

# WWDHS NEWSLETTER No. 449 Oct– Dec 2021 ISSN 2207-1016

## Meetings

**Combined Committee and General Meeting, last meeting for the year, 16th November 2021, by Zoom at 1.30 pm**

**Christmas Party: 27 November 2021 at the Sportsman's Club Hotel, 107 Kincaid Street, at 6 pm.**

## COMMITTEE 2021-2022

**President: Geoff Burch**

**Vice President: Geoff Haddon**

**Secretary: Margaret Hill**

**Treasurer: Geoff Burch**

**Committee: Tony Dunn, Margaret Nowlan-Jones, Peter Morris, Diana Lovett, Rhonda Reedy, Brian Andrews, Craig Dixon, Leanne Diessel, Judy Buik, Sherry Morris, Mark Christison.**

## CHRISTMAS SPECIAL EDITION:

Peter Gissing: *Ruth Gissing pp3-6*

Geoff Burch: *26-28 Johnston Street: The Lands Office, pp.7-25*

Gary Croker: *"Greetings" Telegram with a Difference, pp.26-29*

Sherry Morris: *Wagga Wagga District Ambulance, pp.30-40*



**WWDHS Patron: Michael McCormack M.P.**

## WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 90, WAGGA WAGGA. 2650.

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**Vice-President:** Geoff Haddon Ph 0269224403  
**Secretary:** Margaret Hill Ph 0269334556  
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**Committee meetings:** 3rd Monday of the month

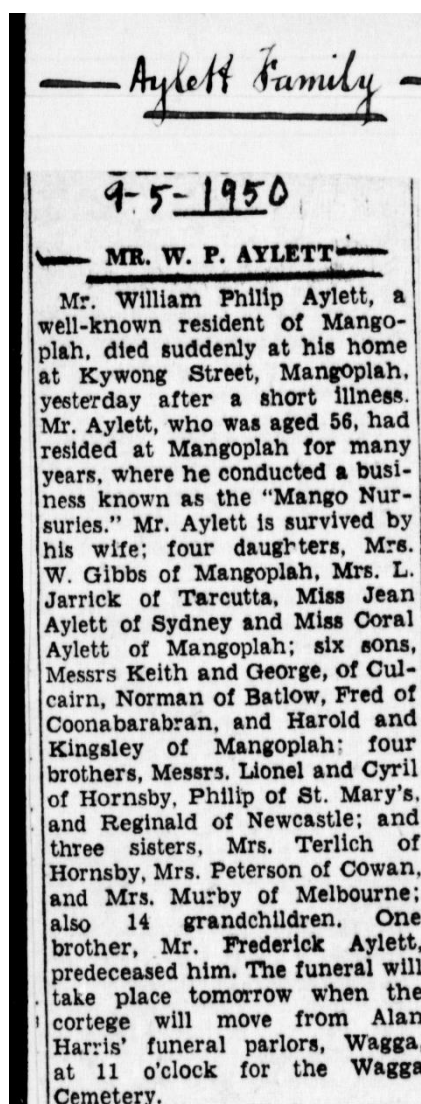
**General meetings:** 3rd Monday of the month

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

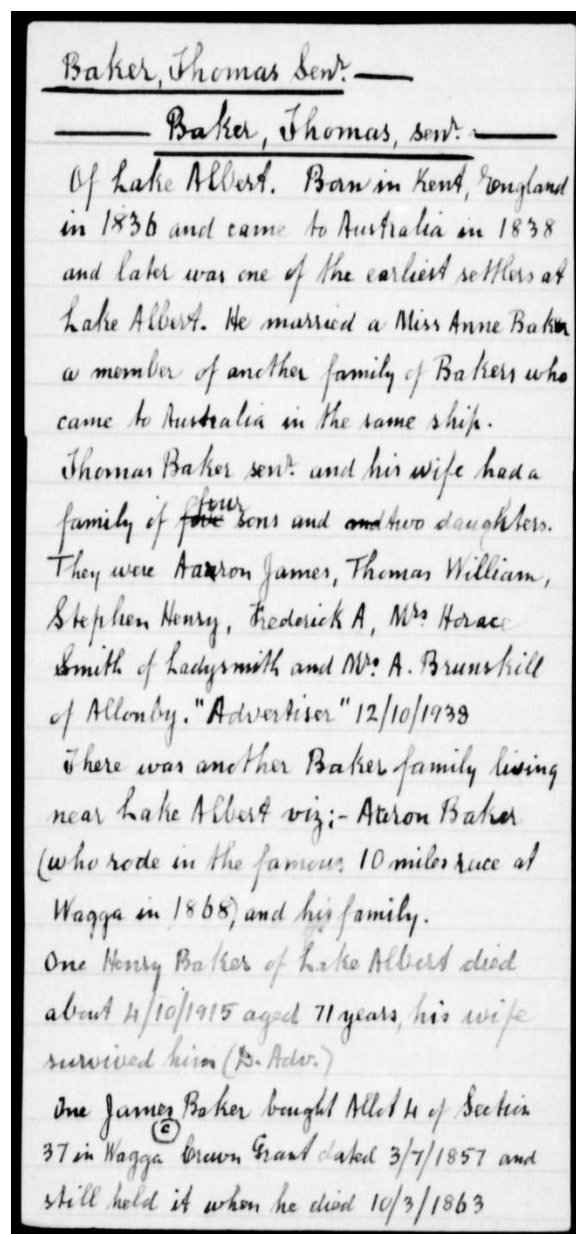
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## GORMLY INDEXES

NSW STATE LIBRARY have now digitised the Gormly Indexes (7200 pages) and posted them online. These indexes (listed alphabetically) include newspaper cuttings and handwritten extracts from other sources. They include a wealth of information on Wagga Wagga and District's history and details of individuals who lived in Wagga Wagga and District.



A couple of samples taken from the Gormly Indexes

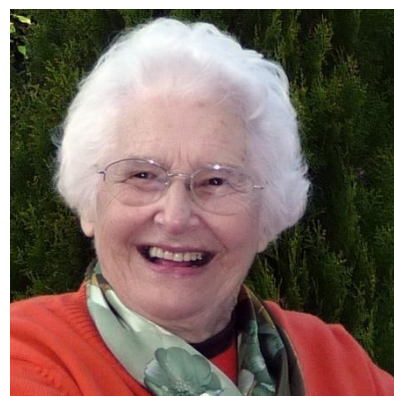


The indexes were compiled by Richard Joseph Ernest Gormly, son of well-known James Gormly, the Irish-born Australian politician (1904-1922). The Gormly family had lived at "Foxborough Hall" in Wagga Wagga. James Gormly had been an alderman (1883-1886) and Mayor of Wagga Wagga for two terms. R. J. Gormly had also been an alderman (1900-01 and 1922-25). He subdivided the Foxborough Estate in 1922 and moved to Sydney in 1925. He died in 1961.

## VALE: RUTH GISSING

**By Peter Gissing,  
8<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

Ruth Elizabeth Gissing was born at “Old Borambola” on 5th April 1922. Her parents were Stan and Nonie Brunskill (nee Blake). The Brunskills and Blakes were two well-known early Wagga Wagga family names. Her brother, Anthony Stanley Brunskill, known as Stan or ‘Boy’, followed in 1926.



Ruth grew up on the family property of ‘Old Borambola’ but also spent a lot of time as a child away from home. As a child, Ruth’s father had serious recurring health problems which meant that she spent periods of time with her grandparents, Anthony and Elizabeth Brunskill at ‘Allonby’, Forest Hill. She often spoke, with affection, of ‘Allonby’ and its extended family, almost as a second home.

Ruth spent her entire schooling period largely as a boarder, away from home. She is quoted in Sherry Morris and Phyliss de Jersey’s book, *Wagga Wagga Grammar School 1915-1946*, where she says:

*I started at the Grammar School in 1928 at the age of five and a half and left at the end of 1932 aged ten and a half. I was always the youngest boarder and when I left, I was the only boarder left.....’*



*Gurwood Street School 5<sup>th</sup> Class, 1933. Ruth is in the middle row, 7<sup>th</sup> from the left*



From the Grammar School Ruth moved to Wagga Public School for two years followed by Wagga High School for one year and over this period she was a weekday boarder with her great uncle and aunt George and Lucy Heydon (another well-known early Wagga family name) in Gurwood Street. She rode her bicycle from here to attend Wagga High School each day.

In 1936 she moved to Sydney where she attended Presbyterian Ladies College, PLC Pymble, as a boarder. World War Two started as she was finishing her schooling. She lost her father in 1942, when she was only 19. Following his death, the family of three struggled to manage the farm during the war years.

Soon after her return to Old Borambola, Ruth involved herself in her local community at Borambola and in the broader Wagga Community nearby. She joined the Borambola Red Cross branch and the Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment in Wagga, volunteering at Wagga Base Hospital and at an Army Hospital at the Wagga Showgrounds.



*A young Ruth Brunskill*

She had a large circle of friends including Judy Gissing, daughter of Harry Gissing, who was at the time, Wagga's Mayor. In due course Judy Gissing introduced Ruth to her brother, Morris Gissing. Morris was a Wagga boy, who on finishing his schooling served in the Army Signals Corps for several years during World War II. After the war, their romance blossomed. They were engaged on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1947 and were married at St John's Church on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1948.

Her son, Peter came along in May 1949 while Morris was finishing his pharmacy training in Sydney with daughter, Margaret, following in 1951. Ruth was committed to her family which grew over time to include Peter's wife, Judy as her daughter-in-law and Margaret's husband, Barry as her son-in-law. She had seven grandchildren, ten great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild, all of whom were an especially important part of her life.



*Ruth with Morris Gissing*



*Ruth and Morris Gissing celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2008*



Family was especially important to Ruth but so too was her community involvement which began in her days as a schoolgirl when she first joined the Red Cross at Wagga Public School. Red Cross was a lifelong commitment and in 2011 her seventy years of service as an adult was recognised with a special award from Red Cross. Ruth was also involved in several other local organisations over a long period of time. These included, the County Golf Club, Wagga Ladies Probus, Girl Guides Trefoil Guild, Liberal Women, Wagga Women's Bowling Club, and a variety of other social and support groups.

Over several years in the 1970s and 1980s she served as Wagga's Mayoress. This was a particularly busy time as she supported her husband, Morris with his mayoral duties. In her own right, Ruth also involved herself with many local organisations and activities, attending functions, supporting causes, and serving as patroness. Ruth and Morris hosted many visitors particularly from Wagga's Sister Cities, Nordlingen in Germany and Leavenworth in Kansas, USA, in their own home.

Later they enjoyed an active retirement for many years and enjoyed spending time with their family and particularly with their grandchildren and later great grandchildren. Then as Morris became seriously ill, Ruth devoted herself for several years to his care and support at home. This was an exceedingly difficult period for her, but she faced it with commitment and determination. After Morris's death in 2013 she lived alone until 2016 and then following serious health problems she moved into residential aged care. She passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021, aged 99 years.

Ruth's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday



# **26-28 Johnston Street**



## **The Lands Offices**

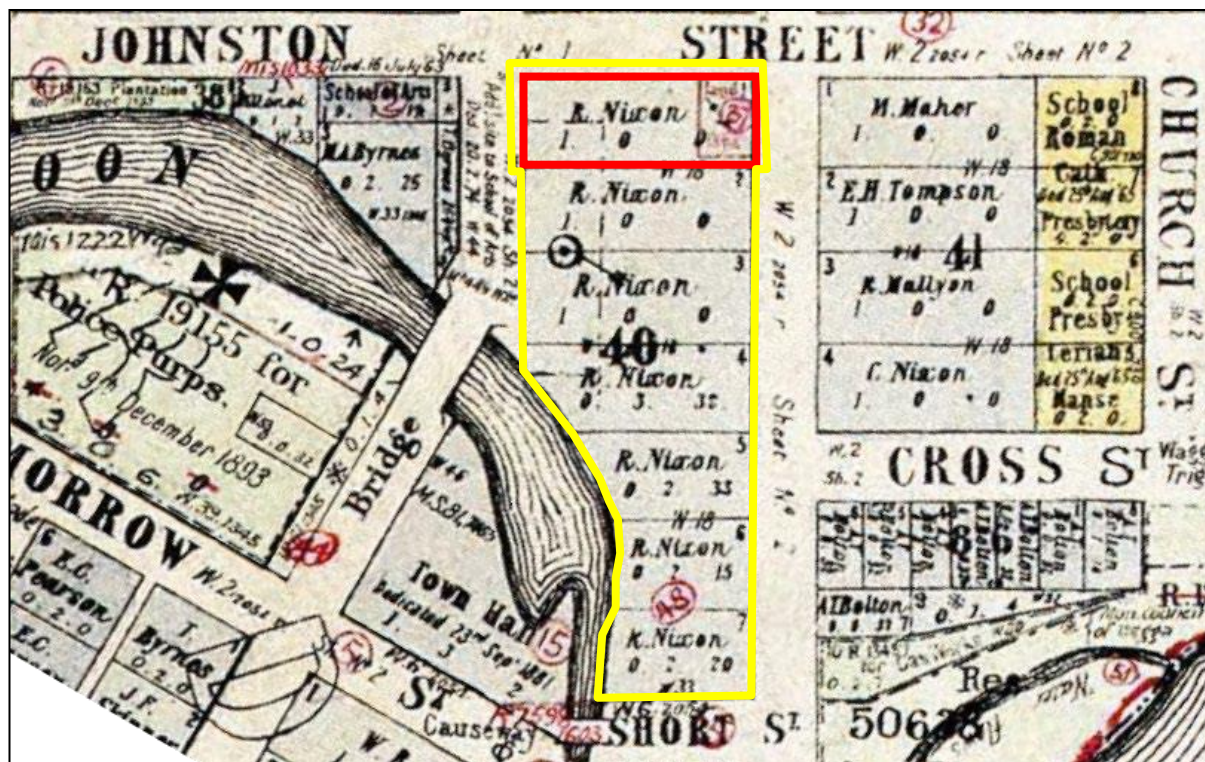
**GEOFF BURCH**



## 26-28 Johnston Street

The building at 26-28 Johnston Street is, in 2021, the Crown Lands Office, or the old Lands Offices building. It is located on allotment 1 of section 40, in the town and parish of South Wagga Wagga.

Allotment 1 ran from Tarcutta Street through to Fitzmaurice Street, with a northern boundary that extended along Johnston Street.



*Above: Extract from town map showing section 40 [yellow boundary] and within that, allotment 1 [red boundary]. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.*

Section 40 originally consisted of seven allotments each running east to west. Allotment 1 was purchased by Robert Nixon on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 1856. He in fact purchased all seven allotments on that same day.<sup>1</sup>

Transactions to follow were:

1857, 23<sup>rd</sup> June – Conveyance from Robert Nixon to James Walsh.<sup>2</sup>

1864, 23<sup>rd</sup> August – Conveyance from James Anderson, the Chief Clerk, Master in Equity Office, to Robert Nixon.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed, Year and serial number: 1856-4284. [see also serial numbers 4285-4289].

<sup>2</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 104, number 76.

<sup>3</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 104, number 76.



The next transfer of land took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1867 with the conveyance of part of allotment 1, section 40, from Robert Nixon, a flour miller in Wagga Wagga, to Joseph Robbins, a wheelwright in Wagga Wagga, for the sum of one hundred and twenty pounds. This lot commenced at a point on the southeast side of Johnston Street, two chains [40.2M] from the western corner of allot.1, where Johnston Street intersects with Fitzmaurice Street. Bounded on the northwest by the southeast side of Johnston Street, being a line bearing south easterly a distance of thirty feet [9.1M]. On the southeast by a line south easterly at a right angle to the north western boundary, a distance of two chains [40.2M] extending to the northwest boundary of allotment 2.

It seems that Robbins had erected his new premises prior to the official registration of the transaction as he had leased same to JD Hurley in September 1866.<sup>4</sup>

**J. D. HURLEY,**  
**COACH AND BUGGY PAINTER,**  
**TRIMMER, &c.,**

**B**EGS to announce to the public of Wagga Wagga, and surrounding district that he has commenced work in the large shop, just finished, in Johnstone-street, Wagga Wagga, belonging to Mr. Joe Robbins. All work turned out in a style guaranteed equal to that of Sydney or Melbourne.

J. D. H. will also carry on business as Painter, Paperhanger, Ornamental Decorator, Gilder, and Grainer, in which branches he has had many years' English experience.

*Above: Notice by J. D. Hurley in September 1866.*

**W. J. BLAKE & CO.,**  
**COACH-BUILDERS,**  
**ADJOINING THE NEW BANK OF NEW**  
**SOUTH WALES,**  
**JOHNSTONE-STREET,**

**B**Eg to notify to the public that they have made Extensive Additions to their Premises, and are now prepared to execute all orders in COACH-BUILDING at PRICES LOWER than hitherto known in Wagga Wagga.

W. J. B. & Co. beg to give notice that on and after the 1st of June the price of Shoving will be REDUCED from 8s., 10s., and 12s., to 6s., 8s., and 10s. A Splendid Stock of the Best Material always on hand.

In May 1876 the lot purchased by Robbins was occupied by W. J. Blake & Co, coachbuilders.<sup>5</sup>

On the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1872, Robert Nixon conveyed another part of allotment 1 to the Bank of NSW. This was a forty-metre square block at the corner of Johnston and Fitzmaurice Streets.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Wagga Wagga Express, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1866, p1.

<sup>5</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1876, p1.

<sup>6</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 131, number 178.





**Above & Below:** The Bank of NSW building at the corner of Johnston and Fitzmaurice Streets [the western section of allotment 1, section 40].

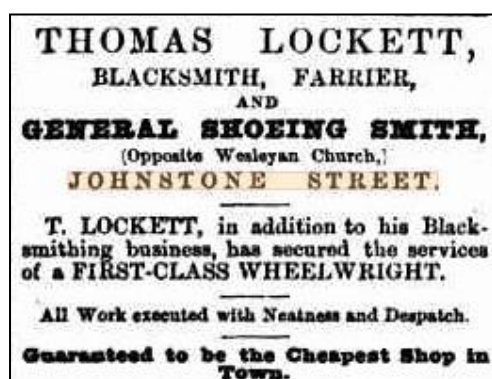






*Above: A contemporary aerial view showing the lot purchased by Joseph Robbins [wheelwright] in January 1867 [red boundary], and the lot purchased by the Bank of NSW in June 1872 [yellow boundary]. Courtesy NSW Land Registry. SIX.*

In October 1872 Nixon sold a right of way to Bowen & McAlister.<sup>7</sup> The boundary of this lot commenced at a point on the southern side of Johnston Street, 162ft [49.4M] distant from the western corner of allotment 1, then extending 30ft 8in [9.3M] easterly along Johnstone Street. The right of way then extended 117ft [35.7M] south, to a lane 15ft [4.6M] wide. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1874, Robert Nixon conveyed a part of allotment 1 to Bowen & McAlister, for the sum of four hundred pounds.<sup>8</sup> According to the Wagga Wagga Rate Books, James Miller conducted a brick smithy business with yards on this site in 1873.



The boundary of this lot commenced at a point two chains and thirty feet [49.4M] from the northwest corner of allotment 1, and then extending a distance of 168ft [51.2M] along Johnstone Street to the north east corner of allotment 1. The boundary then extended two chains [40.2M] along the western side of Tarcutta Street, in a southerly direction, to meet the northeast corner of allot.2.

*Left: An advertisement by Thomas Lockett.<sup>9</sup> This business may well have been located on Bowen & McAlister's lot.*

<sup>7</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 133, number 64.

<sup>8</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 146 number 777; book 255, number 512].

<sup>9</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser 13<sup>th</sup> April 1872, p1.



***Above:** A contemporary aerial view showing the right of way purchased by Bowen & McAlister [red boundary], and the land sold to Bowen & McAlister in November 1874 [yellow boundary]. Courtesy NSW Land Registry. SIX.*

In February 1875 Bowen and McAlister agreed to sell the property to Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender. In June 1876 Susan Mary Bowen and James McAlister legally conveyed the property to Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender.<sup>10</sup> The actual title deed records that Robert Nixon sold the land to Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender. According to that deed, on the 12th May 1876, Robert Nixon conveyed a part of allotment 1, section 40, to Robert Bliss Wilkinson, Phineas Hann, Stapleton Minchin, and James Smith Lavender, for the sum of seven hundred pounds.<sup>11</sup> This firm had been formed in 1873 by the merger of two prominent commission agencies. The lot boundary commenced at the north corner of section 40, and extended 168ft [51.2M] along the southern side of Johnston Street to Robbins lot. It then struck south two chains [40.2m]. This is the exact same land sold to Bowen & McAlister.

In 1876 the lot held by Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender featured a brick cottage and some wooden shops and a bowling alley, each of which faced onto Johnston Street, along with what was described as a ‘building site’.

**TO LET.**  
**TWO OFFICES** at the **Bowling Alley**  
 Building. Apply to **WILKINSON,**  
**HANN, MINCHIN, & CO.,** Exchange.

The latter was, presumably, the corner area (Johnston and Tarcutta streets).

A notice from Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin and CO. (13)

<sup>10</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 162 number 252. [See also book 255, number 512].

<sup>11</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Title Deed. Book 159 number 921.

<sup>12</sup> Wagga Wagga Rate Books: 1870-1907. Held by CSU Regional Archives.

<sup>13</sup> *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1876, p3.



The bowling alley business had originally commenced as a shooting gallery, in 1874, conducted by Messrs Courtney and Davis, who subsequently added the bowling alley, which was officially opened in September 1874.<sup>14</sup>

**T O L E T ,**  
**THE BOWLING ALLEY AND RIFLE**  
**SALOON. Apply to**  
**WILKINSON, HANN, MINCHIN & CO.,**  
**The Exchange.**

**Left:** A notice placed by Wilkinson, Hann & Minchin, in December 1875.<sup>15</sup> The concept appears to have lacked financial success, and Wilkinson, Hann & Minchin, shortly afterwards commenced holding sales from the premises.

**THURSDAY NEXT, 3RD MAY, 1877.**  
**AT THE BOWLING-ALLEY BUILDING.**  
**WILKINSON, HANN, MINCHIN &**  
**CO. have been instructed by several**  
**vendors to sell by public auction on Thurs-**  
**day next at the**  
**BOWLING-ALLEY BUILDING,**  
**At 12 o'clock,**  
**1 Double Buggy**  
**1 Suite of Furniture (Drawing-room)**  
**1 Chest Drawers**  
**Washstand**  
**5 New Colonial made Saddles**  
**1 Case Boots**  
**5 Bags Rice**  
**2 Bedsteads, &c., &c.**  
**Terms cash.**  
**No reserve.**

**Left:** One of the many advertisements placed by Wilkinson, Hann & Minchin, promoting sales by public auction at the old bowling alley building.<sup>16</sup> On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1876 Wilkinson, Hann & Minchin, & Lavender, stock & station agents in Wagga conveyed a part of allotment 1 to Samuel Hawkins, proprietor of the *Wagga Wagga Express*, for the sum of four hundred pounds. The boundary of this land commenced at a point on the southern side of Johnston Street, a distance of 79ft [24M] from the northeast corner of the allotment, then extending 40ft [12.2M] westerly along Johnston Street. The boundary then ran south 126ft [38.4] to a reserved lane ([1.8M]).

On the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1876, Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender, covenanted with Hawkins that he could proceed to build on the land he had purchased. The covenant allowed Hawkins to construct the boundary walls [14in] of his buildings to a depth of 36ft [11M] within his 40ft frontage to Johnston Street. Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender [the covenantors], agreed to pay half of the cost of the walls if, at any time, they made use of said walls. It is assumed that the walls overlapped onto land held by the covenantors, as they were bound to sell their portion of the wall to Hawkins if they had not utilised the option to pay for half of the walls, within a period of five years.<sup>17</sup> In 1877, Samuel Hawkins occupied printing offices in Johnstone Street and was in the process of erecting some other brick buildings.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Wagga Wagga Express*, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1874, p2. / 26<sup>th</sup> September 1874, p2.

<sup>15</sup> *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 24<sup>th</sup> December 1875, p3.

<sup>16</sup> *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1877, p3.

<sup>17</sup> NSW Land Registry Services, Deed of Covenant, Book 162, number 253.

<sup>18</sup> *Wagga Wagga Rate Books*, 1870-1907, CSU Regional Archives.

In 1877 the firm of Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender, were regularly holding auction sales from the bowling alley building. The former bowling alley was now described as “an iron storehouse.”<sup>19</sup> In the period 1877-1878 the land at the corner of Johnston and Tarcutta Streets was still owned by Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin & Lavender.<sup>20</sup> It was then described as a “*building lot*.” This confirms that there was no building on the lot at that time.

In September 1877, Wilkinson, Hann, Minchin, & Lavender mortgaged a piece of allotment 1, in return for a loan of fifteen hundred pounds. The lot commenced at the corner of Johnston and Tarcutta Streets. From here the boundary extended 126ft [38.4M] south along Tarcutta Street, before swinging west at a 90<sup>0</sup> angle, a distance of 34ft [10.4M].<sup>21</sup>

£1,500 appears to be a large value for a piece of mortgaged land, suggesting that there may have been a building on the lot by this date. The Wagga Wagga Rate Books, for the period 1877-1878, record the construction of a brick store, on allotment 1, section 40, facing onto Tarcutta Street. This may have been at the corner of Tarcutta and Johnston. Unfortunately details for this lot could not be found in the 1880s rate books.

By 1880 Samuel Hawkins [editor of the *Wagga Wagga Express*] occupied a brick building [two houses] and a printing office, on allotment 1, facing onto Johnston Street.



*Above: An early photo of the Wagga Wagga Express building. Courtesy Sherry Morris.*

<sup>19</sup> Wagga Wagga Rate Books, 1870-1907, CSU Regional Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Wagga Wagga Rate Books, 1870-1907, CSU Regional Archives.

<sup>21</sup> NSW Land Registry Services. Mortgage Deed, Book 172, number 800.





*Above: A later photo of the Wagga Wagga Express building. Courtesy Sherry Morris.*



*Above: The Wagga Wagga Express offices in Johnston Street. To the right can be seen the coach or wheelwright factory, followed by a two-storey brick edifice, and then the Bank of NSW building at the intersection with Fitzmaurice Street. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina [BGS1966-10h]*



***Above:** A contemporary aerial view showing the land purchased by Samuel Hawkins in 1876 [red boundary], and the footprint of the building as stipulated in the associated covenant [yellow boundary]. This would include the Express offices and the two brick houses as detailed in the Wagga Wagga rate books. Courtesy NSW Land Registry. SIX.*

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1885, Robert Bliss Wilkinson, a stock agent of Sydney, conveyed the property at the corner of Johnston and Tarcutta Streets to the Crown [Queen Victoria] for the sum of two thousand five hundred pounds.<sup>22</sup> The land had a northern boundary of 78ft 4in [23.9M], along Johnston Street, with a depth of 126ft[38.4M] to a rear lane [12ft wide].

An advertisement in the local paper, in January 1885, confirmed that the new Lands Offices building had previously been Wilkinson Graves & Lavender's grain store.<sup>23</sup> It is assumed that the main section of the building was constructed in 1877.

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<sup>22</sup> NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 321 number 256.

<sup>23</sup> *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1885, p3.



*Right: The advertisement in January 1885 confirms that the new Lands Office Store of Wilkinson, Graves & Lavender.*

**FRIDAY, 16TH JANUARY.**

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**A.** T. BOLTON has received instructions from the Under-Secretary for **Lands** to sell by auction, at the New **Lands Office** (late Wilkinson, Graves, and Lavender's Grain Store), at 12 o'clock on Friday, 16th January,

**3 DOUBLE DOORS and FRAMES**  
**13 IRON WINDOW GRATINGS**  
**2 WROUGHT IRON CRANES, with**  
     Gearing complete  
**2 ROPES**  
**Quantity Second-hand TIMBER.**

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**Terms Cash.**

**TO BUILDERS.**

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**TENDERS** are required for **ALTERATIONS** to **PREMISES** at corner of Tarcutta and **Johnstone** streets, Wagga Wagga, for the Department of **Lands**, Sydney.

Plans and Specifications may be seen at the **office** of the undersigned, where endorsed tenders are to be sent not later than **WEDNESDAY, 26th inst.**

The Minister does not bind himself to accept the lowest or any Tender.

**GEO. SHEPPARD,**  
 Architect,  
 Council Chambers.

*Left: George Sheppard's request for tenders in November 1884*

The Department of Lands had been in possession earlier than 1885. In November 1884 George Sheppard, architect, sought tenders for alterations to the premises at the corner of Johnston and Tarcutta Streets, on behalf of the department.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 27<sup>th</sup> November 1884, p3.

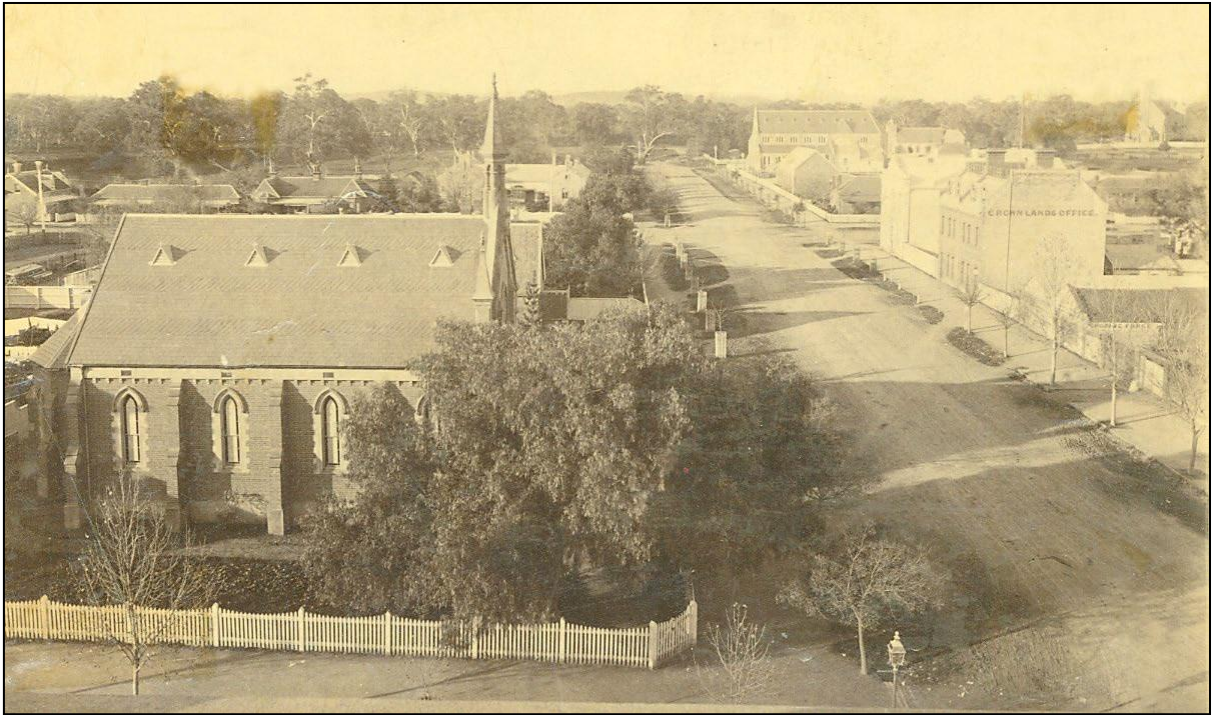


***Above:** A contemporary aerial view showing the land purchased by the Crown in 1885 [red boundary]. Courtesy NSW Land Registry. SIX.*



***Above:** An early photo of Johnston Street, looking west from its intersection with Tarcutta Street. Courtesy Sherry Morris.*





*Above: Johnston Street, looking east from its intersection with Fitzmaurice Street. On the left is the Wesleyan Church. Behind its spiral is the Wagga Wagga Hospital. On the right from front to back is, firstly the coach or wheelwright factory, followed by the Wagga Wagga Express buildings, and then the Wagga Wagga Land Office. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina [BGS2003-154]*



*Above: The Crown Land Office building in June 2021.*





*Above: The eastern façade of the Crown Land Office building in May 2021.*



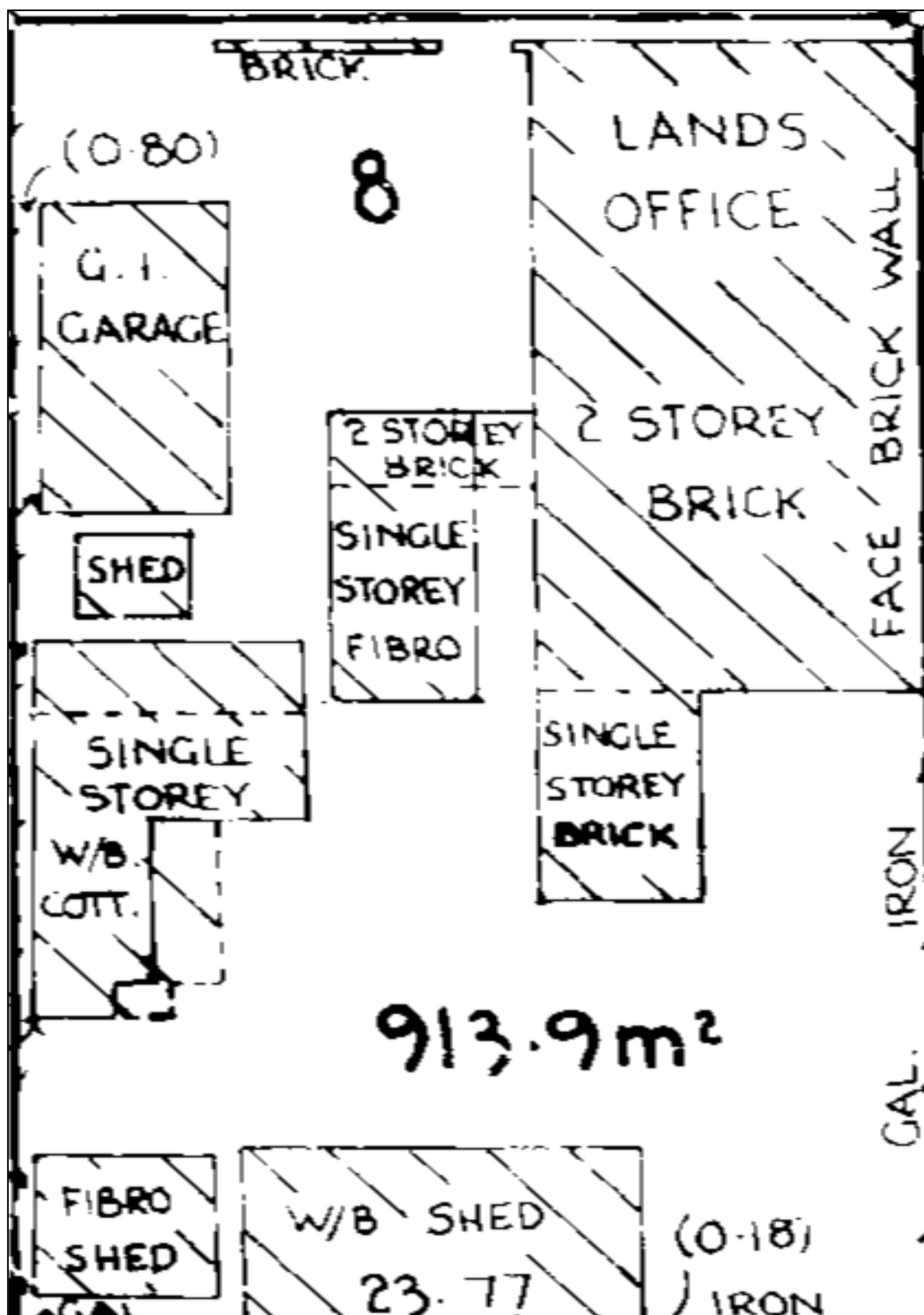
*Left: The addition to the main building, located on the western side of the original edifice.*

*This addition was part of renovations in 1986.*

*There are several out-buildings on the lot but unfortunately very little is known of their history.*







*Above: Extract of plan by John Wesley Hawkins. Courtesy Wagga Wagga City Council. Intramaps.*





***Above:** A 1971 aerial view of the site. “A” corresponds with the two storey brick building shown on Hawkins’ 1985 plan. “B” corresponds with the single storey weatherboard cottage shown on that same map, while “C” corresponds with the garage. Courtesy Wagga Wagga City Council. Intramaps.*



***Above:** A 2012 aerial view, post the 1987 changes shows that the old stables and shed along the back of the block have been replaced with a newer structure. The two storey adjunct on the western side of the main building has either been knocked down or incorporated into the new, larger, western wing. The garage on the front western side of the block has been demolished. The single storey weatherboard cottage has been retained. Courtesy Wagga Wagga City Council. Intramaps.*

During the renovations in 1985-1987 the operation of the Lands Department moved to a building in Dobney Avenue, not far from Edward Street and in the vicinity of Judds.

The main contractor for the renovations was Peters Constructions Pty Ltd of Tumut.<sup>25</sup>

When the staff moved back into the Johnston Street building, in February 1987, a new wing had been added to the old building, on the western side. This consisted of a hallway with several offices attached to the right.

The original building featured administrative staff on the ground floor with a division separating a customer service counter, located at the front of the room. The area behind was an open room except for about six columns that supported the upper floor.<sup>26</sup>

Computers were a new feature in 1987 and a glass wall was installed to isolate the printers and other hardware, in order that the noise did not disturb the administrative staff. The glass tank was later removed as technology improved and noise was no longer an issue.<sup>27</sup>

The upper floor was reserved for outdoor staff – surveyors, etc., and it was an open plan area.<sup>28</sup>



*Above: The authentic timber counter that greeted members of the public.*

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<sup>25</sup> *Daily Advertiser*. 13<sup>th</sup> February 1987, pp9-12.

<sup>26</sup> Gary Croker. 12<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Gary Croker. 12<sup>th</sup> June 2021.





*Above: One of the beautiful stained glass windows that are a feature of the building.*

## A “Greetings” Telegram Form with a Difference

By Gary Croker

I have an interest in all the telegram forms and envelopes used in Australia. My particular search is for all the coloured forms catalogued as “Greetings” forms. Although the forms in this article are listed as “Greetings” forms, no one would have regarded the message received as a “greeting”!

According to Barbara Hancock in her Catalogue *“Telegram forms and envelopes of Australia”* a particular coloured form was supplied from May 1942 and were still being mentioned in PMG (Postmaster General) circulars in July 1945. The purpose of this coloured form was “for use exclusively in connection with the issue to next of kin of notification of fatal service casualties”. It was described as type A-G-19 and the matching envelope as A-GE-19. Barbara illustrated an unused copy of the form and envelope but did not suggest a usage timeframe.

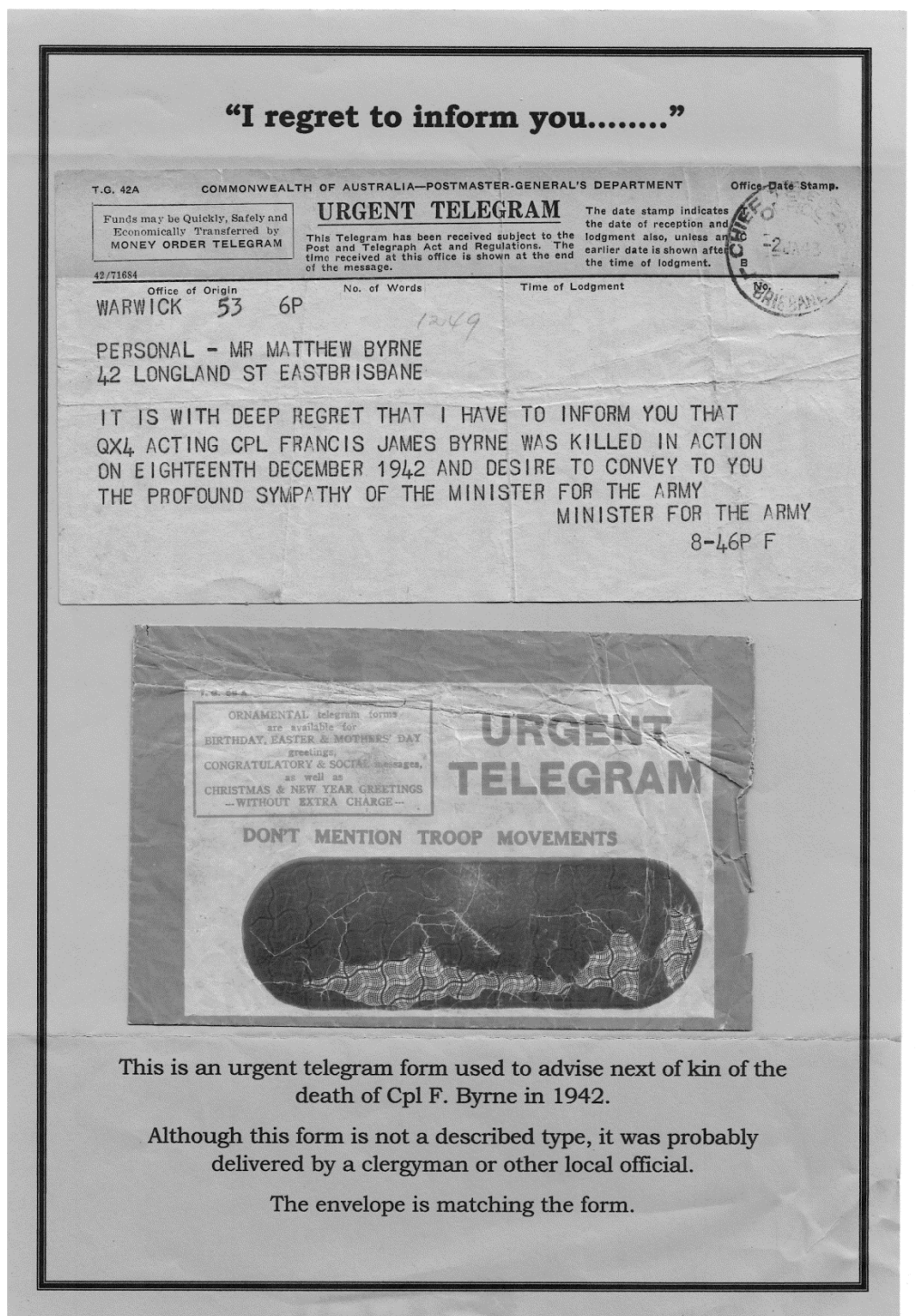


Unused Casualty Envelope

This form, which was printed in purple on white paper, has not appeared used in any collector’s source observed by me in 40 years of searching. The Australian War Memorial does not have a copy. I have an unused envelope (above), but no form. I was beginning to think the form had been designed and perhaps printed but never used.

I had an urgent form in my collection which dated from January, 1943. It was similar to, but not exactly type A-UD- 7b of Barbara’s catalogue but could be evidence that the coloured casualty form 42Y was not in use at this time. My form clearly was used to advise next of kin of a death of a soldier (F. J. Byrne).





Casualty form and envelope used in 1943

Additional evidence that the coloured form (42Y) was not generally used, came to light in the book "*Centaur, the myth of immunity*". On page 169 of that book, a telegram form was illustrated that advised the family of David Milligan that he had been killed in the sinking of the hospital ship *Centaur*. This telegram was sent in May 1943 and the form used was Hancock A-D-9b.

My idea that greetings form 42Y had never been used changed in 2015. A book was published called *"The Kapooka Tragedy"* by John Sheahan. This book tells the horrific story of an accident at Kapooka Army base, near Wagga Wagga in May 1945, in which 26 men died. The families of the dead men were urgently advised of their death by telegram. On page 65 of the book, John showed a telegram that went to the Dilley family. The telegram was on form 42Y, the casualty form.

It is assumed that all families affected by this tragedy received this same form. So I had reasonable proof that at least 26 copies of this form were sent in late 1945, just before the war ended. For a while I was of the opinion that, owing to the rarity of seeing this telegram form, perhaps only those 26 were ever used.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA-POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Office Date Stamp

TELEGRAM

Office of Origin: ALICE SPRINGS  
No. of Words: 56/1  
Time of Lodgment: 7.01

POSTAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
DELIVERY PERSONAL  
MRS KATHLEEN MARJORIE DILLEY  
63 REGIMENTS RD  
LORNE

IT IS WITH DEEP REGRET THAT I HAVE TO INFORM YOU THAT MAF1536  
SER NORMAN COURKE JOHN DILLEY WAS ACCIDENTALLY KILLED ON 31ST  
MAY 1945. I DESIRE TO CONVEY TO YOU THE PROFOUND SYMPATHY  
OF THE MINISTER FOR THE ARMY

MINISTER FOR THE ARMY  
9/25AM C

Copy of telegram from Kapooka Book

However, such rare use would seem improbable, and it was. In 2020 I found this image on the internet.



T.G. 42 Y. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

THIS TELEGRAM HAS BEEN RECEIVED SUBJECT TO THE POST AND TELEGRAPH ACT AND REGULATIONS. THE TIME RECEIVED AT THIS OFFICE IS SHOWN AT THE END OF THE MESSAGE.

**TELEGRAM**

THE DATE STAMP INDICATES THE DATE OF RECEPTION AND LODGMENT ALSO, UNLESS AN EARLIER DATE IS SHOWN AFTER THE TIME OF LODGMENT.

Office Date Stamp  
29 JUL 46  
C.

Office of Origin: *Victoria Barracks  
Via Sydney*

No. of Words: *62/1*

Time of Lodgment: *1 pm*

Postal acknowledgement  
Delivery Personal  
Mr Andrew Christenson  
do do Atkins  
Lansdowne NSW

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that NX 4617 Pte Harold George Christenson now reported missing, became missing date unknown and it is for official purposes presumed to be dead and desire to convey to you the profound sympathy of the Minister for the Army

Minister for the Army

Casualty form for Harold George Christenson

This clear example of the form 42Y was sent from Sydney to the next of kin of H.G. Christenson in Lansdowne, NSW. It is dated 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1946, much later than the Kapooka examples.

This example shows the form was used more generally, and with the Kapooka example, shows that, despite the form being promulgated in May 1942, the casualty form was used only from May 1945 until at least July 1946. That is not a long term of use, but indicates that examples of Casualty Form 42Y should be available for collectors if we keep searching.

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 Image of Telegram for H.G. Christenson. Web site [www.upperlansdownehall.org.au](http://www.upperlansdownehall.org.au)

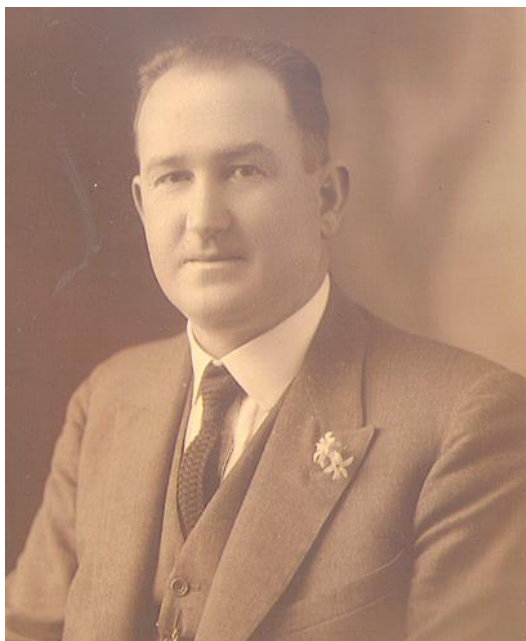
# WAGGA WAGGA DISTRICT AMBULANCE

By Sherry Morris

The first Ambulance service in NSW, known as the Civil Ambulance and Transport Brigade, was established in 1895. It was staffed mainly by volunteers. Patients were transported to hospitals on stretchers or on hand-drawn litters or hand carts. Horse-drawn ambulances were introduced in 1899 while the first motor ambulance was introduced in 1912. Ambulance Stations were built mainly to keep equipment and as a base for operations. The first Ambulance Station was built in Sydney at Railway Square in 1895. By 1902 there were about six ambulance stations in NSW.

Wagga Wagga acquired its ambulance service in the 1920s. From 1923 the need for a motor ambulance service was recognized in Wagga and frequently discussed by various public bodies. However, nothing was done until 1925 after the Greater Wagga League appointed a committee to inquire thoroughly into the needs and the best way to meet them.

A public meeting was then called by the Mayor D. T. Byrnes, a keen supporter of the movement for a Motor Ambulance, at the Town Hall on 11 May 1925. It was moved that an ambulance district should be formed in Wagga Wagga under the NSW Ambulance Transport Service Board. It was estimated that £600 to £700 was required for an ambulance and ongoing administration would cost about £300 pounds a year. A provisional committee was appointed: Henry Ernest ('Harry') Gissing (Chairman), Harvey Phillip Paull (Secretary), A. Maguire (Treasurer), Mrs A. R. Raleigh, Mrs W.M. Tonkin, Mrs M. Byrnes; and Messrs D.T. Byrnes, E. J. Campbell, R. J. Cunningham, William James Peacock, W. Higgins, J. Muir and C. R. Maybury. A Ladies Auxiliary was later formed to assist the committee: Mesdames Raleigh, Tonkin, Juppenlatz, Byrne and Anderson. The Country Women's Association (CWA) was also happy to help as required. The committee worked energetically with the support of Wagga and District to raise the funds required.



*Daniel Terence Byrnes (left), Mayor of Wagga, who called a meeting to form an ambulance district and Henry Ernest Gissing (right) who chaired the meeting on 11 May 1922.*



In the following years, there was an organized drive to raise the funds required. There were street collections, concerts, market days, a comic opera, plays, plain and fancy dress balls, Ambulance Button Days, night carnivals and sporting events in Wagga Wagga and at various towns in the Wagga District. There were numerous voluntary subscriptions and Wagga Wagga Municipal Council contributed £25. By November 1925, £600 had been raised and it was announced that Wagga was to become a large ambulance centre.

In January 1926, Fred Roffe was appointed as the Superintendent and Secretary of Wagga Wagga District Ambulance. He had been a Superintendent-Secretary in Maryborough, Queensland, for 11 years and was noted for his thoroughness and organizing ability. His attendant bearer was H. J. Habler. Both men were able to receive calls day and night. It was decided that the service would be free. It was to be funded by subscriptions and by running raffles and other functions. The ambulance was to perform the following tasks:

- 1) To transport, under doctor's orders, persons who were suffering from any form of illness, to public or private hospitals;
- 2) to provide first aid and transport to doctor, hospital or home;
- 3) to assist at casualty depots;
- 4) to assist pre-maternity cases;
- 5) to take convalescents home from hospital;
- 6) to take serious cases to Baby Health Centres;
- 7) to assist police by removing lunacy cases by train.

Within a few months the first Motor Ambulance car was ordered. It was constructed by local firm, Douglas and Patterson. It was built on a Hudson super-six chassis, mounted on balloon-tyred wheels. The timber framework was of Queensland maple. It could carry three stretchers or two stretchers and seven patients sitting. Two collapsible stretchers with telescope handles mounted on rubber-tyred wheels were also made by Douglas and Patterson. The ambulance was a very bright vermilion colour. It had a white medal with the Geneva Red Cross and the words 'New South Wales Ambulance Service' around it. It had gold letters, 'NSW Ambulance Brigade, Wagga Wagga District'.



*One of the first ambulances in the Wagga District*

The Ambulance began operating in April 1926 in a former private hospital in Simmons Street. In a month it had attended ten accident cases, 25 transport cases and two office cases – 37 calls. It had travelled 475 miles to Ganmain, The Rock, Uranquinty and Mangoplah. To satisfy growing demand a second ambulance car had to be added to the fleet, a Buick ‘Big Six’ for one-stretcher case and one sitting patient. It too had a vermillion enameled body with the words ‘Wagga District Ambulance’ in black and gold lettering on the sides. The car was supplied by Wagga Motor Garage Co Ltd. The alterations were completed in Sydney and Superintendent Fred Roffe drove it from Sydney to Wagga Wagga in July 1926.



*The Wagga District Ambulance's temporary quarters in 1927*



*The 1920s Buick is in on the left and the 1925 Hudson on the right in front of the temporary premises*



Roffe resigned as superintendent and secretary in June 1927 after having laid the foundations of the very efficient system for the Wagga District. He was replaced by Michael Patrick Loth from the Kingaroo Ambulance Centre in Queensland, a returned soldier who was married with four children. He was a hard-working, public spirited ambulance officer who had been awarded a special medal by the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade in 1915 for five years of splendid service with the Ravenswood brigade and for attending to many serious mining accidents. After serving in the Army Medical Services during the First World War, he was appointed as Superintendent at Kingaroo, Queensland, and established the ambulance service in the district. He was also a motor mechanic; he had excellent first aid credentials and was a capable organizer. On his arrival in Wagga in July 1927, he began first aid courses, held each year under the auspices of the St John's Ambulance Association. Classes were held in Ladysmith, Marrar, Coolamon and Borambola as well as Wagga.

By August 1926, it had been decided that a new site for the Ambulance Station was required. By June 1928 it was decided to erect it in Johnston Street after two old buildings on the site were demolished, an old landmark in the town, the timber blacksmith's shop, which had already disappeared and an old brick house which had stood at the back of the School of Arts for many years.

On 15 August 1928, the foundation stone for a station in Johnston Street was laid by the Minister for Health, Dr Richard Arthur, who had previously worked in Fitzmaurice Street, Wagga Wagga, 38 years ago. At that stage the building was already well on the way towards completion. It was to be a brick building two storeys high with a frontage to Johnston Street. Plans and specification had been drawn up by Messrs Pitt and Morrow, local architects, and it was built by local company, Charles Hardy Contracting Company, with local labour. It was financed by local donations and meant to be of service for many years to come.

On the ground floor was a spacious plant room with a concrete floor and tiled walls and was designed to provide space for the ambulances. On either side were offices, casualty rooms and a lecture room and at the back was a store, a fumigating room, conveniences and laundry. Upstairs there were two rooms and bathroom for permanent bearers. The Superintendent's quarters were reached through a vestibule on the ground floor with an entrance on the outside or from the plant room and a concrete stairway leading up to a hall on the second floor. The living room had doors opening on to a front balcony; and there were three bedrooms, two of which opened onto the balcony. There were also two rooms and a bathroom for the permanent bearers. There was a garage made of wood and fibre with a tiled roof. The block was enclosed with a low brick fence at the front and side, and back fences which were to be wood posts with chain wire panels.

The new Ambulance Station was officially opened on 30 January 1929 by the Premier of NSW, T. R. Bavin, who had to travel by train to Wagga Wagga. The contractors, Hardy and Co had to make a special effort to complete the building on time with the help of Superintendent Loth and a small band of helpers who were working till a late hour. Others were working until nearly midnight, fitting blinds and laying linoleums. The Ambulance Committee organized a week-long carnival at the bathing beach reserve including a tug-of-war championship involving 16 teams.

By October 1929, the staff included the new Superintendent-Secretary, Michael Patrick Loth, two permanent bearers and five honorary bearers. Volunteers in these early days only required a desire to help, a basic knowledge of first aid and a keenness to learn while on the job. In 1937 Loth had the assistance of two permanent bearers and 14 honorary bearers. In 1939, two cottages were erected in Morrow Street for staff.



*A line up of ambulance vehicles in front of the Ambulance Station in 1937  
Left to right: 1927 Hudson, two 1929 Studebakers and 1934 Vauxhall.*



*Johnston Street Ambulance Station c1938*

In 1932 the Committee of the Wagga and District Ambulance Committee included H. E. Gissing (President), R. J. Cunningham, H. C. Buckman, C.W. Pratt, H. P. Davis and Superintendent M. P. Loth. In 1936 a branch was opened at Junee and in the following year a new branch was opened at Gundagai (both towns later formed a separate district). In 1940 the local police raised funds for a new Ambulance, mainly from the Police Ball and other functions. The car was purchased at Minty's local distributors of Buicks and Superintendent Loth drove the Buick car from Sydney to Wagga Wagga. It was officially presented to the Wagga and District Ambulance Committee on 11 May 1940. Sergeant Hill handed over to President H. E. Gissing. The Ambulance was also represented by R. J. Cunningham, Superintendent Loth and three bearers.





*Wagga Wagga Police Force presenting the Buick Ambulance to the Wagga Wagga Ambulance Service outside the Johnston Street Ambulance Station, 11 May 1940.*



*2WG Women's Club President, Cobby Webb, and member, Mrs Brentnall, presenting an Ambulance to Harvey P. Paull, President of the Wagga Ambulance Committee in 1948*

In 1950, the committee included H. P. Paull, president, H. C. Buckman, treasurer, H. E. Gissing, representative of NSW Ambulance, R. W. Norman, D. Holmes, A. L. Adams, Robert Cunningham, P. Spice, A. Harding, N. Barnes, Vic Rae and Dr R. M. Holmes. In 1951, H. C. Buckman replaced Harvey Paull as president.



*H. C. Buckman, H. E. Gissing, R. J. Cunningham and H. Paull,  
Pioneers of the Wagga Wagga and District Ambulance*



Superintendent Loth (pictured left) remained Superintendent until 1953. In 1939 he had been decorated at Government House by NSW Governor, Lord Wakehurst, as a Serving Brother of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, in recognition of his excellent work in Ambulance Service for 30 years. In 1949 he had been invested with the Order of Officer of St John by Governor John Northcott in recognition of 40 years' ambulance service.

The service then had five modern well-equipped ambulance cars in Wagga and two at Tumbarumba which had been a branch of Wagga since 1948.

When Loth retired in 1948 after twenty-three years' service in Wagga Wagga, he was replaced by Leonard ('Len') Rees who had been in the Ambulance Service for over 24 years. He had been Deputy Superintendent in Maitland for eight years and for five years in Wagga before his promotion to Superintendent. In 1951, H.C. Buckman was the new president after Harvey Paull retired. Great Southern Motors, 2WG Women's Club and the North Wagga ladies were generous contributors. Funds were raised by Ambulance Art Unions, donations, house to house collections, Ambulance Button Days, Balls and Carnivals.



Dr Ronald Lewis (pictured right) was appointed honorary Medical Officer for the Ambulance Service. Dr Lewis first came to Wagga Wagga at the end of January 1932 to help the resident staff at the District Hospital for six weeks. He returned as Junior Resident Medical Officer (RMO) towards the end of the year and was appointed the Senior RMO in February the following year. In 1938, he joined Dr Martin in Wagga Wagga they were joined by Dr Weedon the following year.



*The Ambulance fleet in the 1950s, all were Fords. From left to right: 1954 model, 1953 model, 1951 model and then two 1949 models*



*1954 Ford for Wagga Wagga and 1958 Ford for (Tumbarumba)*



*A fleet of six Fords in Wagga including two 1958 models, one 1956 model, 1954 model, 1952 model and 1951 model.*



*Left: 1962 Ford Fairlane, Wagga Ambulance*

Leonard Rees remained Superintendent of the Wagga District Ambulance Service in the 1960s. He received a long service medal in 1961 and was awarded an Insignia of Commander (Brother) in the Venerable Order of St John by the Queen in 1962. The President was A. L. Adams who was awarded life membership after 23 years' service.

In 1977, the Ambulance Service was brought under the control of the Health Commission of NSW (later the Department of Health, NSW). Wagga Wagga was part of the South West Region with headquarters in Albury. It was a large area including Tumut, Gundagai, Hay, Leeton and Ardlethan as well as Wagga and Albury. The area superintendent was Graham Willis. He was a registered nurse with 15 years' Ambulance Service in NSW and was studying for a Bachelor of Social Science degree. There were 29 fulltime staff including a Deputy Area Superintendent and six officers who co-ordinated and deployed the staff and liaised with hospitals. Ambulance officers were highly trained skilful professionals. Their training was more formal and a higher level than on-the-job training. They not only attended fires, car accidents, injured bushwalkers or such emergencies as heart attacks, strokes, spider and snake bites, emergency childbirth and drownings. They still transported routine medical cases. There were then nine Ford ambulances and a rescue unit.



In 1982 the Health Commission decided to amalgamate the Riverina and Murray Ambulance Regions. An industrial campaign protesting against any amalgamation followed as it was feared that it would cause the loss of 70 jobs in the state and that would create large unmanageable regional responsibilities. At least nine positions were threatened in Wagga Wagga including the Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent. Despite the protests, the Riverina and Murray Ambulance Regions merged in 1983.

By 1985 there were staff shortages and Riverina Ambulance Stations were closing down including Berrigan for a while. At times in Wagga there were only three officers. When the Health Department advertised positions for nine officers at six stations in the region (Wagga, Albury, Tumut, Narrandera, Deniliquin and Jerilderie) only one was filled – at Deniliquin. By 1991 Wagga was complaining about the transfer of a number of facilities to Albury.

In 1994, Grade Two station officer Graham Pyne took charge of Wagga Ambulance branch. He had begun his career in Sydney 15 years ago and had spent the previous eight years with the ambulance service at Tumut. In the 1990s two ambulances joined the fleet. A new Toyota Tarago which was designed for routine transport rather than emergencies and a brand new Holden VR Commodore which consisted of a utility with a special module dropped onto an extended tray.

By 1994 it was decided that the Johnston Street premises would have to be upgraded or a new ambulance station built on a new site. \$757,000 had already been allocated for the reconstruction or re-location of Wagga Ambulance Station by the State Government 1987-1998 budget. It was agreed that the funding for the Wagga project would be made available in the 1996-1997 financial year to bring all ambulance operations in Wagga, including vehicular maintenance, under one roof.

By 2015 the Wagga paramedics were still located in the Johnston Street station. In that year's budget, the NSW Government committed \$4.4 million to build a new station on a greenfield site. A site in Fernleigh Road near the Riverina Juvenile Justice Centre was chosen as the new site. The new station was to be larger, accommodate more vehicles and feature a training room for paramedics. There were then 10 ambulances and 27 paramedics. It was designed after local paramedics were consulted and it was expected to meet the mobile emergency care needs of Wagga Wagga and district for many years. It was one of the busiest ambulance stations in regional NSW.

The new Ambulance Station was completed two years later under Stage 1 of NSW Government's Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration (RAIR) program. The local paramedics were consulted before it was designed to enable these highly trained paramedics to meet the mobile emergency care needs of Wagga Wagga and District. It was officially opened in December 2017. It not only included administration, office areas and amenities. It provided on-site staff parking and parking bays were provided for up to 14 ambulance vehicles to ensure that the infrastructure was ready to meet the projected patients' increasing demands for a decade or more. Maintenance was conveniently available on-site.

The old Ambulance Station in Johnston Street closed in 2016 and remained vacant. In 2021 Wagga Wagga Mayor, Greg Conkey, began lobbying the NSW Government to return the station to the city because it had been built by community donations and maintained by local effort for many years. He believed that it could be used, for example, by the arts community or by business people.

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## Photographs (and their descriptions)

Most of the photographs of ambulances were given to me in 2010 by Michael Taylor, a retired Ambulance Paramedic from Forbes. He had a collection of photos of ambulances from all over Australia and New Zealand.

His interest in old ambulances came from the family connection. His father, Jack, had joined the Ambulance Service at Goulburn on June 5, 1935. At the end of January 1938, he transferred to Young, which had just become a Branch Station of the Goulburn District Ambulance as Officer in Charge until 1943. He was then Superintendent until 1970. Five of his six sons followed their father into the service. Michael was the end of the line and retired on September 25, 2009 after 34 years, seven months. During 1966 and the winter of 1967, he did volunteer work with the Wagga Ambulance while based in Wagga with the RAAF. His brother Peter, also worked at the Wagga Ambulance in the mid-1960s as a Permanent Officer.