941, 28 August 1941.

<sup>6</sup> DA, 14 August 1941, 30 September 1941, 4 December 1944, 9 December 1944.

<sup>7</sup> DA, 9 December 1944.

<sup>8</sup> DA, 13, 14 November 1941.

<sup>9</sup> DA, 14, 17 October 1941.

<sup>10</sup> *Cootamundra Herald*, 5 July 1940.

<sup>11</sup> DA, 19 September 1941.

<sup>12</sup> *The Sun*, 30 June 1940, 2 July 1940.

<sup>13</sup> DA, 7 July 1942, 17 December 1942, 2 March 1944, 6, 22, 29 April 1944, 18 September 1944, 9 December 1944.

<sup>14</sup> DA, 18 December 1945, 7 February 1946.

# MURDER AT THE NORTH WAGGA COMMON

By Sherry Morris

Christian Epple was a steady, reliable, well respected young man. Though born in Denmark about 1854, he had resided in Queensland for a number of years and was married with four children. A big man, he was 178 centimetres in height and of stout build and was said to have 'luxuriant sandy whiskers'. He was not a rich man and he had done nothing to incur the ill will of others. Yet he was brutally murdered early Sunday morning, 14 September 1889, at the North Wagga Wagga Common in what was described by the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* as 'one of the most cold blooded and atrocious murders ever chronicled in the criminal annals of this district'.

In 1889 Epple drove a mob of cattle from Messrs Cobb and Company's station on the Warrego River in Queensland to Wodonga on the Victorian border. He had employed a number of assistant drovers including William Green, Frank Norris and John Draper. Another employee, Thomas Riley, had been recruited at Bourke enroute and had only been with the team about ten or eleven weeks. Born in Lancefield, Victoria, Riley was described as 'an active looking muscular young man, aged about twenty-five' and apparently had once been a jockey.

On the return journey, the drovers pitched two tents at the North Wagga Wagga Common, a small one for Epple and a large six-man tent for the other drovers. Epple procured cheques from Alexander Thornley Bolton (pictured right), the Wagga Wagga agent for the owners of the cattle, paid the wages of all his men and retained £20 for himself. On Saturday 14 September, Epple, Green and Norris spent the evening in town before Norris left by train for Albury. When Epple and Green returned to the camp about 9 p.m. they were surprised to see Riley apparently asleep on some blankets before the campfire rather than in the big tent as was his habit.

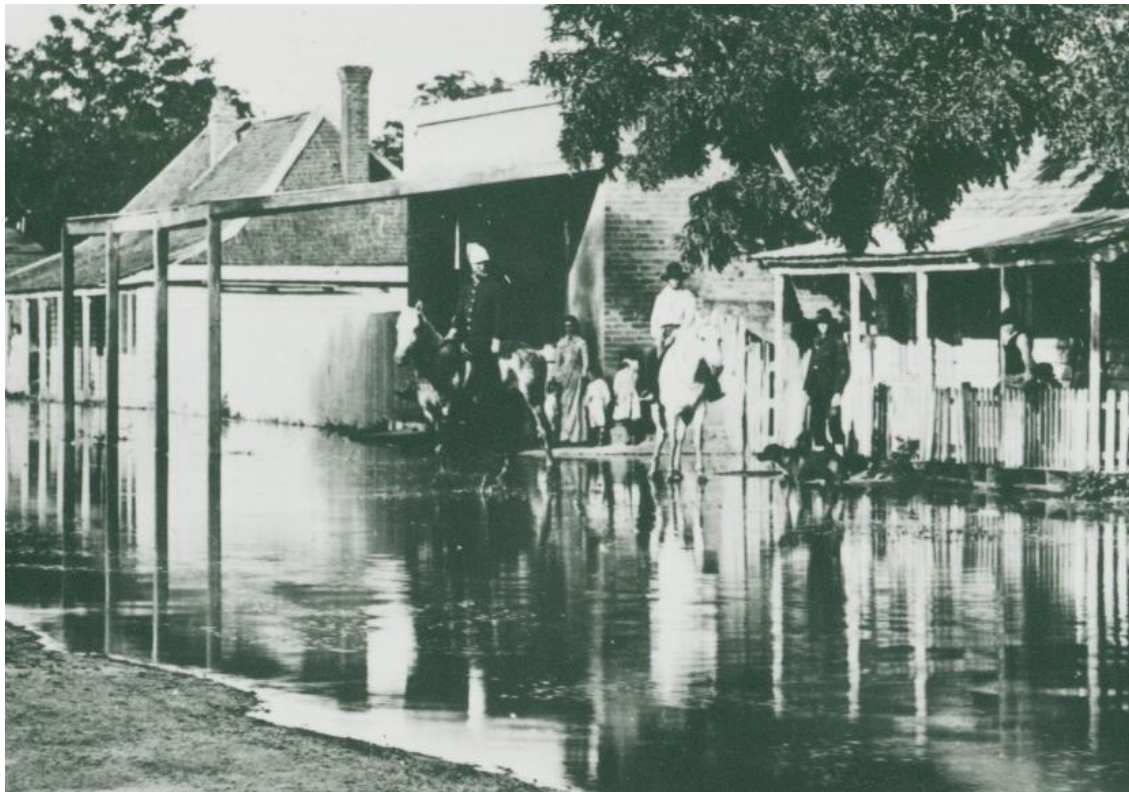


## The Murder of Christian Epple

About 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. the following morning, Green awoke to find that Riley had disappeared along with Norris's valuable horse. On entering his employer's tent to wake him, he made a gruesome discovery. His boss had been shot in the eye at close range by the camp's only firearm, a snider rifle, and according to Green, 'his head was shattered in a terrible manner'. After waking Draper, Green rushed to the house of W. F. Mathews, the Common's ranger, an interesting character who reputedly had fitted golden horseshoes onto a circus horse owned by his former employee, William Brown, back in the 1850s. The ranger's son told him that he had heard a shot between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. and shortly afterwards had seen Riley with a bridle in hand trying to catch a horse which he subsequently saddled and rode in the direction of Wagga Wagga. Borrowing a horse from Mathews, Green rode to North Wagga Wagga where he informed Constable George Giltrap, the zealous and dedicated policemen who had been stationed in the small village since 1881. Giltrap accompanied him to Wagga Wagga where Inspector Arthur J. Harvison took control. He sent his most active horsemen, Senior Constable Henry Teague Dixon (a future Inspector of Police at Wagga Wagga) and Constable George T.

Davidson, in pursuit of Riley and telegraphed all the police and telegraph stations in the district.

On leaving the scene of the crime, Riley travelled along the Junee Road, desperate for a drink, no doubt wanting to calm his nerves and spend his new-found 'wealth'. After being refused service firstly at Michael O'Donnell's Caledonian Hotel at Cartwright's Hill and then at James and Sarah Clarke's North Wagga Hotel, he crossed over the Company Bridge (which was about one hundred metres from the Hampden Bridge which replaced it in 1895).



*Above: Police Constable George Giltrap on his horse outside the North Wagga Police Station*



*Company Bridge, a toll bridge, where Riley crossed from North Wagga to Wagga Wagga*

The Criterion Hotel in Fitzmaurice Street (near the present site of Romanos), licensed by Frenchmen John Henry Millenet, was able to provide him with the much-needed drink. After several storekeepers refused to open their shops on a Sunday so he could buy a change of clothes, the irate Riley journeyed on to the Farmers' Home Hotel on the Tarcutta Road where he had breakfast and more alcohol.



*Farmers Home Hotel*

His 'exited condition' and the fact he changed a couple of gold sovereigns alerted the suspicion of the licensee, Mrs Grace Darling Tillet, who sent the information to the police in Wagga Wagga even though at that stage she had no knowledge of the murder.

## **Police Pursuit of Riley**

Riley continued his pub crawl, travelling three kilometres along the Tarcutta Road to the Royal George Hotel, licensed by Robert and Mary Beaver. Once again, his exited state, his loud criticism of the local storekeepers who had refused to serve him and the fact that he appeared flush with money all aroused suspicion. Oblivious to the impression he was creating, Riley departed after inquiring about the road to Tumbarumba.

The pursuing police had no difficulty tracing their quarry. After ascertaining his route at the Farmers' Home Hotel, Dixon and Davidson mounted their horses and the chase began. Riley was almost a kilometre ahead when he noticed the police following. Although he galloped off at full speed, his horse quickly became exhausted and within three kilometres, Senior Constable Dixon was able to get within hailing distance and called on him to surrender. As there was no response, Constable Davidson, on Dixon's instructions, fired over his head to frighten him.

By this time Dixon overhauled the fugitive and as he pulled alongside him gave him a powerful blow in the face which almost knocked him out of the saddle. Even then Riley continued to flee, letting his body lean over almost at a right angle to the body of his horse whilst, with one foot outstretched, he attempted to keep the constables at bay. Another shot was then fired with more effect. Riley threw up his hands immediately and allowed himself to be secured. He was handcuffed, taken to Wagga Wagga and lodged at the jail. There he adopted a sullen dogged demeanor and refused to be communicative.

## The Trial

The news of the murder created great excitement in the town of Wagga Wagga and the crowds flocked to the court to hear all the gory details. The Inquest was conducted by the District Coroner L. A. Fosbery, a land agent, valuer and commission agent and Coroner since 1882. It was held at the Wagga Wagga courthouse on Monday 16 September and Tuesday 17 September.

The jury consisted of twelve of the town's most influential men including storekeepers, William Cowan Hunter and James Fox, publicans, A. J. Monks (Pastoral Hotel), Jean Henry Millenet (Criterion Hotel) and P. S. F. Stephen (former publican/storekeeper), stock and station agents, Charles Hawthorne Croaker and John Jeremy, John Dixon Norman, a farmer at 'Oak Hill', North Wagga Wagga, and Frances Herrick, a pastoral manager at 'Ballymoran'. The other members were Arthur Henry Knott, Edward Tyler and T. W. Howard.



### Coroner

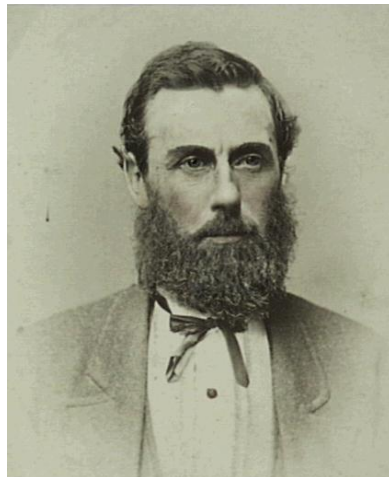
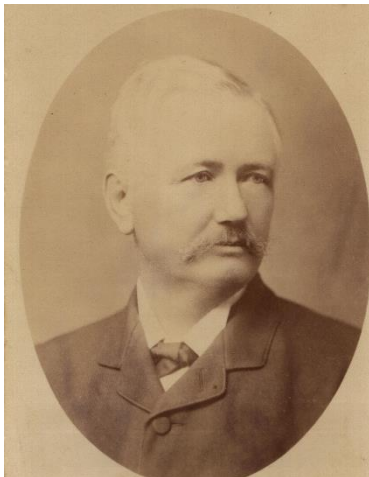
*Left: The District Coroner who conducted the Inquest, Lenard Arthur ('Len') Fosbery, a land agent, valuer and commission agent with his wife*

### Jurors

*Below left: William George Hunter, a storekeeper in Fitzmaurice Street, Wagga Wagga*

*Below centre; A. J. Monks, publican at the Pastoral Hotel*

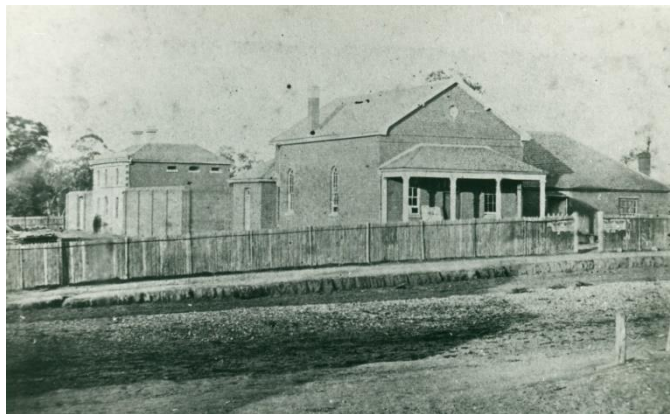
*Below right; Charles Hawthorne Croaker, stock and station agent*



As the body had not yet been removed, it was decided to take the jury out to view the scene of the crime. The jurors were conveyed in Jack Hely's horse-drawn bus while the Coroner and the two doctors travelled separately. The eight-kilometre trip took about forty-five minutes. The site was near the hills known as the two sisters, about half a kilometre from the main Cowabie Road and less than 400 metres from the residence of Mathews. After examining all the evidence, they all returned to Wagga Wagga at about 12.20 for lunch.

After lunch, evidence was given by the police, Epple's assistant drovers, Green and Draper, the doctors and the licensees and some of their employees at the various hotels. Riley at first remained quiet and indifferent though he did say he 'may' have been present at the murder, that he was innocent and that he could possibly tell who did it. However, by the second day of the inquest, he had written a lengthy confession, explaining that his motive was robbery. He had apparently fallen deeply in love with a girl at Bourke and needed the money to make her parents consent to their marriage or alternatively for them to elope. As a result, he had had an 'overpowering impulse he could not master'. He was committed for trial on 27 September that year.

At the trial at the Wagga Wagga Circuit Court on 27 September Riley pleaded guilty and was sentenced to death. On 16 October he was informed that the execution would be on 6 November. From the time of his conviction, Riley was a model prisoner. He was visited by a brother from Victoria and by Fathers Gallagher and Kennedy. He was apparently not visited by his girl from Bourke! The courthouse (right) and Jail (left) are pictured on the right.



## The Hanging

The hangman Howard and a strong burly assistant arrived on 1 November. They were recognised on the platform at the railway station and attracted a 'considerable amount of attention'. Cab drivers refused to give the two men a seat and they had to walk to the jail where they were accommodated.

Howard superintended the construction of the scaffold near the south east angle of the jail wall, not far from the condemned man's cell, a position chosen to shield the gallows from the public gaze. In addition, canvas boarding was erected around the top of the wall. As it happened, all these arrangements had been unnecessary, there being little public curiosity and less than a score of people attending. There had been only one application to the Under Sheriff Maybury by a member of the public wanting to witness the execution from an old man who had ridden eighty kilometres to see it but his application was refused as he had no good reason to view it.

Most Wagga Wagga residents objected strongly, not to the hanging itself which they felt Riley richly deserved but to the fact that the execution was carried out at the Wagga Wagga jail right in the heart of the business centre of their town.