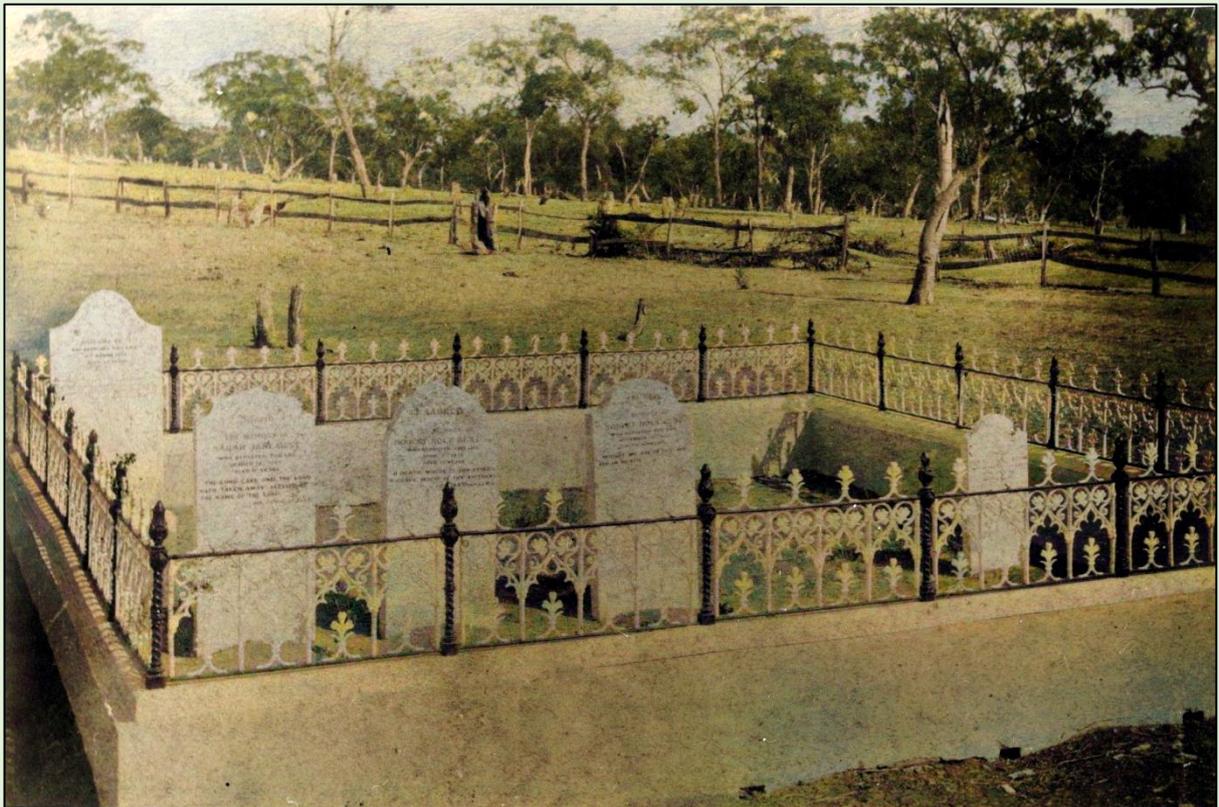


THE BEST FAMILY OF WAGGA WAGGA



Front Cover: An early photo of the Best Family Cemetery [photo taken between 1874 and 1887].
Courtesy Museum of the Riverina.

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Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the large amount of research previously carried out by Sherry Morris, Barbara Stroud, and Leanne Diessel.

These same researchers, and other volunteers, were responsible for developing the Best Family Cemetery Conservation Management Plan [2003], in collaboration with the Friends of the Cemetery Committee.

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Introduction

The Best family were the original family to squat on the southern side of the Murrumbidgee at the location we now know as Wagga Wagga. This took place in 1832.

Patriarch of the family was George Best, a convict, who with his wife, Martha, raised a family of nine children.

A descendant, Neil Best, displayed the pride in what this ancestor had achieved. To quote Neil,

““I really do consider George to be a remarkable man. To be sentenced to life imprisonment, uprooted from his normal life and transported at the mature age of around 35 to an infant colony, and within the next 40 years establish a farming empire across the Sydney area and southern NSW is a stunning achievement for an illiterate man. To be recognised by the authorities as an expert farmer – as he was when called to give evidence to the Bigge inquiry - is due recognition, as is the comment that Macquarie made re the quality of his farm.

The other strong feature of George’s life was the importance of family, evidenced by the fact that his sons worked together across their extended businesses, and which must have been strongly promoted by he and Martha.”

To trace the history of George’s successes is to trace the history and growth of the fledgling colony. The story encompasses the expansion of the original settlement at Sydney Cove, the development of the economy, the transition to self-government, along with the trials and tribulations of raising a family in the harsh and foreign Australian conditions.

This is the story of two illiterate convicts whose children were all educated and given choices they might never have had back in England. The early deaths of Robert Holt Best senior and Robert Holt Best junior highlight the realities of life in the bush.

Robert Holt Best, senior, was a son of George and Martha. The children of Robert, and his widow, married into a number of prominent Wagga Wagga families, further enhancing the significance of the Best family story.

The history of the family that established the squatting run that our city is named after, forms an important foundation stone of our history, and one that needs to be recognised in various forms. Hopefully this article contributes to the cause.

It is important to recognise the consequences for the Wiradjuri families that inhabited the area at the time. Smallpox had preceded the arrival of the first squatters, with devastating impact, and in 1832 access to tribal lands on both sides of the Murrumbidgee River was interrupted for the first time, by white men. This article is a white man’s interpretation of historical events – Aboriginal people may well hold alternative interpretations.

The Best Family of Wagga Wagga.

Early Settlement

The Best family was one of the two earliest families to take up land, as squatters, in the vicinity of modern day Wagga Wagga, in 1832. The first family was that of the Tompsons,¹ who occupied the northern side of the Murrumbidgee River - Eunonyhareenya and Oura. Charles Tompson, senior, had earlier occupied Kimo near Gundagai, but controlled his pastoral holdings from his home [*Clydesdale*] at Windsor, with his sons being the ones to occupy these hinterland holdings. By 1849, Oura was occupied by William & Leopold Fane De Salis, but Tompson retained Eunonyhareenya.²

The Tompson family did not personally reside at Eunonyhareenya in the early 1830's. This honour went to the family of William Davis, Tompson's overseer. The Davis family was living on the north side of the Murrumbidgee River before the Best family occupied land on the south side.³ The Best family named their run, Wogga Wogga. Both families had occupied these runs in 1832.

William Best originally occupied some fifty miles of river frontage, on the southern side of the Murrumbidgee River, extending from the Wogga Wogga Run out to Buckingbong, where he built stockyards and huts. Resistance from the Aboriginal inhabitants forced him to abandon Buckingbong and retreat to Wogga Wogga. He divided this latter run into two portions, with his sheep station to the west of Wogga Wogga, and the cattle station up around what became known as Marshall's Creek.⁴

From 1838 to 1847 the run was listed in the name of William Best.⁵ In 1848, when it became a requirement that all runs were defined, in terms of their area, the occupier was listed as William Best (per Robert Holt Best).⁶

William Best's obituaries confirmed his status as one of the earliest settlers on the Murrumbidgee. William was selecting land in other counties during the 1830's,⁷ and it is suspected that his brother, Robert Holt Best, was mostly responsible for the management of the Wogga Wogga Run,⁸ although even that was done from Sydney up until 1846.⁹

In the early years, Anthony Marshall was Best's head stockman. Marshall's Creek was named after that man.

In 1855 William Best transferred the lease of the Wagga Wagga Run to Clara Best.¹⁰ After Clara married Edward Charles Pearson in December 1856,¹¹ she transferred the run to her new husband, in either 1857 or 1858.¹²

¹ Daily Advertiser. 23rd April 1949, p3.

² NSW Government Gazette. 1848.

³ Daily Advertiser. 6th May 1950, p4.

⁴ Daily Advertiser. 6th May 1950, p4.

⁵ NSW Government Gazettes. 1837-1847. / Bingham Itineraries [1839]

⁶ NSW Government Gazette. 1848.

⁷ NSW Government Gazette. 1837, p825.

⁸ Cumberland Argus. 6th September 1902, p8

⁹ Albury Banner. 8th September 1899, p24. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th January 1904, p2.

¹⁰ Daily Advertiser. 6th May 1950, p4.

¹¹ Sydney Morning Herald. 10th December 1856, p1.

¹² NSW Government Gazette. 1858, p1071.

George Best [1st Generation]

The first member of the Best family to arrive in the colony was George Best, as a convict, in 1791.

It is believed that George Best was born in Sussex, England around 1758.¹

On the 15th March 1790, thirty three year old George Best was convicted of stealing a silver watch, chain, key and seal worth five pounds one shilling and threepence, on December 24, 1789. He was sentenced to death initially, but this was amended to transportation for life.² He was subsequently transported to Australia, arriving in August 1791, aboard the *William & Ann*.³

George spent his first two years working for the government, before he was appointed overseer and seedsman at the Government Farm at Toongabbie.⁴ George spent seven years in this latter role, which would have meant it was 1800 before he left the Government Farm.

On the 30th December 1796 George was granted thirty acres of land at Toongabbie, by Governor Hunter.⁵ Subsequent purchases saw his land holdings increase to 185 acres in 1803. The grant was portion 112, in the parish of Castle Hill and this initial 30 acre holding was subsequently expanded, by George, when he purchased the holdings of three other grantees [in August 1803]. These consisted of a thirty-acre grant to Nicholas Rogers, a twenty five acre grant to George Chestland, and a one hundred acre grant to John Jamieson.⁶ George's land holdings had increased to 800 acres by the time of the 1828 census.⁷

In 1797, on the 17th September, George Best married Martha Chamberlain. The officiating minister was Samuel Marsden, and the ceremony was conducted in St John's Church at Parramatta. Both George and Martha made their mark with an X.⁸

It appears that as early as 1799 George had been assigned convict servants.⁹ The official records show that George was granted a pardon on the 4th June 1800.¹⁰

George had a flock of sheep on his property, "*near Toongabbie*" in April 1805,¹¹ and he was still residing there in 1806.¹² In July 1810 he qualified for the issue of cloth from the government, in return for wool he had delivered to the factory at Parramatta.¹³ George was by now well established on his farm.

¹ St John's, Parramatta. Burials: 1790-1986. 1836, no.291. [ancestry.com]

² Australian Convict Transportation Registers. Third Fleet, 1791, p83. [Ancestry.com] / Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. George Best.

³ NSW, Settler & Convict Lists: 1878-1834. [Ancestry.com]. / The Evidence of the Bigge Report. Vol.1, The Oral Evidence. Ed. John Ritchie. 1971, pp80-85.

⁴ The Evidence of the Bigge Report. Vol.1, The Oral Evidence. Ed. John Ritchie. 1971, pp80-85.

⁵ NSW Land Grants: 1788-1963. [ancestry.com] / NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deeds. Serial no.2, page number 159.

⁶ NSW Land Registry Services. 1897 parish map of Castle Hill. / *The Beginnings of the Hills District*. 1987, p38. The Hills District Historical Society.

⁷ Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. George Best.

⁸ St John's Church, Parramatta. Marriages: 1790-1966. [Ancestry.com]

⁹ Sydney Gazette. 26th March 1809, p2.

¹⁰ NSW, Convict Registers of Conditional and Absolute Pardons: 1788-1870.

¹¹ Sydney Gazette. 7th April 1805, p4.

¹² Sydney Gazette. 16th November 1806, p1.

¹³ Sydney Gazette. 14th July 1810, p2.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN HUNTER, Esqr., Captain General & Governor in Chief
&c. &c. &c. ———

WHEREAS full power & authority for granting lands in the Territory of New South Wales to such persons as may be desirous of becoming settlers therein is vested in His Majesty's Captain General & Governor in Chief in & over the said Territory & its dependencies by His Majesty's instructions under the Royal Sign Manual bearing date respectively the twenty fifth day of April one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven and the twentieth day of August one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine ———

IN PURSUANCE of the power and authority vested in me as aforesaid I do by these presents Give and Grant unto GEORGE BEST his heirs and assigns to have & to hold for ever THIRTY ACRES of land to be known by the name of Best's farm, laying & situate in the District of Toongabbee and bounded on the North East side by the allotment granted to N. Rogers, the said thirty acres of land to be had & held by him the said George Best his heirs & assigns free from all fees taxes quit rents and other acknowledgements for the space of ten years from the date of these presents PROVIDED that the said George Best his heirs or assigns shall reside within the same and proceed to the improvement and cultivation thereof such timber as may be growing or may grow hereafter upon the said land which may be deemed fit for Naval purposes to be reserved for the use of the Crown & paying an annual quit rent of one shilling after the expiration of the term or time of ten years before mentioned ———

AND IT IS HEREBY PROVIDED that the said George Best shall reside upon & cultivate the lands hereby granted for & during the term of five years from the date hereof provided the said George Best shall so long live and any sale or conveyance of the said lands before the expiration of the said term of five years shall be void and the said lands shall in such case revert to His Majesty his heirs & successors except it shall be certified under the hand & seal of the Governor or in his absence the Lieutenant Governor of His Majesty's Colony of New South Wales for the time being, that the same was made with his consent ———

IN TESTIMONY whereof I have hereunto set my hand & the seal of the Territory at Government House Sydney in the Territory of New South Wales this thirtieth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety six. ———

(Signed) JNO. HUNTER

SIGNED & SEALED in our presence

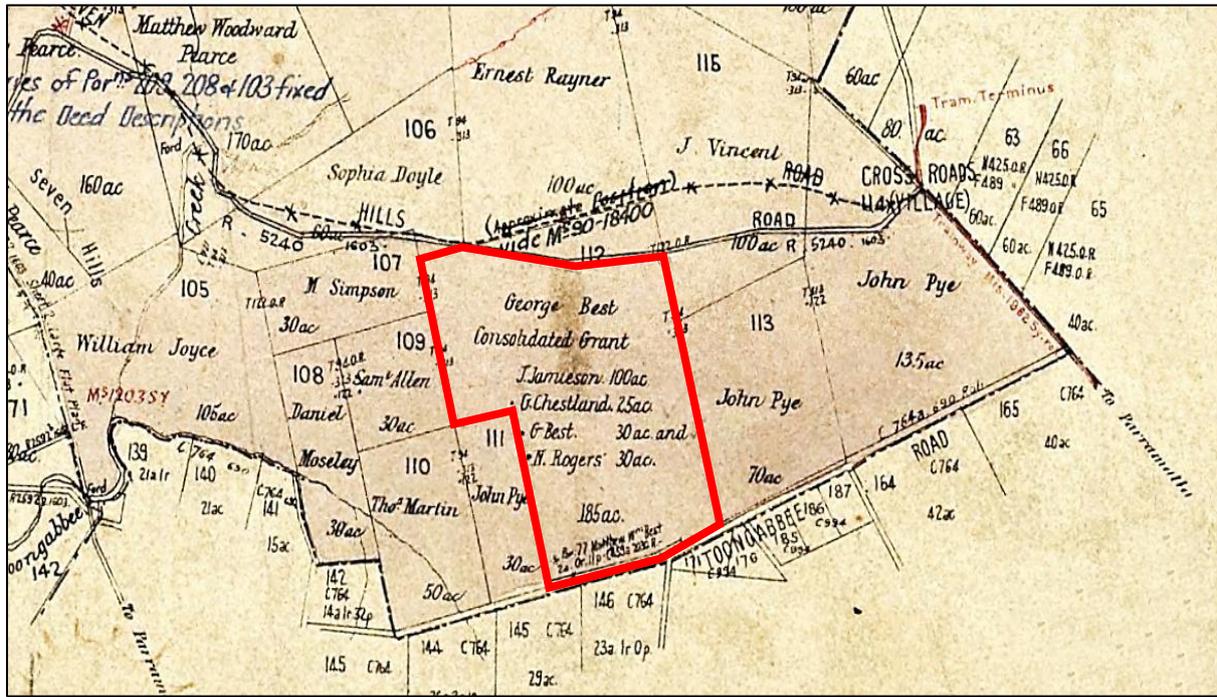
JOHN PIPER

C. GRIMES

(L.S)

CONSOLIDATED in GEO. BEST'S Grant 1803.

Above: A copy of the original grant deed to George Best in December 1796.



Above: Portion 112 in the parish of Castle Hill, as held by George Best in 1803 [185 acres in total].
 Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

In 1815 George was one of numerous landholders who were contracted to supply fresh meat to the government. George's commitment was to supply 3,000 units to the Sydney store, on the 30th September, of that year.¹ He secured similar contracts in 1816, 1817, 1818 and 1819... ad nauseam.

In September 1820, George told the Bigge Commission that he owned 345 acres at the location where he resided and another 110 acres nearby [in Toongabbie]. The only land granted to George had been the thirty acres at Toongabbie and another sixty acres at Airds. Everything else he had purchased. At that time George had four "government men," and in addition to that, "Two Freeman putting up posts & rails, one Freeman a shepherd, and Two Ticket of Leave men stumping."

In 1821 George was still residing at Toongabbie.² It can be assumed that George's farm featured more than just sheep and that he would have endeavoured to be self-sufficient in other stock and produce. In June 1822 he offered a reward for information leading to the conviction of whoever had stolen stock from his farm at Toongabbie – specifically eight fat pigs, four barrows, and four splayed sows.³

In the 1822 Census George Best was listed as a landholder. He was living with his wife, Martha, and three children – Mary Mills (24) Elizabeth Best (16), and George Best (21). Four servants (all convicts) resided with George.⁴

Thomas Best [son of George] was listed in the same census (immediately under the family of George). He was also described as a landholder, and he was living with his wife, Mary Best.

¹ Sydney Gazette. 19th August 1815, p1.

² Sydney Gazette. 10th February 1821, p4.

³ Sydney Gazette. 14th June 1822, p4.

⁴ NSW Census and Population Books: 1811-1825. [Ancestry.com]

There is no mention of George's eldest son, Robert Chamberlain Best, in the 1801 Settlers Muster and it is assumed that the latter was deceased by this date.¹

In September 1822, twenty one year old George Best [junior] advertised the services of a stallion, at Toongabbie.² He advertised the same services in 1823 but the location of his farm was now identified as being situated at Baulkham Hills.³

It seems that George (senior), like many landholders, was looking further afield for properties and stock and in June or July 1823, George junior travelled down to Argyle looking at stock. The young man met a tragic end crossing the "*Wollandary*" [sic] River on his way back home. He and a servant were driving a cart drawn by two horses through the stream, which had risen considerably, resulting in the cart being swept away. The horses consequently lost their footings and were drowned, along with young George. The servant was able to reach the bank and survived. George's body was not recovered.⁴

In the 1828 Census, George Best (72) was living at Seven Hills, with Martha (53), Sarah (20), John (17), Robert (16), Peter (14) and William (13). The record confirmed that George arrived on board the *William & Ann* in 1792, and that Martha arrived on board the *Indispensable* in 1796. George had been sentenced to life and Martha to seven years.⁵

In November 1832 George Best (senior) described himself as a "*settler*" at Toongabbie, near Seven Hills.⁶ By 1833 and in 1834 he was making official claims for land to the south, including two blocks of 1,920 acres each at Jerrawa, in the county of Argyle.⁷ This was land previously promised to Simeon Lord, and was situated some five miles south west of the Fish River.⁸ George paid six hundred pounds for these lands.⁹ In January 1836, George and his eldest son, Thomas, both made claims for land near Gunning.¹⁰

Other lands held by George, apart from the 805 acres in the greater Parramatta district, were runs at Bargo Brush, four thousand acres (in partnership) at Byanoff, a forty square mile area at Gunning, and of course the Wogga Wogga Run, which was said to consist of some 125,000 acres in those early days.¹¹ In addition to this there were the lands held by his sons.

On the 3rd July 1836, George Best passed away at his residence, "*Loongaliley*," following a protracted illness.¹² He was buried in the graveyard at St John's Church, Parramatta, alongside his wife, Martha. At the time of his death George had amassed considerable wealth and enjoyed a reputation as a respected, and prosperous, farmer and grazier.

¹ Rod Best. Email 27th October 2021.

² Sydney Gazette. 6th September 1822, p1.

³ Sydney Gazette. 11th September 1823, p1.

⁴ Sydney Gazette. 17th July 1823, p3.

⁵ NSW Census 1828. District Seven Hills, no.27.

⁶ Sydney Monitor. 24th November 1830, p2.

⁷ Sydney Monitor. 21st February 1834, p3.

⁸ Sydney Gazette. 19th April 1834, p1.

⁹ NSW Land Grants: 1788-1963. [ancestry.com]

¹⁰ Sydney Gazette. 19th January 1836, p4.

¹¹ Rod Best. Email 27th October 2021. [Note: In 1848 the property was reduced in size to forty thousand acres. See NSW Government Gazette. 1848, p1353]

¹² Sydney Monitor. 23rd July 1836, p3.

Martha Chamberlain

Martha Chamberlain was born in England on the 6th November 1776, the daughter of William and Mary Chamberlain. Martha was baptised at Saint Benet Pauls Wharf, London, on the 8th December 1776.¹ On the 1st July 1795 she was convicted of stealing several items of clothing valued at thirty-nine shillings, and sentenced to seven years transportation. She arrived in the colony on the 4th May 1796 aboard the vessel, *Indispensable*.²

Court records suggest that Martha was working as a prostitute, 'out of rooms at 3 Bambridge Street, St Giles [London]' in 1796.³

On arrival in Australia, Martha was assigned to George Best in May 1796, as a servant,⁴ and ten months later their first child, Robert, was born.⁵

Martha married George Best on the 17th September 1797 at Parramatta.⁶ The couple had ten children – Robert Chamberlain, Thomas, George (junior), Mary, Elizabeth Clara, Sarah, John, Robert Holt, Peter and William. George testified to the Bigge Commission that he had nine children, all born in wedlock, neglecting to mention his first child, born out of wedlock.

Martha passed away at Toongabbie, in March 1833. There was an inquest into her death as a consequence of a mark "over one of her eyes," but the jury accepted an explanation provided and ruled that she died "by the visitation of God."⁷

Respectable Character

George's achievements and character are perhaps best summarised by Bigge who wrote,⁸

"In the neighbourhood of Parramatta, the most favourable instances that have occurred of the effect of transportation, are exhibited in the persons, as well as the properties, of three men who were transported in the early periods of the colony; their names are George Best, John Pie, and William Mobbs: they have been distinguished for the propriety of their conduct in the colony; for their respectable characters; and for their unremitting industry: and the state of their farms and habitations attest, in a conspicuous manner, the united effects of good conduct in New South Wales, and of industry, when well applied."

¹ England, Select Births & Chriстенings:1538-1975. FHL film no. 481065. [ancestry.com].

² Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. Martha Best. / Old Bailey Proceedings. Ref. T17950701-30. <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>

³ *Old Bailey Proceedings* Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 15 October 2020), July 1795, trial of John Jones and Martha Chamberlain (t17950701-30).

⁴ *Governor Hunters Assignment List 1798: Return of Convict Women in the Services of Officers or other Households*: Mitchell Library

⁵ NSW BDM's. Birth registrations # 157/1797 V1797157 148 and 577/1797 V1797577 1A.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 184/1797 - V1797184 147A.

⁷ Sydney Herald. 21st March 1833, p3.

⁸ John Thomas Bigge. *Report of the Commissioner of Enquiry into the State of the Colony of New South Wales*. 1822, p142.

George's achievements are even more impressive given additional comments from Bigge, who noted,¹

“that out of 4,376 remitted convicts [Windsor district], including those whose terms have expired, and who are now resident in New South Wales, 296 may be considered as respectable in conduct and character.”

¹ John Thomas Bigge. *Report of the Commissioner of Enquiry into the State of the Colony of New South Wales*. 1822, p143.

**THE
CHILDREN OF
GEORGE BEST
& MARTHA
BEST
[NEE CHAMBERLAIN]**

The Children of George & Martha Best [2nd Generation]

Robert Chamberlain Best

Robert Chamberlain Best was born in March 1797, and baptised in St John's Church, Parramatta, in April 1797.¹ As previously stated, there is no mention of George's eldest son, Robert Chamberlain Best, in the 1801 Settlers Muster and it is assumed that the latter was deceased by this date.²

Robert's parents married six months after his birth on the 17th September 1797.³

Thomas Best

Thomas Best was born on 20th June 1799 in Toongabbie, New South Wales.⁴ He married Mary Beckett on 16th February 1818 at Parramatta, New South Wales. Thomas died on 26 January 1874 at Tangmangaroo, New South Wales, at the age of 74 and was buried in Gunning, New South Wales.⁵ His executors were Peter Best of Tangmangaroo, and Thomas S Best.⁶

Mary Best (nee Beckett) passed away on the 2nd December 1857,⁷ aged fifty six. It appears that all of the couple's children were born at Dural and that their descendants are connected with Dural and Middle Dural. Presumably some of the children resided at Tangmangaroo. Thomas had no known contact with Wagga Wagga.

George Best

George Best was born on the 29th November 1801 at Toongabbie.⁸ He died tragically in June 1823 while attempting to cross the flooded Wollondilly River near Goulburn at the age of twenty one.⁹

Mary Best

Mary Best was born on the 3rd October 1803 at Castle Hill according to the official record.¹⁰ On the 22nd June 1818, she married John Mills, at Parramatta.¹¹ The couple had two sons before John died on the 22nd August 1821.¹² John's death was the consequence of a legal execution by hanging. Their 1st son, George, was born on the 9th September 1819, presumably at Toongabbie.¹³ George died at the tender age of nine, in 1828.¹⁴ The 2nd son, William, was born on the 8th July 1821¹⁵ at

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 157/1797 V1797 157 148.

² Rod Best. Email 27th October 2021.

³ St John's Church, Parramatta. Marriages: 1790-1966. 1797, no.57 [ancestry.com]

⁴ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 253/1799 V1799 253 148.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 8581. / Goulburn Herald. 31st January 1874, p2.

⁶ Sydney Morning Herald. 3rd October 1874, p8.

⁷ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 4007. / St John's Church, Parramatta. Burials: 1790-1986. [Ancestry.com]

⁸ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 294/1801 V1801294 148.

⁹ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 6134/1824 V18246134 2B. / Sydney Gazette. 17th July 1823, p3.

¹⁰ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 408/1803 V1803408 148.

¹¹ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 2203/1818 V18182203 3A.

¹² Sydney Gazette. 25th August 1821, p4.

¹³ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 4923/1819 V18194923 1B.

¹⁴ Australian Death Index: 1787-1985. [Ancestry.com].

¹⁵ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 1153/1823 V18231153 147B.

Toongabbie but died at Yass, on the 19th January 1891.¹ He had been a resident in the district for some fifty years [Tangmangaroo]. William had been suffering from paralysis for the previous three months.

Mary married James Beckett on the 31st March 1823.² James was the brother of Mary Beckett, the wife of Mary's older brother, Thomas Best. Mary and James had a number of children whose birth locations were registered as Castle Hill, Parramatta, and Dural. Mary passed away on the 13th February 1870 at Parramatta.³

Elizabeth Best

Elizabeth Best was born in 1806 at Toongabbie.⁴ In July 1823 (aged seventeen) she married Timothy Powers in Sydney.⁵ The couple had a number of children, all born in the Prospect, Parramatta, Seven Hills area. Their eldest son, Morgan Hygmus Power, died at Lake Albert on the 14th April 1875 when he fell from a haystack.⁶ Morgan had married Ann Beckett at Seven Hills on the 4th August 1845.⁷ This latter couple had a large family. Up until 1859 their children were all born at Toongabbie but from 1860 onwards the remaining children were all born at Wagga Wagga. It is assumed that the family of Morgan and Ann all moved to Wagga Wagga in 1859 or 1860 and resided at, or near, Lake Albert.⁸

Morgan's siblings, along with the children of he and Ann, married into many well-known local families – including the Baker, Angel, Wild and Bye families. Morgan's son, Morgan [junior], kept a hotel at the Adelong Crossing Place for many years. He later kept Tattersall's hotel at Wagga Wagga and then Tattersall's hotel at Tumbarumba.

Another of Elizabeth's children was Sarah [b.1836]. In 1855 Sarah married Thomas Fox at Wagga Wagga.⁹ The couple had one child, Maria Jane, before Thomas passed away in March 1859.¹⁰ Thomas had previously been married to Maria Gormly and there were four children from that union. Maria had passed away in April 1855.¹¹ Sarah subsequently married Thomas Gormly, the brother of Maria Gormly, in Victoria in 1860.¹² James Gormly, MLA, was a brother of Maria and Thomas.

Elizabeth Power [nee Best] passed away on the 24th November 1875 at Seven Hills.¹³ Timothy Power had predeceased both his wife and his eldest son. His death took place on the 15th June 1873 at Seven Hills.¹⁴

¹ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 16144. / Australian Town & Country Journal. 31st January 1891, p17.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 3091/1823 V18233091 3B. / Vol.147B No.1153.

³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 5163.

⁴ NSW Census: 1822.

⁵ Australian Marriage Index: 1788-1950. [Ancestry.com].

⁶ Sydney Morning Herald. 3rd May 1875, p6.

⁷ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 294/1845 V1845294 30B.

⁸ NSW Government Gazette. 1875, p2441. / Daily Advertiser. 3rd July 1933, p3.

⁹ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 500/1855 V1855500 43B.

¹⁰ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 5276.

¹¹ Goulburn Herald. 9th May 1855, p2.

¹² VIC BDM's. Marriage registration # 3577.

¹³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 9088. / Sydney Morning Herald. 3rd December 1875, p1.

¹⁴ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 6227.

Sarah Best

Sarah Best was born at Parramatta on the 26th June 1809.¹ On the 20th June 1836 she married James Pye at Toongabbie.² Witnesses to the marriage were John Yeomans, junior, and Mary Anne Best.

Three months later their first and only child, George Robert William Pye, was born on the 30th September 1836.³ It seems the marriage was not successful, with Sarah and James each forming a relationship with a new partner.

Between 1847 and 1851 Sarah bore three children to John Robert Brien, the brother of Clara Brien [wife of Robert Holt Best]. Sarah was still legally married to James Pye, which would have prevented her marrying Brien.

Sarah Pye passed away in May 1882 and was buried in St John's Cemetery, Parramatta.⁴ No references to her death could be found in the newspapers of the day.

James Pye had a relationship with Elizabeth Hibbard [1813-1895] that resulted in the birth of their first child, James, in April 1836. James and Elizabeth had eight more children between 1838 and 1858.

When Sarah's father, George Best, passed away in 1836, his will specifically precluded James Pye from any benefit bestowed on Sarah.

After Sarah passed away on the 11th May 1882,⁵ James Pye married Elizabeth Hibbard on the 5th August 1882⁶ at his home, *Rocky Hall*, near Parramatta.

James Pye [Husband of Sarah best]

James Pye was an interesting man. He was born at Baulkham Hills on the 18th March 1803,⁷ the son of John Pye and Mary Pye [nee Phillips].⁸ John Pye was one of the original settlers at Toongabbie, and a neighbour of George Best. He too was recognised as a successful farmer by Governor Macquarie.⁹

James Pye passed away on the 29th December 1885. His death occurred when he was knocked off his horse by a runaway in Church Street, Parramatta. He was eighty-one years old at the time and said to be in perfect health - both physically and mentally.¹⁰ Numerous obituaries lauded the good works he had done as an alderman with the Parramatta Municipal Council [from 1862-1885]. Prior to that he had a short stint as a member of the first Legislative Assembly in NSW [1856-1861]. He also served as mayor on the council for a number of years.

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 2310/1811 V18112310 1A. St John's Church, Parramatta. Baptism Records.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 256/1836 V1836256 162A. / The Australian. 24th June 1836, p2.

³ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 668/1836 V1836668 20. / St John's Church, Parramatta. Baptism records. 1836, pa21, no.314. [ancestry.com]

⁴ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 7461. / Australia & New Zealand. Find a Grave Index:1800's to current. [ancestry.com]

⁵ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 7461.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 4075.

⁷ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 348/1803 V1803348 148 or 1193/1803 V18031193 1A. / Sydney Mail. 17th January 1885, p109.

⁸ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 162/1791 V1791162 3A and 41/1791 V179141 147A.

⁹ J Bisman. *Accounting concepts in the construction of social status and privilege: a microhistorical study of an early Australian convict*. 2007. p7.

¹⁰ Illustrated Sydney News. 17th January 1885, p3.



James Pye's obituaries all had one thing in common – there were no details of his wives or his children.

Left: Alderman James Pye.¹

John Best

John Best was born on the 11th December 1810 at Parramatta.² In 1848 he married Mary Whitehead at Gundaroo. Mary had previously been married to William Buist [aka Bruce] but he [Buist] died at Gundaroo in 1847,³ with his pregnant wife surviving him.

On the 18th October 1861 John Best committed suicide by hanging himself from a sapling on his property at Jerrawa. John occupied a sheep station at that place and had gone out to inspect some sheep on one of the out-stations. Two young men rode past and found the body suspended by a handkerchief he had used to create a noose. John was the brother of Peter Best of Gunning. He was survived by his wife and family.⁴ An inquest was held at the home of the deceased man and a jury delivered a verdict of "*Found dead in the bush.*"⁵

John's death certificate recorded that there was nil issue from his marriage to Mary,⁶ but this is believed to be incorrect. Frederick Best, the son of John and Mary Best, was born in October 1858.⁷

Mary Best [nee Whitehead] also committed suicide, in September 1876, at Oolong, near Dalton, by cutting her own throat on or about the 12th of that month. The body was found about three quarters of a mile from her home. Mary was said to have been "*in comfortable circumstances,*" eliminating financial problems as a reason for her actions.

An inquest was held at the home of her son William Buist. A witness at the inquest was Margaret Byrnes who testified that she had lived with Mary Best, since she (Byrnes) was two years old. Margaret stated that Mary never drank but that she had been feeling low for some months and had even stayed in Goulburn for a while to see if she would benefit "*from a change of air.*" The jury's verdict was that Mary died from a wound to her throat, self-inflicted, "*while in a state of temporary insanity.*"⁸

¹ Sydney Mail. 17th January 1885, p110.

² NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 2311/1810 V18102311 1A. St John's Church, Parramatta. Baptism Records.

³ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 326/1848 V1848326 33B.

⁴ Goulburn Herald. 23rd October 1861, p2.

⁵ Goulburn Herald. 26th October 1861, p2.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 5345. / Neil Best. October 2021.

⁷ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 275/1858 275 vol 159.

⁸ Goulburn Herald. 20th September 1876, p4.

Robert Holt Best

Robert Holt Best was born on the 27th August 1812 at Seven Hills.¹ On the 24th December 1836 he married Clara Brien at Parramatta.²

Clara Brien was born at Seven Hills on the 10th November 1821, the daughter of Daniel Brien and Mary Ann Brien [nee Parker].³

Robert and Clara had ten children. The first five were all born at Seven Hills, Castle Hill, or Baulkham Hills. The last five were all born at Wagga Wagga.

The ten children were as follows,

1. Clara Agnes Best [b.1837, d.1924] Married James Joseph A Rudd.
2. Martha Susannah Best [b.1839, d.1926] Married (1) James Burke, (2) Henry Edwin Tompson, (3) Charles Edwin Scriven.
3. Robert Holt Best [b.1841, d.1855] Never married.
4. Matthew William Best [b.1843, d.1919] Married Margaret Corie Iredale [nee Adams].
5. Adelina [or Adelena] Best [b.1845, d.1874] Never married.
6. Diana Elizabeth Best [b.1848, d.1927] Married Charles John Tompson.
7. Amelia Ann Best [b.1849, d.1928] Married Thomas Francis Murray.
8. Sarah Jane Best [b.1851, d.1862] Never married.
9. Benjamin Paul Best [b.1853, d.1901] [Twin] Married Clarissa Clementine Nixon.
10. Francis George Best [b.1853, d.1910] [Twin] Married Annie Maria Nixon.

The fact that Robert's first five children were all born on the outskirts of Sydney, suggests that he was not permanently residing at Wogga Wogga during this period [1837-1845]. He was living at Seven Hills in January 1848, when he placed a notice in the Sydney press, warning all persons not to accept orders in his name, as it was his intention to visit his stations "*twice a year, for the purpose of discharging all legal claims.*"⁴ Like the Tompson family the Best family presumably hired a manager for each station but, as the Tompson family learnt, such management of the stations was unsatisfactory and eventually the family took over themselves.

With the birth of his daughter, Diana, at Wagga Wagga in January 1848,⁵ it can be assumed that the family was settled in that place prior to this date. According to Clara's obituary the family moved to Wagga Wagga in 1846.⁶ Matthew Best also confirmed this date.⁷ James Gormly declared that Robert Best moved to Wagga Wagga, with his family, in 1846, or thereabouts.⁸

In 1851 *Best's Yard*, on the licensed station of Robert Holt Best, was appointed a public pound.⁹ Edmund Seppings was the pound keeper at that time, and it is assumed that the term, "*Best's Yard*,"

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 797/1812 V1812797 148 or 2837/1812 V18122837 1A. / St John's Parramatta. Marriage records [ancestry.com]

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 209/1836 V1836209 20. / St John's Parramatta. Marriage records [ancestry.com]

³ St John's Church. Baptisms: 1790-1916. [ancestry.com]

⁴ Sydney Morning Herald. 6th January 1844.

⁵ Some claim that Diana was the first white child born at Wagga Wagga. RJE Gormly suggests that this is probably incorrect. See Daily Advertiser. 7th May 1949, p4.

⁶ Albury Banner. 8th September 1899, p24.

⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th January 1904, p2.

⁸ James Gormly. *Exploration & Settlement in Australia*. 2004 edition. p117.

⁹ Sydney Morning Herald. 3rd May 1851, p5.

referred to the bend in the river where the Wagga Wagga Beach is located [behind the churches], which is where Seppings had the pound.

The floods in 1852 and 1853 caused everyone to reevaluate where they built and lived. The Best family was no exception. In 1852 the family were forced to climb into a small punt and to secure same to a tree, where they stayed for two days before being rescued.¹ According to Gormly the family home was washed away in the flood.²

The Best family would have had knowledge of the 1844 flood, but as the evidence suggests they were not residing at Wagga Wagga at this time, they would not have personally experienced the severity of the event. The '44 flood was severe, but the '52 flood was apparently two to three feet higher.³

Robert Holt Best died on the 26th September 1853. He was out riding on his run searching for cattle, when he was thrown from his horse and killed instantly at a location some two miles from his home. He was survived by his wife and his ten children.⁴ Following the death of her husband, Clara took over the management of the run with the assistance of her sons.

In 1855 the lease of the Wogga Wogga Run was transferred to Clara, from William Best.

On the 3rd April 1855, Robert Holt Best's eldest son, Robert Holt Best [junior] died when he was crushed to death by his horse after it faltered and fell. Robert was only thirteen years and six months old.⁵

On the 4th December 1856, Clara Best [nee Brien] married Edward Charles Pearson, the second son of Mr & Mrs John Pearson of George Street, Parramatta. The wedding took place at the private residence of Frederick A Tompson [erroneously listed as *Simpson* in press report], CPS, at South Wagga Wagga.⁶

Clara Pearson [nee Brien] passed away at the residence of her son-in-law, Charles Tompson of Gurwood Street on the 6th September 1899 at the age of eighty years.

¹ Bell's Life. 17th July 1852, p2.

² Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 30th June 1904, p3.

³ Maitland Mercury. 21st July 1852, p4.

⁴ Freeman's Journal. 19th November 1853, p5.

⁵ Goulburn Herald. 21st April 1855, p2 & p3.

⁶ Sydney Morning Herald. 10th December 1856, p1.



Above: Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien] Courtesy CSU Regional Archives [RW23/558].

Peter Best

Peter Best was born on the 8th November 1814 at Castle Hill.¹ On the 22nd November 1841 he married Eliza Lawless [or Lawliss] at Yass.² Eliza was the youngest daughter of F Lawless of Yellonglar. The couple had four children – one daughter and three sons, none of whom had any connection with Wagga Wagga. Peter Best died at his home, Albert Vale [Gunning], on the 18th February 1878.³ Eliza Best [nee Lawless] died at the home of her son-in-law at Grenfell on the 17th October 1912, at the age of ninety.⁴

William Best

William Best was born on the 9th April 1816 at Toongabbie.⁵ In 1840 he married Susan Gilbert at Parramatta.⁶ Susan was the daughter of Samuel Gilbert, an old Parramatta identity.⁷

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 1006/1814 V18141006 148 or 3900/1814 V18143900 1B.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 492/1841 V1841492 25C. / Sydney Monitor. 8th December 1841, p3.

³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 10627. / Goulburn Herald. 16th February 1878, p5.

⁴ Grenfell Record. 25th October 1912, p2.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 1007/1816 V18161007 148 or 3901/1816 V18163901 1B.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 333/1840 V1840333 24B.

⁷ Cumberland Argus. 11th October 1902, p7.



The couple had eleven children all recorded as being born in the Prospect, Seven Hills, and Parramatta districts. A number of the children died at or near Yass [Tangmangaroo]. One died at Young, while the rest died in the suburbs of Sydney or on the outskirts - at Dural or Parramatta.

William was an orchardist at Seven Hills for some sixty years.

William passed away on the 3rd October 1902 at Seven Hills.¹

Left: William Best. Courtesy Rod and Neil Best.



Left: Susan Gilbert c.1858. Courtesy Rod and Neil Best.

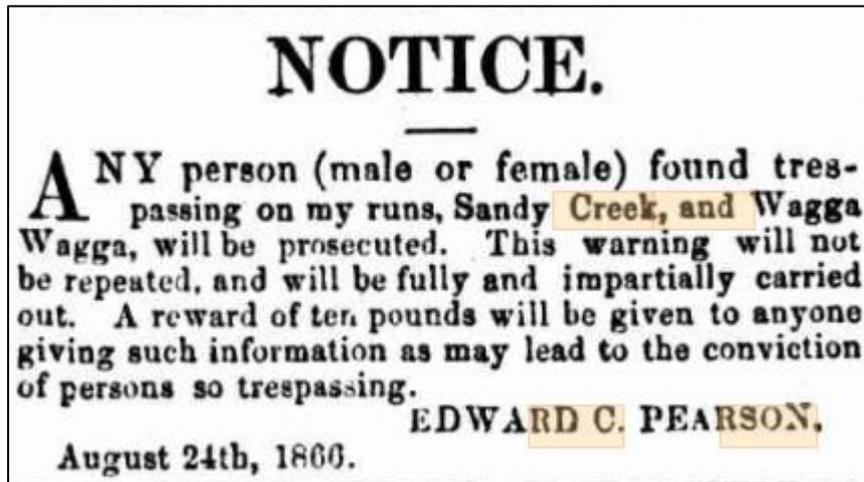
Susan Best [nee Gilbert] died at Parramatta on the 27th December 1865.²

¹ NSW Death registration # 15313

² NSW Death registration # 5338. Sydney Morning Herald. 30th December 1865, p5. / 6th January 1866, p5.

Clara Pearson

Following her marriage to Charles Pearson, Clara transferred the lease to her new husband. In 1865 Pearson purchased the Sandy Creek Run from John Peter¹ and combined it with what was left of the Wagga Wagga Run.



Left: A notice posted by Edward Pearson in September 1866.²

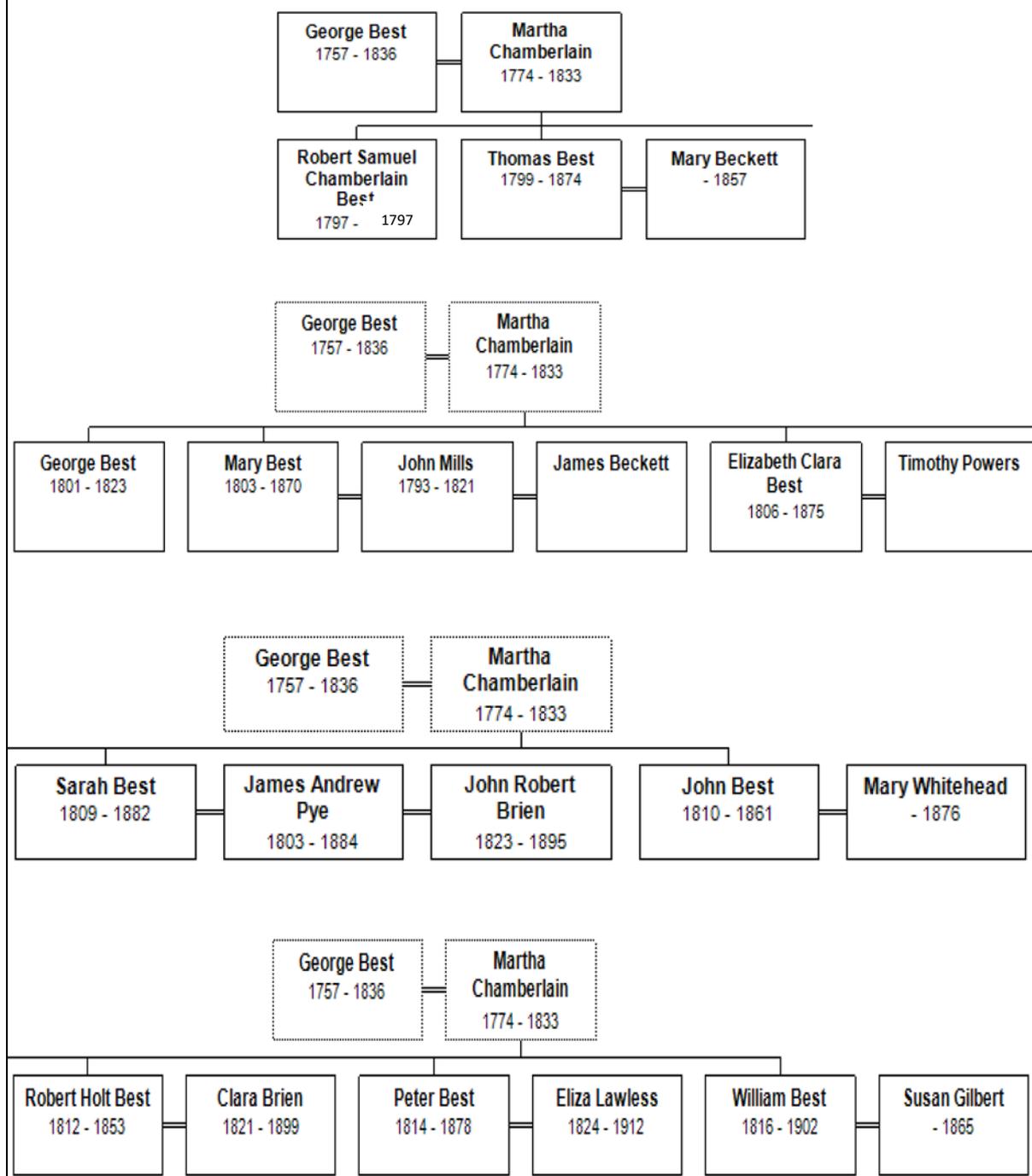
Edward Charles Pearson passed away on the 18th December 1887 and an obituary provided the following account of his life,

“The deceased gentleman was the son of the late Mr. John Pearson formerly of Hampshire (England), and came with his family to this colony 50 years ago, and was educated at King's School, Parramatta. He arrived in this district about 28 years ago, and was for some years manager of Pomingalarna Station, then owned by Mr. John Church. After that Mr. Pearson married, and lived for some time at Flowerdale, then the homestead of the Wagga station, which at one time pretty well included what is now the site of the town of Wagga. Subsequently Mr. Pearson bought the Sandy Creek Station and settled there about 23 years ago. The deceased gentleman's brothers are Messrs Stephen and Robert Pearson. The former has been manager of the Commercial Bank, Parramatta, for years, and is now on a holiday trip to Europe, and Mr. Robert Pearson is now, and has been for many years, manager of that institution at Yass. The deceased gentleman, after the death of his first wife, married Mrs. Best, the relict of the late Robert Best. One of his sisters is Mrs. Myles, the widow of the late Laurence Myles, a very successful tobacco planter upon the Hunter River. A second sister, Mrs. F. A. Tompson, wife of our late respected townsman, one of the earliest pioneers of this district, is still amongst us, and a third sister of the deceased, Mrs. E. H. Tompson, wife of our late Clerk of Petty Sessions, is also with us as also are a great number of respected descendants. The deceased has left a widow and only one child, the wife of Mr. J. R. R. Ross, manager of the Bank of New South Wales, at Junee Junction. The Messrs. Best and their relatives, connected with the late Mr. Pearson, are engaged in pastoral pursuits in the district, and are well known and highly respected. By the death of Mr. Pearson a worthy colonist is lost to the country.”

¹ NSW Government Gazette. 1865, p414.

² Wagga Wagga Express. 8th September 1866, p3.

**Descendant Chart for
George Best**



Above: The family of George and Martha Best.

**THE
CHILDREN OF
ROBERT
HOLT BEST &
CLARA BEST
[NEE BRIEN]**

The Children of Robert Holt & Clara Best [3rd Generation]

Clara Agnes Best

Clara Agnes Best was born on the 19th November 1837, at Seven Hills.¹ On the 20th December 1857 she married James Joseph Rudd in St Augustine's Church, at Yass.² Clara was born to be the wife of a farmer and grazier, having been raised on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, where she "*rode the hills and flats with her brother, and her sister, Martha, and how she loved to send horses over the logs and slip-rails.*"³ A demonstration of her grit was on display when she mounted her horse, and in company with her companions, rode to Yass from Wagga Wagga, to attend her own wedding.⁴

The couple's first child, an unnamed female, was born in 1858 at Wagga Wagga.⁵ It is assumed the infant died that same year, as no further evidence of the child was found. Ten more children followed, including the last two children, Neida and Leslie [twins], in August 1879.

Their first, and eldest son, was James Verdict Isodore Rudd and he took over Wagingoberembee after his father died, maintaining an unbroken chain of family possession.

James Joseph Rudd passed away at Wagingoberembee on the 7th July 1893 at the age of fifty eight.⁶ [See section on Rudd family, further on].

Clara Agnes Rudd [nee Best] passed away thirty-one years later on the 29th November 1924 aged eighty-seven.⁷ Her residence at the time was *Fairleigh* in Kincaid Street. Clara's obituary enforced the family's desire for acceptance, with the following passage,⁸

"The deceased lady came of good old English stock, remarkable for their love of sport and pioneering. Her grandfather kept the hounds on his estate at Parramatta and she was related to the Mitchell and Humes of exploration fame in Australian History."

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 683/1837 V1837683 21.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 2948. / Sydney Morning Herald. 28th December 1857, p1. / 9th January 1858, p7.

³ Daily Advertiser. 1st December 1924, p2.

⁴ Daily Advertiser. 19th September 1934, p2.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 12705.

⁶ Wagga Wagga Express. 8th July 1893, p3.

⁷ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 19648.

⁸ Daily Advertiser. 1st December 1924, p2.

Martha Susannah Best

Martha Susannah Best was born at Castle Hill on the 28th December 1839.¹ On the 28th November 1855, Martha married James Bourke at Wagga Wagga.² Martha and James had three children – John [b.1855, d.1908]; Martha Susannah [b.1858, d.1901]; Clara Ursula [b.1859, d.1939]. Martha was only sixteen years old when she married James. No official record could be found for the birth of the couple's first child, John, and there is a strong possibility that he was conceived prior to his parent's marriage. The couple's youngest child, Clara Ursula, was born in October 1859, some four months after the death of her father in June 1859.

James Bourke passed away on the 7th June 1859 at the age of twenty-four years.³ He was the son of James Bourke [senior] and Mary Bourke [nee Bent]. His father had settled the *Gumly Gumly* run in 1832, before the Bests settled at *Wogga Wogga*.⁴ James [senior] passed away in 1835 and his widow, Mary, married the infamous John Peter.

James [junior] was a farmer and grazier who owned the *O'Brien's Creek* run. He was bequeathed seven hundred head of mixed sheep, three hundred head of mixed cattle and five hundred head of horses as his share of his father's estate, which would have placed him in good stead. After his death the property was sold for fifteen hundred pounds, but Martha subsequently purchased the property.⁵

On the 21st March 1862, Martha married Henry Edwin Tompson at Wagga Wagga.⁶ There was no issue from this marriage. Henry Edwin Tompson passed away at Gumly Gumly on the 30th January 1867.⁷ Edwin was the second son of Frederick Anslow Tompson and Eliza Tompson [nee Pearson], of *Waterview*, Wagga Wagga. He was only twenty-nine years old at the time of his death.

On the 2nd March 1873, Martha married for the third and last time to Charles Edwin Scriven, in Hobart, Tasmania.⁸ Charles Scriven was a manager of the Wagga Wagga branch of the Bank of NSW. He left Wagga Wagga in 1877⁹ and passed away at Sydney on the 23rd June 1891.¹⁰ There was no issue from this union.

Martha Susannah Best passed away at Randwick on the 22nd December 1926.¹¹

Robert Holt Best [junior]

Robert Holt Best [junior] was born on the 16th October 1841 at Baulkham Hills.¹² Robert [junior] was tragically killed when riding from Wagga Wagga to *Mundawaddera* on the 3rd April 1855.¹³ The tragedy occurred when the horse he was riding stumbled and fell on him, crushing his body.¹⁴

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 665/1839 V1839665 24A.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 758/1855 V1855758 101.

³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 5289.

⁴ Daily Advertiser. 18th June 1949, p3.

⁵ Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. James Bourke.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 3114

⁷ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 8072.

⁸ TAS. BDM's. Marriage registration 152/1873.

⁹ Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. Charles Edwin Scriven.

¹⁰ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 988.

¹¹ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 18171. / Sydney Morning Herald. 24th December 1926, p8.

¹² NSW BDM's. Death registration # 986/1841 V1841986 25A.

¹³ Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. Robert Holt Best [junior]

¹⁴ Goulburn Herald. 21st April 1855, p2 & p3.

Matthew William Best

Matthew William Best was born on the 14th August 1843 at Baulkham Hills.¹ In 1875 he married Margaret Corrie Iredale [nee Adams] at Paddington, Sydney.² Matthew and Margaret had two children – George Robert William [b.1875, d.1876], and Ada Florence [b.1878, d.1956].

Margaret had previously been married to Thomas Richardson Iredale but the latter had passed away in 1870. Frank Iredale [b.1867, d.1926], the son of Thomas Richardson and Margaret Iredale, was an exceptional cricketer, playing for both NSW and Australia.

Margaret Corrie Best [nee Adams] passed away on the 10th June 1919³ at Thornbury Lodge.⁴

Matthew William Best died on the 11th September 1919 at Baulkham Hills.⁵

Matthew resided at Wogga Wogga in the 1840's and two letters he submitted to the local paper in the early 1900's, recorded important details of those early days.⁶

The Convict Stain [Matthew Best]

A convict heritage was not something to be proud of in earlier times. In September 1902 a reporter, Edwin Howell, held an interview with Matthew William Best of Thornbury Lodge, at Baulkham Hills.⁷ Best recounted how his grandfather, George Best, had an argument with Lord Camelford, which resulted in a duel taking place on the 4th May 1804. Lord Camelford was mortally wounded compelling George to leave the motherland and head to Australia. According to Matthew, George arrived in Botany in 1806 and promptly took up land. George, according to Matthew, declined the offer of land at Redfern and Burwood, instead choosing land at what, by 1902, was known as Baulkham Hills. He soon cleared three acres of his four-hundred-acre grant and built the first home in that district. Matthew's father, Robert Holt Best, was born in this house and again according to Matthew he [Robert Holt] was named after his godfather, General Holt.

George then, according to Matthew, proceeded to the Gunning River and Jerrawa Creek and established the first station in that district. George then moved down the Murrumbidgee and took up *Wagga Wagga* [120,000 acres] and *Buckinbong* [250,000 acres] but abandoned the latter not long after. Furthermore, Matthew claimed that Robert Holt Best [senior] took over the *Wagga Wagga* run in 1834.

RJE Gormly stated that when William originally settled the *Wogga Wogga* run, he occupied the southern side of the river for a distance of some fifty miles - as far as *Buckinbong*, where he had erected stock yards and huts.⁸

Matthew recalled that he and four of his brothers and sisters were all christened on the one occasion at St John's, Parramatta. At that time there were no facilities at either Gunning or on the Murrumbidgee where the children could be christened. The event had to wait till the family

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 745/1843 V1843745 27A.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 1453.

³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 12590.

⁴ Cumberland Argus. 14th June 1919, p14.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 21261. / Cumberland Argus. 13th September 1919, p6.

⁶ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 1st June 1901, p2. / 12th December 1905, p3.

⁷ Cumberland Argus. 6th September 1902, p8.

⁸ Daily Advertiser. 6th May 1950, p4. / Cumberland Argus. 13th September 1919, p6.

returned to Baulkham Hills for a visit. This event took place on the 26th April 1853, when Amelia, Sarah, Benjamin, and Francis Best, were all baptised by William Gore.¹

According to Matthew Best, following the death of Robert Holt, senior, Robert Holt, junior, took over the property and then, when Robert Holt [junior] died, he, Matthew Best [aged eleven] inherited the properties, including the land at Baulkham Hills. The lease was legally in the name of Clara, but it is assumed that the two aforementioned sons were responsible for the management of the property, under Clara's watchful eye. Clara's marriage to Edward Pearson in December 1856 would have altered the situation.

It appears that after Clara married Pearson, Matthew went back Baulkham Hills but returned in 1914 to help his stepfather and did so until he [Matthew] turned forty, at which time he moved back to the Baulkham Hills property and remained there for the next twenty years. He created one of the best known orchards in the colony at this location.²

In 1877 Matthew married Mrs Margaret Corrie Iredale, the mother of the famous Australian cricketer, Frank Iredale. The couple had two children but only one survived infancy - Ada Florence Best, who became an accomplished singer.

In 1890 Matthew sold two hundred acres of his estate leaving him with an equivalent area.

Matthew stated that he held three objects, which he cherished – the pistol with which Lord Camelford was shot; his grandfather's buckskin breeches; and his grandfather's hunting coat – all of which were in good condition.

It is not known if Matthew fabricated these lies about his grandfather's arrival in Australia or whether earlier generations created the stories.

Adelaide Best [aka Ada, Adelina, or Adelena]

Adelina Best was born on the 27th October 1845 at Baulkham Hills.³ She passed away on the 11th March 1874 at Sandy Creek.⁴ Ada never married and was living with her mother and stepfather at the time of her death. Ada was buried at Flowerdale.

Diana Elizabeth Best

Diana Elizabeth Best was born on the 13th January 1848 at Wagga Wagga.⁵ On the 30th November 1876 she married Charles John Tompson at Wagga Wagga in St John's Church.⁶ Charles was the fifth son of Frederick Anslow Tompson and Eliza Tompson [nee Pearson].⁷

Diana and John had four children – Claribel Maud [b.1897, d.1950]; Charles Selwyn [b.1880, d.1930]; Cyril Lionel [b.1883, d.1957]; and Clive Henry [b.1886, d.1957].

¹ Sydney, Anglican Parish Registers: 1814-2011. Parish Marsfield. 26th April 1853.

² Cumberland Argus. 6th September 1902, p8.

³ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 1031/1845 V18451031 31A.

⁴ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 8117.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 2217/1848 V18482217 34A.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 4392.

⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 2nd December 1876, p2.

Charles John Tompson passed away on the 26th April 1927 at Manly.¹ His death took place at his residence, 44 Fairlight Street, Manly.²

Tompson had been a prominent businessman at Wagga Wagga up until 1910, at which time he left Wagga Wagga to live at Manly. He had been a very successful stock and station agent during his time at Wagga Wagga, having been a member of several different firms. At one time he was a part owner of the Sandy Creek Run, firstly with Benjamin and Frank Best, and later with EC Rolls.³



Diana Tompson [nee Best] passed away on the 20th November 1927 at her Manly residence.⁴ She was survived by her four children, all of whom, at that time, lived in Manly.⁵

Left: Diana Tompson [nee Best].
Courtesy Neil Best.

¹ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 8353.

² Sydney Morning Herald. 27th April 1927, p2.

³ Sherry Morris. Biographical Listings. Charles John Tompson.

⁴ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 21108.

⁵ Daily Advertiser. 8th December 1927, p2.

Amelia Ann Best

Amelia Ann Best was born on the 2nd August 1849 at Wagga Wagga.¹

Early in November 1880 Amelia married Thomas Francis Murray in St John's Church at Wagga Wagga.² Thomas was the eldest son of the late Thomas Roger Murray, of Glasgow.³

Thomas and Amelia had three children [Francis Wilfred Pearson [b.1881, d.1952]; Clara Agnes Best [b.1884, d.1931]; and Edward Charles Oswald [b.1885, d.1969].

Thomas Francis Murray died in July 1909, at Brisbane, Queensland.⁴ Amelia Ann Murray [nee Best] passed away at Mosman [Sydney] in October 1928.⁵

Sarah Jane Best

Sarah Jane Best was born on the 18th February 1851 at Wagga Wagga.⁶ Sarah passed away on the 11^h March 1862 at Wagga Wagga.⁷ Sarah was buried at Flowerdale.

Benjamin Paul Best

Benjamin Paul Best was born on the 20th January 1853, at Flowerdale, Wagga Wagga.⁸ His twin brother, Francis George, was born the same day.

On the 4th February 1880 he married Clarissa Clementine Nixon at Wagga Wagga.⁹ Benjamin and Clarissa had eight children, all of whom were born at Sandy Creek. The children were as follows,

1. Lesley Robert [b.1880, d.1919]
2. John Reginald Holt [b.1882, d.1900]
3. Bertie Cecil [b.1884, d.1891]
4. Ada Annie Emmeline [b.1886, d.1922]
5. George William [b.1888, d.1979]
6. Claraville May [b.1890, d.1976]
7. Stanley Benjamin [b.1892, d.1969]
8. Rollo Wilfred [b.1896, d.1974]

Benjamin lived and worked on Sandy Creek with his mother and stepfather, and later in life he owned this station in partnership with his brother Frank and his brother-in-law, Charles John Tompson.¹⁰

Benjamin Paul Best passed away on the 29th October 1901 at Sandy Creek¹¹ and was buried at Flowerdale.

¹ Sydney. Anglican Parish Registers: 1814-2011.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 5195.

³ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 11th November 1880, p2.

⁴ Brisbane Courier. 22nd July 1909, p4.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 19643.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 2433/1851 V18512433 39A.

⁷ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 6129. St John's Church, Wagga Wagga. Burial Register.

⁸ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 2434/1853 V18532434 39A. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 31st October 1901, p2.

⁹ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 5129.

¹⁰ Wagga Wagga Express. 31st October 1901, p2.

¹¹ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 15678. / Wagga Wagga Express. 31st October 1901, p2. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 31st October 1901, p2.

Benjamin and Clarissa lived in Wagga Wagga at one time, and later [in 1912] Clarissa lived at *Gregadoo*, Balmoral Avenue, Mosman.

Clarissa Clementine Nixon passed away in the St Lawrence Private Hospital at Chatswood, on the 2nd July 1930.¹ She was the 5th daughter of John Nixon and Ann Maria Nixon [nee Parsons] and was born at *Gregadoo* on the 20th March 1862. Her sister, Annie Maria Nixon, had married Benjamin's twin brother, Frank Best.



Above: Clarissa Clementine Best [nee Nixon]. Courtesy CSU Regional Archives [RW5/499]

¹ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 11990. / Daily Advertiser. 7th July 1930, p5.

Francis George Best

Francis George Best was born on the 20th January 1853 at Flowerdale, Wagga Wagga.¹ His twin brother, Benjamin Paul Best, was born the same day.

On the 1st June 1880 Frank married Annie Maria Nixon at Wagga Wagga.² His brother, Benjamin Paul Best, had married Annie's sister, Clarissa Clementine Nixon, earlier in that same year.

Frank and Annie had four children – Edward Francis [b.1881, d.1951]; Sidney Victor [b.1882, d.1968]; Ida Emily Lena [b.1884, d.1956]; and Charles Herbert [b.1887, d.1978].

Frank passed away on the 7th March 1910³ at his residence in Peter Street. He had, at one time, been a part owner of the Sandy Creek run but had lived in Wagga Wagga for the past twelve years. Frank was survived by his widow and his four children.⁴ Frank was buried at Flowerdale. Annie Best [nee Nixon], of 27 Tahlu Street, Burwood, passed away on the 2nd November 1942 at a private hospital in Croydon, Sydney.⁵



Left: Frank Best. Courtesy
CSU Regional Archives
[RW5.494]

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 2434/1853 V18532434 39A. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 31st October 1901, p2.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 5146.

³ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 3558.

⁴ Wagga Wagga Express. 10th March 1910, p2. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 10th March 1910, p2.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 25351. / Sydney Morning Herald. 17th November 1942, p8.



Above: Frank Best, Annie Best [nee Nixon], and two of their children. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina [BGS2008_1000].



Left: Annie Best [nee Nixon].¹



Right: The twins – Benjamin and Frank Best, the sons of Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien]. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina [BGS2008_998].

¹ Museum of the Riverina. [BGS1984_38]

Clara Brien [1821 -1900] – wife of Robert Holt Best (senior)

Clara Brien [Bryan on birth registration] was born on the 10th November 1821 at Seven Hills.¹ She was the daughter of Daniel Brien and Mary Ann Brien [nee Parker]. Her parents were both born in England, but both died in Australia. Her parents had married in January 1821 at Parramatta.²

Clara married Robert Holt Best on the 26th December 1836 in St John's Church, at Parramatta.³ Clara and Robert had ten children before his death in 1853. In December 1856 Clara married Edward Charles Pearson at Wagga Wagga.⁴

Clara and Edward had two children,

1. Edward John Stephen Pearson [1860 -1863]
2. Isabella Agnes Pearson [1861-1930]. Isabella married JRR Ross in 1883 at Wagga Wagga.⁵

Edward Charles Pearson passed away in December 1887. Clara Pearson passed away on the 6th September 1899 at Wagga Wagga.⁶ Her death took place at the Gurwood Street residence of her son-in-law, Charles Tompson.⁷ According to the local press she had often been referred to as "*the mother of the district.*"

Edward Charles Pearson [1826 -1887]

Edward Charles Pearson was born in England in 1826.

Edward passed away on the 18th December 1887 at Sandy Creek.⁸ An obituary provided the following details,⁹

"The deceased gentleman was the son of the late Mr. John Pearson formerly of Hampshire (England), and came with his family to this colony 50 years ago, and was educated at King's School, Parramatta. He arrived in this district about 28 years ago, and was for some years manager of Pomingalarna Station, then owned by Mr. John Church. After that Mr. Pearson married, and lived for some time at Flowerdale, then the homestead of the Wagga station, which at one time pretty well included what is now the site of the town of Wagga. Subsequently Mr. Pearson bought the Sandy Creek Station, and settled there about 23 years ago. The deceased gentleman's brothers are Messrs Stephen and Robert Pearson. The former has been manager of the Commercial Bank, Parramatta, for years, and is now on a holiday trip to Europe; and Mr. Robert Pearson is now, and has been for many years, manager of that institution at Yass. The deceased gentleman, after the death of his first wife, married Mrs. Best, the relict of the late Robert Best. One of his sisters is Mrs. Myles, the widow of the late Laurence Myles, a very successful tobacco planter upon the Hunter River. A second sister, Mrs. F. A. Tompson, wife of our late respected townsman, one of the earliest pioneers of this district, is still amongst us, and a third

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 5645/1821 V18215645 1B or 6645/1821 V18216645 1B or 1336/1821 V18211336 148.

² NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 2684/1821 V18212684 3B.

³ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 209/1836 V1836209 20.

⁴ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 2051.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 5945.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 11114.

⁷ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 7th September 1899, p2.

⁸ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 10808.

⁹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 20th December 1887, p2. / 22nd December 1887, p2.

sister of the deceased, Mrs. E. H. Tompson, wife of our late Clerk of Petty Sessions, is also with us; as also are a great number of respected descendants. The deceased has left a widow and only one child, the wife of Mr. J. R. R. Ross, manager of the Bank of New South Wales, at Junee Junction. The Messrs. Best and their relatives, connected with the late Mr. Pearson, are engaged in pastoral pursuits in the district, and are well known and highly respected. By the death of Mr. Pearson a worthy colonist is lost to the country. The deceased gentleman had thoroughly earned a very high reputation for strict probity - a keen sense of honour distinguishing all his dealings with his fellow man - and a kindly, genial disposition. Above all things, his word was his bond, a sufficiently uncommon attribute in these degenerate days; and with so many good and admirable qualities it is no wonder that he should have easily obtained the regard and esteem of the extensive circle of acquaintances and friends to whom his sudden death, at the age of 62 years, will be a matter of sincere regret, and who will sympathise with those nearer and dearer ones whom the deceased gentleman has left to mourn their loss."

Edward John Stephen Pearson [1860 -1863]

Edward John Stephen Pearson was born at Wagga Wagga in 1860¹ the first child of Edward Charles Pearson and Clara Pearson. The lad passed away on the 21st April 1863 at Wagga Wagga,² aged three years and three months. His death was attributed to diphtheria.³

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 12957.

² NSW BDM's. Death registration # 6131.

³ Empire. 8th May 1863, p1.



Above: A contemporary aerial view of Wagga Wagga, with Best's original settlement locations superimposed. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services. SIX.

Key

Yellow boundaries > Best's original paddocks [pre 1852-53 floods]

A > Best's original head station [at Pig Point]

B > Flowerdale homestead location

FLOWERDALE

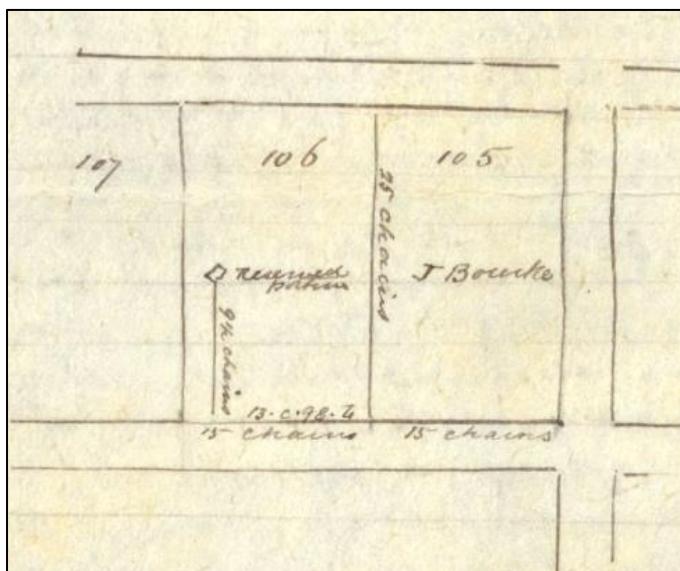
**THE BEST
FAMILY HOME**

Flowerdale

Following the 1852 and 1853 floods the Best family built a new homestead on higher grounds, which they called *Flowerdale*. The original Best homestead at Pig Point had been swept away by the 1852 flood. The family lived at *Flowerdale* until the 1860's when Edward Pearson moved to the Sandy Creek Run [around 1864].

Flowerdale homestead was located on portions 106 and 107, in the parish of South Wagga Wagga. Both portions were purchased from the crown by Edward Charles Pearson. Portion 106 was purchased on the 6th September 1858,¹ while portion 107 was purchased on the 9th February 1857.² Pearson had purchased portion 108 at an earlier date on the 21st October 1858.³

On the 15th July 1863 Edward Charles Pearson conveyed portions 106, 107 and 108 to Archibald Irvine of Brookong, for the sum of six hundred pounds. A small part of portion 105 was exempt from the sale, this being the Best family cemetery plot.⁴



Left: Extract from deed showing the location of the Best family cemetery plot, within portion 106, in 1863. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

On the 14th October 1871, Archibald Irvine, of Forest Lodge, sold the three portions to William Adam Jacob, a grazier of *Flowerdale*, Wagga Wagga, for the sum of three hundred and ten pounds. The burial plot and a right of way, twelve feet wide, that provided an access to the plot, were exempt from the sale.⁵ [Deed features the dimensions of the burial plot]

Right: Jacob appears to have been a progressive farmer and was growing a crop of sugar cane in April 1870.⁶

SUGAR-GROWING ON THE MURRUMBIDGEE.
 —We have received from Mr. W. A. Jacob a splendid sample of the Planters' Friend grown by him on his farm at Flowerdale. The cane is about five feet high, stout and strong, and certainly seems to set at rest any doubt as to the adaptability of the Murrumbidgee soil and climate for its profitable cultivation. Mr. Jacob has about five acres under crop, from which he hopes to get at least from eight to ten tons of sugar. As the pioneer of a new industry likely to be of such vast future importance to the district, he is entitled to the best wishes of all for his success.

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Year 1859, page 4. See also NSW Land Registry Services. LTO Charting Maps [L2710, 5 & 81]. [Note: The latter disagrees with original deeds.]

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Year 1857, page 1450.

³ NSW Land Registry Services. LTO Charting Maps [L2710, 5 & 81]

⁴ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 84, number 18.

⁵ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 127, number 331.

⁶ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 2nd April 1870, p2

FRIDAY, 31st JANUARY.

At Flowerdale Estate, near Pound
Yard, Wagga.

**DISPERSAL OF DAIRY
HERD.**

HEATH & IRVINE (in conjunction with MEURANT & BLAKE) have received instructions to sell by auction, at the Homestead, Flowerdale, on Friday, 31st inst., at half-past 2 o'clock, the whole of the Herd, comprising—

60 Head of Mixed Cattle,

Including—

Selected Milkers and Springers,
Steers, Heifers, and Calves,
And one Pure-bred Pedigree Bull.

In consequence of Mr. McGarry having leased Flowerdale, these Cattle are for positive sale, and the Auctioneers urge upon buyers the opportunity afforded as being exceptional, the cattle offered being the very pick of the large number that have passed through Mr. McGarry's hands. dv

Left: An advertisement by McGarry in January 1902, confirming the presence of a dairy at Flowerdale.¹

140 Head Mixed Cattle.

SALE OF DAIRY HERD.

"FLOWERDALE," WAGGA WAGGA.

WEDNESDAY, 16th JANUARY, 1907,
At 2 p.m.

MEURANT & BLAKE have received instructions from Mr. H. Masters (who is leaving the district) to sell by public auction, as above—

The whole of his

First-class Dairy Herd,

Comprising:—

- 34 Picked Dairy Cows, 26 of which are in full milk and 8 forward springers.
- 15 Dairy Heifers, 6 months old.
- 21 steers, 6 months old.
- 4 Really Good Horses, broken to saddle and harness.
- 1 New Milk Cart, 1 Milk Cart (good order).
- 1 Sulky, 3 Sets Harness, Saddle and Bridle.
- 1 Alpha-Laval Separator (100gals.), 2 Receivers (30 and 10 gals.), 1 Churn, Cream Cans, Buckets, Milk Cans, Measures, Weights and Scales, Wheelbarrow, D.B.B. Gun, Copper, Tubs, together with the Household Furniture and Effects, and sundries too numerous to mention; also a quantity of Poultry.

Also, same time and place,
A/c Mr. Jas. BAXTER:

- 60 Dairy Heifers (good), 2 to 2½ years.
- 8 Fat Cows.

As Mr. Masters has decided to give up dairying, and is leaving the district, the whole of his herd and furniture are for absolute sale.

MEURANT & BLAKE,
Auctioneers.

Right: Another notice for sale of dairy cattle at Flowerdale, in January 1907.²

PRELIMINARY
Highly Important Sale
OF "FLOWERDALE,"

Containing About 280 Acres, and
M'GARRY'S SLAUGHTER YARD
PADDOCK,
Containing 46 acres in Wagga's
Suburban Area.

These Properties will be Auctioned on
an Early Date to be fixed.

MEURANT, BLAKE, WATTS,
CLARK LTD., in conjunction with
SALMON, HANRAHAN and Co., have
received instructions from the owners
to Sell as above.

Full particulars later issues.
**MEURANT, BLAKE, WATTS,
CLARK LTD.,**
Wagga and Henty.
SALMON, HANRAHAN and CO.,
Wagga.
(Auctioneers in Conjunction).

Left: A 1926 notice for sale of McGarry's Flowerdale holdings.³

¹ Wagga Wagga Express. 28th January 1902, p3.

² Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 3rd January 1907, p3.

³ Daily Advertiser. 28th August 1926, p3.

On the 13th October 1933, Herbert Ernest McGarry, a butcher of Narrabri and the sole surviving executor of the estate of Michael McGarry, acting with the consent of various other parties, distributed portions 106, 107, 108, 113, 114, 115 and 116 amongst the various beneficiaries. Olive Isabel McDonough [nee McGarry], the wife of Joseph William McDonough, a hotel assistant of Wagga Wagga, was the beneficiary of portion 106 and a part of portion 107. Total area of the holding was 55 acres and 32 perches.¹

On the same day Olive sold her holding to Ernest Arthur Shoemark, a retired farmer of Wagga Wagga, for the sum of twelve hundred pounds.² The holding consisted of all of portion 106 and a part of portion 107, and had a total area of fifty five acres and thirty two perches.

Ernest Arthur Shoemark passed away on the 13th January 1944 and an obituary provided some brief details,³

“The death occurred in Rawson Private Hospital, Wagga, last night of Mr. Ernest Arthur Shoemark, of Flowerdale, Edward street south, Wagga, at the age of 67 years. He is survived by his wife, four sons: Messrs. Allan, of Flowerdale; Robert (RAAF). Ernie (AIF) and Milton (AIF); seven daughters. Mesdames K. L. Smith, Dhulura; P. O. Smith, Murray street, Wagga; W. J. Lawson, Flowerdale: B. J. Heaslip, Wagga: H. Hingston, Malvern (V.); F. W. Tyler, Wagga; and F. A. Dowsett, Wagga; two brothers, Cecil (Coreinbob) and Sam (Wagga); three sisters, Mesdames I. Tapscott, Wagga; W. J. Watson, Keajura, Tarcutta; and Miss Jenny Shoemark, Wagga. His funeral will take place to-morrow afternoon, the cortege moving from the Methodist Church, Wagga, after a service to commence at 2 o'clock. Members of the Manchester Unity Lodge, of which the late Mr. Shoemark was a very old member, are requested to attend the funeral.”

On the 21st July 1953 William Allen Shoemark, a butcher of Wagga Wagga, and Phillip Osbert Smith, a baker of Wagga Wagga, acting as executors for the estate of Ernest Arthur Shoemark, with the consent of Clara Jane Shoemark, a widow of Wagga Wagga, conveyed certain property to Lancelot Bede McLure, a grazier of Tarcutta, and his wife, Patricia McLure, and Helena May Flynn, the wife of Trevor Gerald Livingstone Flynn, the Clerk of Petty Sessions at Wagga Wagga, for the sum of eight thousand pounds.⁴ The holding consisted of all of portion 106 and a part of portion 107, and had a total area of fifty five acres and thirty two perches.

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 1675, number 941.

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 1675, number 944.

³ Daily Advertiser. 14th January 1944, p2.

⁴ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 2261, number 22.

BY AUCTION ON
NOVEMBER 22
 113 ACRES
“FLOWERDALE”
 ON CITY BOUNDARY
 SPLENDID IMPROVEMENTS
 EARLY VACANT POSSESSION
 AUCTION 3.30 p.m. AT AUSTRALIAN HOTEL
 ACCOUNT ESTATE LATE E. A. SHOEMARK

This Auction presents an opportunity to acquire a splendid property situated with frontage to Edward Street West and adjoining the Salmon Estate lands at rear.

**ON CITY BOUNDARY, YET IN KYEAMBA SHIRE
 IT'S TRULY A WONDERFUL POSITION**

Total area 112 Acres 3 Roods 22 Perches. The land is from level rich flats gently rising to elevated high ground, square in shape, and one half is well above any flood, whilst lower lands are flooded in extreme floods only.

Highly improved, the property is suited for any type of mixed farming, intense culture or stud farm, and has wonderful subdivisional prospects, being adjacent to the city's factory area. Good pastures established, some lucerne and sub. clover.

Good fences and gates, 11 large and 4 small paddocks, Pig Pens and Sheds. Large Wood and Fibro Homestead, telephone connected, built on site overlooking the city and well above any flood. City electricity connected. Concrete paths and flower beds, concreted back yard, big Garage and Workshop and Tool Shed, also Iron Machinery Shed; Orchard and grape vines, &c.

Property is very well watered by bricked well, 5 excavated tanks and rain tanks. Engine and pump on well supplies overhead tank, is laid on to grounds and stock pens.

Here is a first class proposition for any man seeking a property alongside this city.

Lusher, Young & Stellway, Solicitors for Vendor Estate.

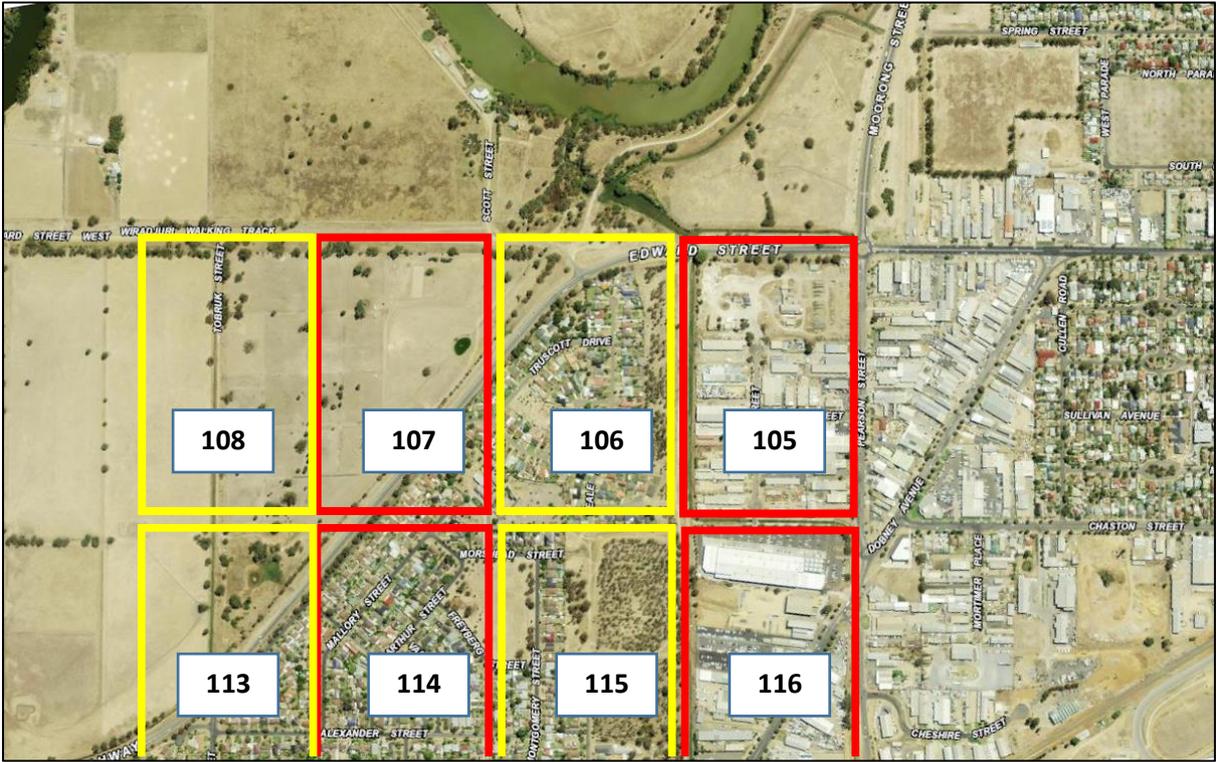
Hore & Docker, Property Agents & Auctioneers
 WAGGA WAGGA

Left: Notice for sale of property in November 1951.¹

Ownership of the property post 1953 has not been traced.

Current title is DP.7.249561 > 12838-197

¹ Daily Advertiser. 27th October 1951, p7.



Above: Contemporary aerial view with approximate boundaries of portions 105, 106, 107, 108, 113, 114, 115, and 116 superimposed. These lots made up McGarry’s farm. Courtesy Google maps.



Above: Contemporary aerial view showing location of the Best Family Cemetery [portion 106]. Courtesy Google Maps.

THE BEST FAMILY CEMETERY

Best Family Cemetery

The Best family cemetery is located in an area that originally lay within portion 106, in the parish of South Wagga Wagga. This portion changed ownership multiple times, but the family cemetery was always exempted from the sale.

The land set aside for the burial plot had an area of twenty feet square. The boundary of same commenced at the end of a straight line drawn from a point on the southern boundary of portion 106. Said line commenced at a point 13 chains and 98 links [281M] distant from eastern end of said southern boundary. Said line extended 9 chains and 50 links [191M] to the north. The boundaries of the burial plot commenced at this latter point, extending to the west a distance of twenty two feet, parallel with the southern boundary of portion 106. The boundary then extended north, at a right angle, a distance of twenty two feet. The northern and eastern boundaries formed a perfect square. A right of access, twelve feet wide, extended, at an angle of 90⁰, from the southern boundary of portion 106, directly to the burial plot.¹

The earliest burial in the family plot was that of Robert Holt Best [senior] in September 1853. His son, Robert Holt Best [junior] followed in April 1855. The last person to be buried in the plot was Francis George Best in March 1910.

Fortunately, the cemetery has been preserved, and still exists in 2023 – a rare and historical legacy from the earliest days of white occupation.

As part of the “*Back to Wagga*” celebrations in 1927, a group of people visited the Best Family Cemetery at *Flowerdale* as part of an arranged tour. A press report provided the following details,²

“There are probably many residents of Wagga who have not heard of the Flowerdale cemetery and who do not know where it is. The best way to get to it is along Edward-street, continuing past the hospital, keeping Lewisham on the left. Then a short distance to big gates admitting to a dairy farm, on which the old burial ground lies well back from the road. Flowerdale Lagoon is not far away. The small patch, not large enough to be called 'God's acre' is now well protected with a low brick wall and iron fence. The names on the headstones include the following:

ROBERT HOLT BEST, died September 28, 1855 [sic]. aged 40 years.

ROBERT HOLT BEST, Junr., died April 3, 1855, aged 13 years.

SARAH JANE BEST, died March 12, 1862. aged 11 years.

EDWARD JOHN STEPHEN PEARSON, died April 21. 1863, aged 5 years.

ADALENA BEST, died March 11, 1874, aged 28 years.

EDWARD CHARLES PEARSON, died December 18, 1887, aged 62 years.

CLARA PEARSON, died September 6, 1900, aged 80 years.

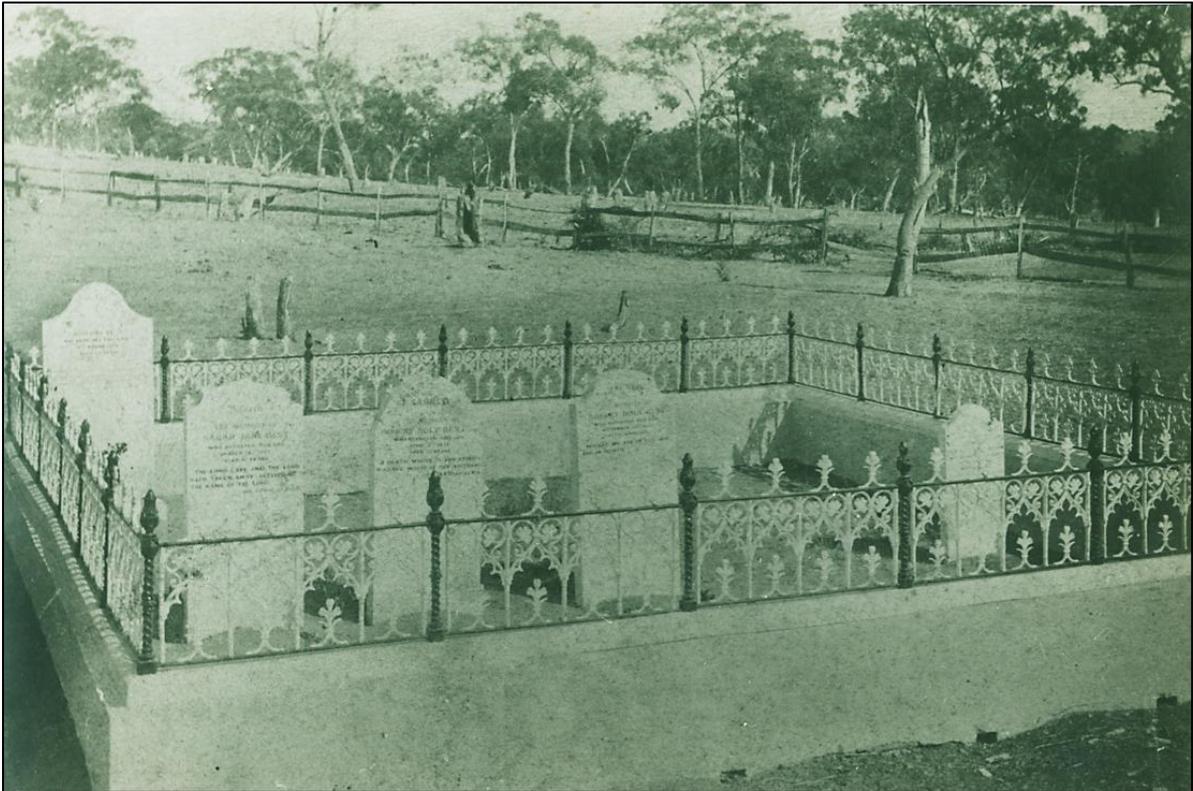
JOHN REGINALD HOLT BEST, died December 3, 1900, aged 18 years.

FRANCIS GEORGE BEST, died March 7, 1910, aged 58 years.

It is believed that it was the Flynn family who donated the Best Family Cemetery plot and the land surrounding it, to the Wagga Wagga City Council.

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Book 127, number 331.

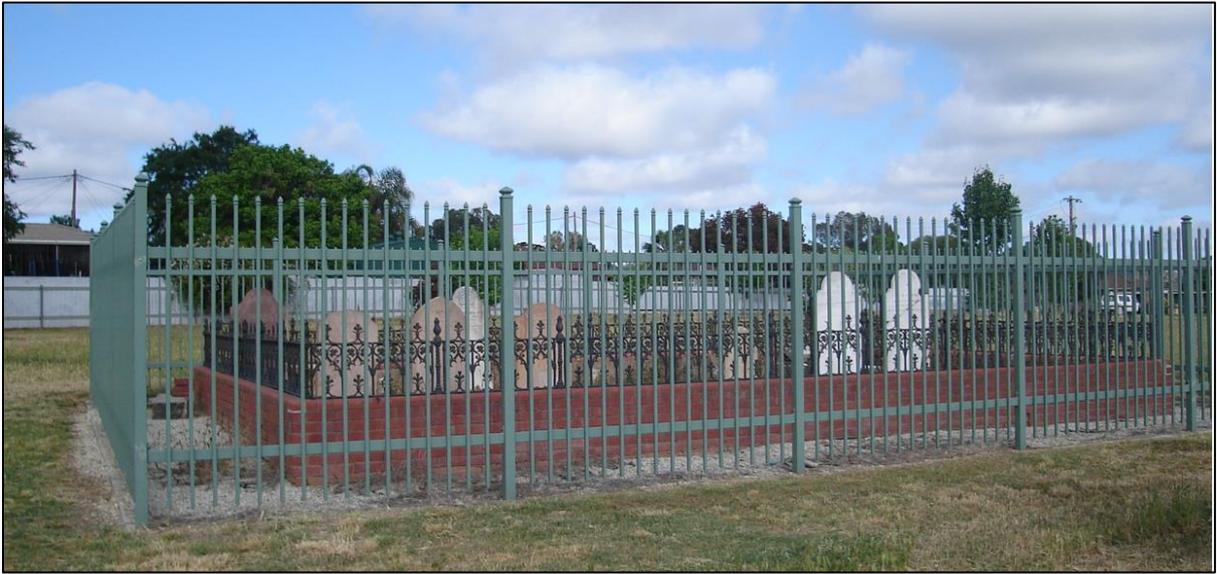
² Daily Advertiser. 21st October 1927, p2.



Above: An early photo of the Best Family Cemetery [photo taken between 1874 and 1887]. The headstone on the extreme right is that of Edward John Stephen Pearson [1860-1863]. It is clear that the plot was subsequently extended to the right [or west] to accommodate later burials. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina.



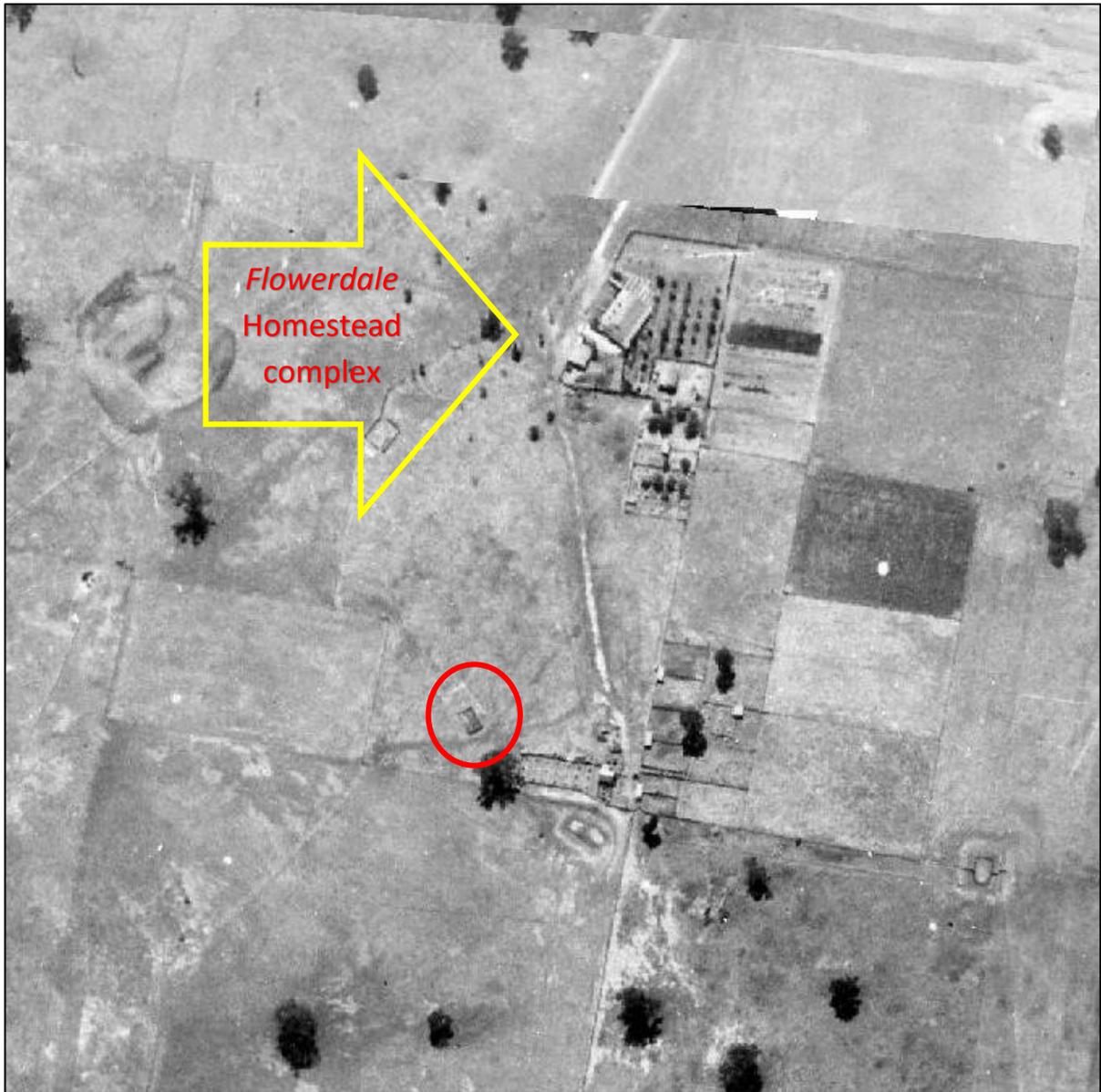
Above: The Best Family Cemetery c.1951.



Above: Best Family Cemetery in October 2011, with protective fence surrounding same.



Above: Best Family Cemetery in September 2014 [from inside the protective fence].



Above: A 1944 aerial view, featuring the Best Family Cemetery [red circle] and the *Flowerdale* homestead. Courtesy Wagga Wagga City Council. Intramaps.



Above: A similar aerial view in 1971. Courtesy Wagga Wagga City Council. Intramaps.



Above: A recent aerial view [2012] showing the extensive development since 1971. Courtesy Wagga Wagga City Council. Intramaps.



Above: The Best Family Cemetery in 1992.



Above: Evidence of the vandalism in early 21st century.

Best Cemetery¹ – [see DA 21/10/1927 p2]

The Best family cemetery at *Flowerdale* contains at least eleven graves. The eleven known persons buried in this cemetery are as follows:

1. Adalena Best [1845 -1874]. Daughter of Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien]
2. Benjamin Paul Best [1853 -1901]. Son of Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien]
3. Bertie Cecil Best [1884-1891]. Son of Benjamin Paul Best and Clarissa Clementine Best [nee Nixon]
4. Clara Pearson [1821 -1899]. Daughter of Daniel Brien and Mary Ann Brien [nee Parker]. Wife of 1. Robert Holt Best, 2. Edward Charles Pearson.
5. Edward Charles Pearson [1826 -1887]. Son of John Pearson and Sarah Pearson [nee Hawkins]. Second husband of Clara Best [nee Brien]
6. Edward John Stephen Pearson [1860 -1863]. Son of Edward Charles Pearson and Clara Pearson [nee Brien]
7. Francis George Best [1853 -1910]. Son of Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien]
8. John Reginald Holt Best [1882-1900]. Son of Benjamin Paul Best and Clarissa Clementine Best [nee Nixon]
9. Robert Holt Best [1813-1853]. Son of George Best and Martha Best [nee Chamberlain]
10. Robert Holt Best [junior] [1841-1855]. Son of Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien]
11. Sarah Jane Best [1851-1862]. Daughter of Robert Holt Best and Clara Best [nee Brien]

¹ Daily Advertiser. 21st October 1927, p2 [and various other sources].

Adalena Best

b. 27th October 1845

d. 11th March 1874 (aged 28)¹



¹ Headstone of Adalena Best. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Benjamin Paul Best

b. 20th January 1853

d. 29th October 1901 (aged 48)¹



¹ Headstone of Benjamin Paul Best. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Bertie Cecil Best

b. 22nd February 1884

d. 23rd October 1891 [aged 8]¹

The grave of Bertie Cecil Best is not identified.

From the Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 27th October 1891, p2.

“The many friends of Mr. B. P. Best will learn with regret of the death of that gentleman’s third son, Bertie Cecil, which took place on Friday last at Sandy Creek Station. The child, who was seven years and eight months old, was only ill for a few days, the cause of death being croup. The remains were interred in the family’s private cemetery at Flowerdale, where a number of the deceased’s relatives are buried. The funeral service was conducted by Archdeacon Pownall. Much sympathy is expressed for the parents in their sad bereavement, as the child was a general favorite.”



Above: The headstones of Edward Charles Pearson and his wife, Clara Pearson [nee Bryan]

¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 27th October 1891.

Clara Pearson [nee Best, nee Bryan]

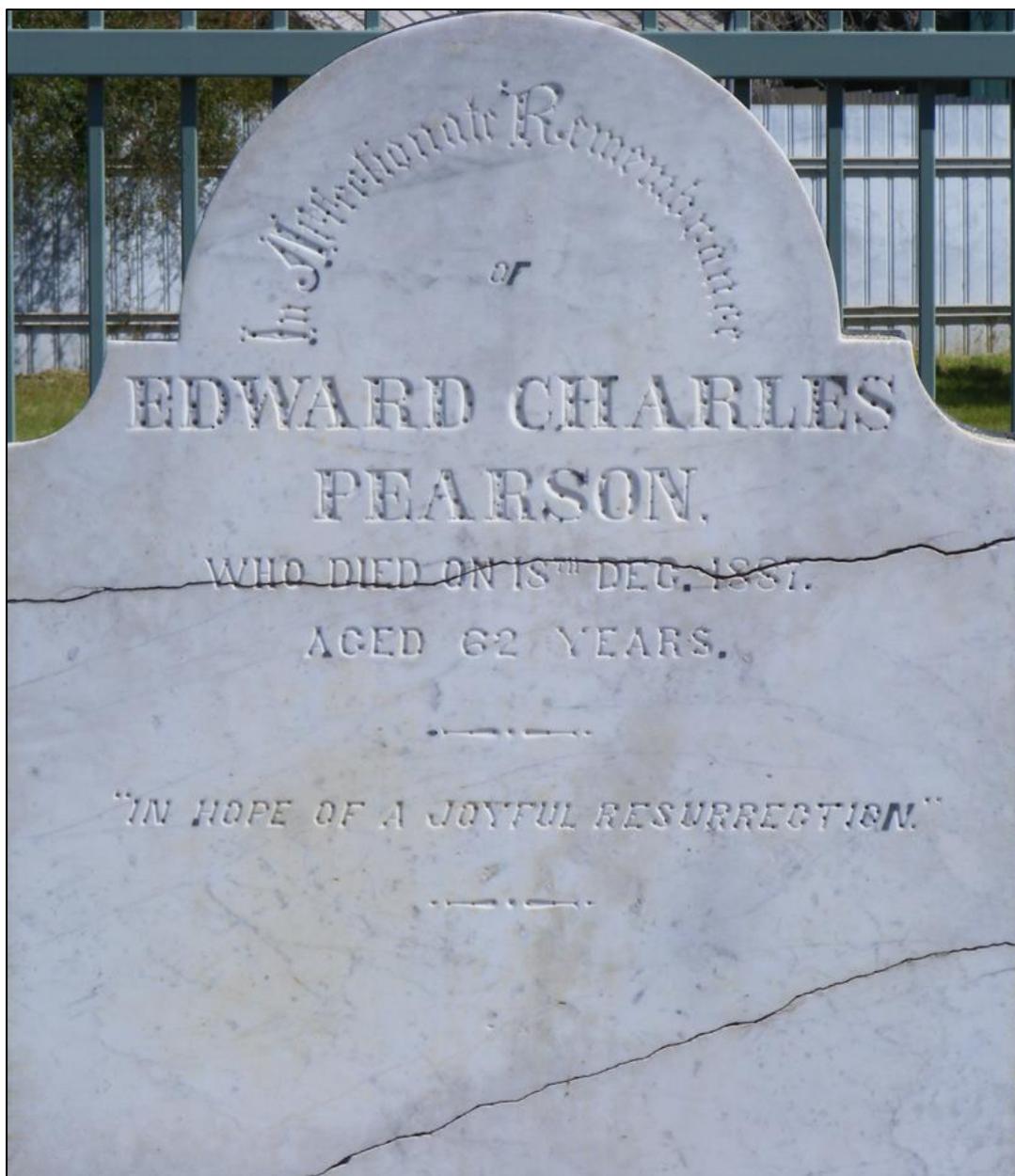
b. 10th November 1821

d. 6th September 1899 (aged 80)¹



¹ Headstone of Clara Pearson. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Edward Charles Pearson
b. 18th May 1826
d. 18th December 1887 (aged 62)¹

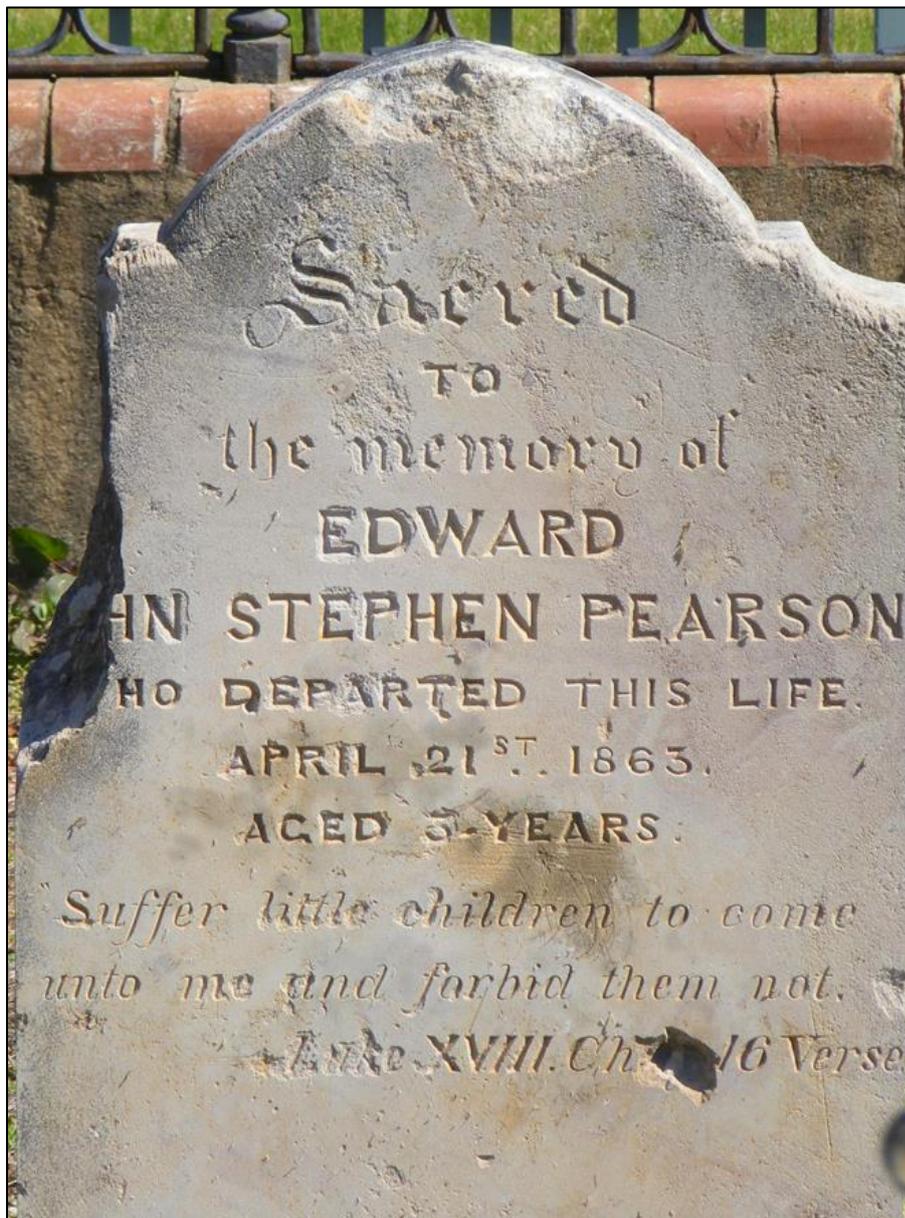


¹ Headstone of Edward Charles Pearson. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Edward John Stephen Pearson

b. 13th January 1860

d. 21st April 1863 (aged 3)¹



¹ Headstone of Edward John Stephen Pearson. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Francis George Best

b. 20th January 1853

d. 7th March 1910 (aged 58)¹



¹ Headstone of Francis George Best. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

John Reginald Holt Best

b. 16th June 1882

d. 3rd December 1900.¹

The grave of John Reginald Holt Best is not identified.

From the *Wagga Wagga Express*, 4th December 1900.

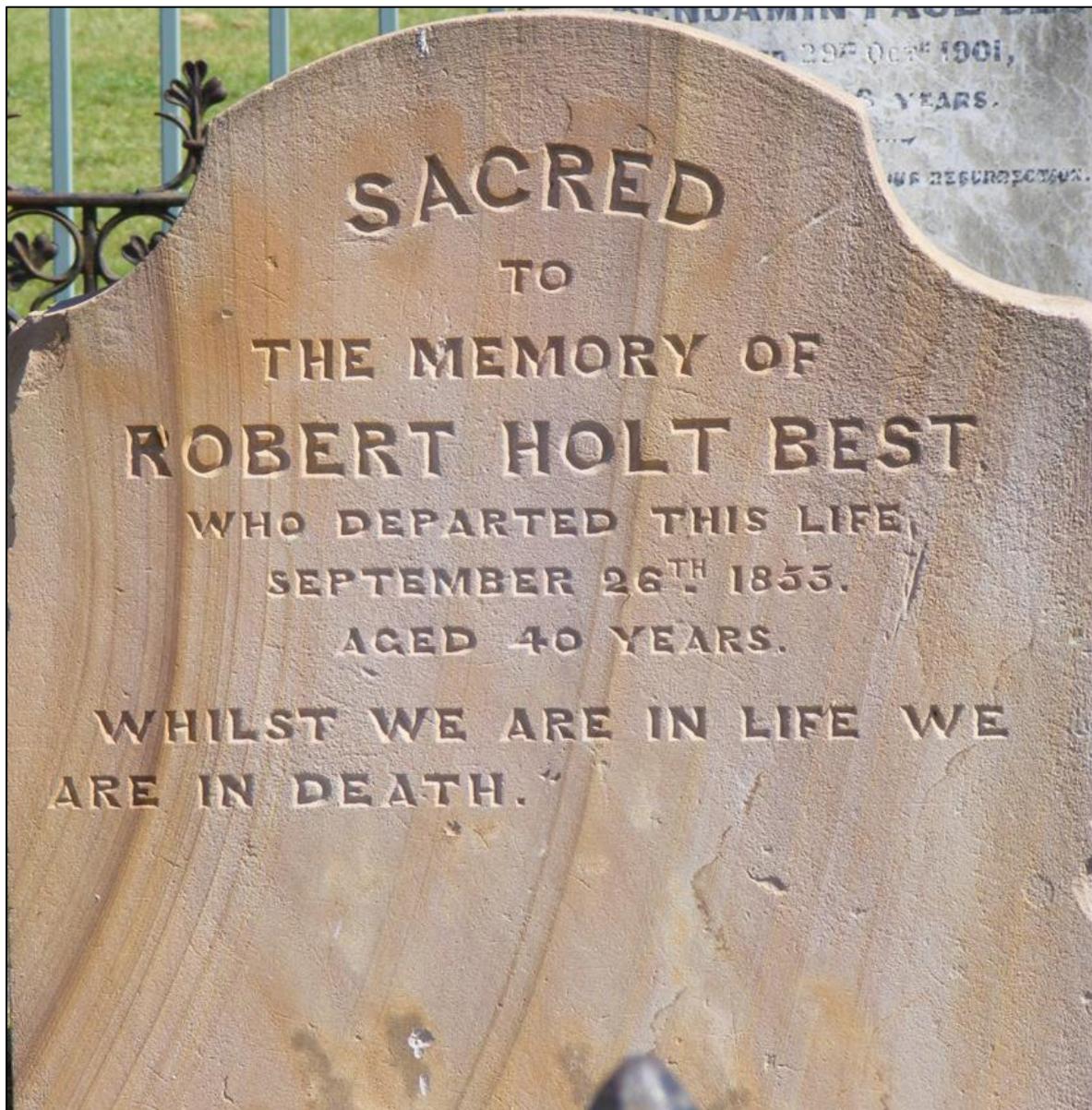
“John Reginald H. Best, aged 18, son of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin P. Best, of Sandy Creek, died after six days illness at the 'Bungalow,' early yesterday morning. The cause of death was acute peritonitis [sic], and he had only been ill for 6 days. The funeral took place yesterday afternoon, the remains being interred in the private cemetery of the family at 'Flowerdale'.”

¹ St John's Church. Burial Register. / *Wagga Wagga Express*. 4th December 1900.

Robert Holt Best (senior)

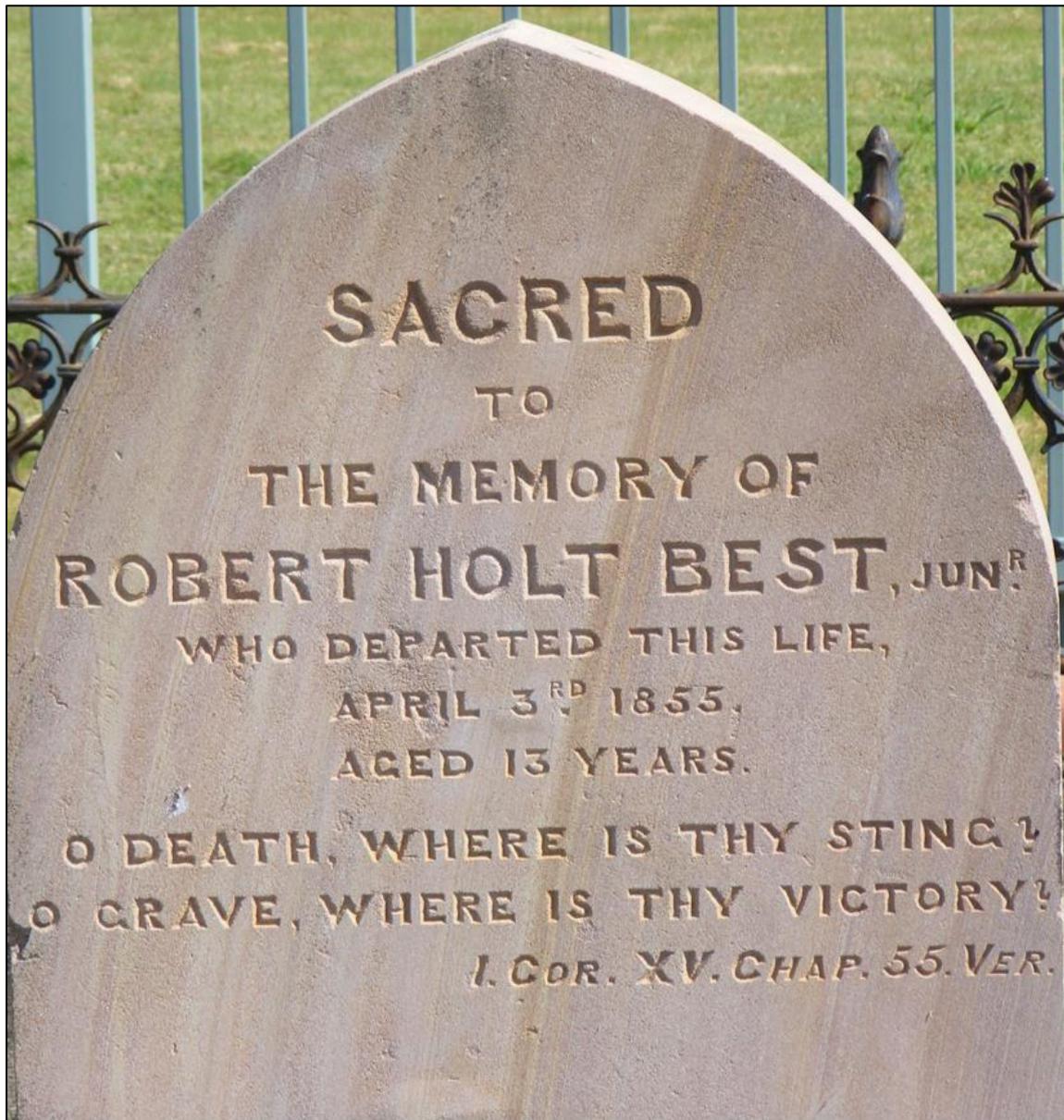
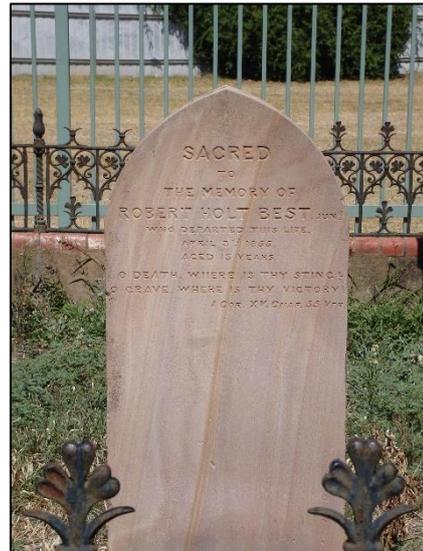
b. 27th August 1812

d. 26th September 1853 (aged 40)¹



¹ Headstone of Robert Holt Best (senior). Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Robert Holt Best (junior)
b. 16th October 1841
d. 3rd April 1855 (aged 13)¹



¹ Headstone of Robert Holt Best (junior). Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Sarah Jane Best

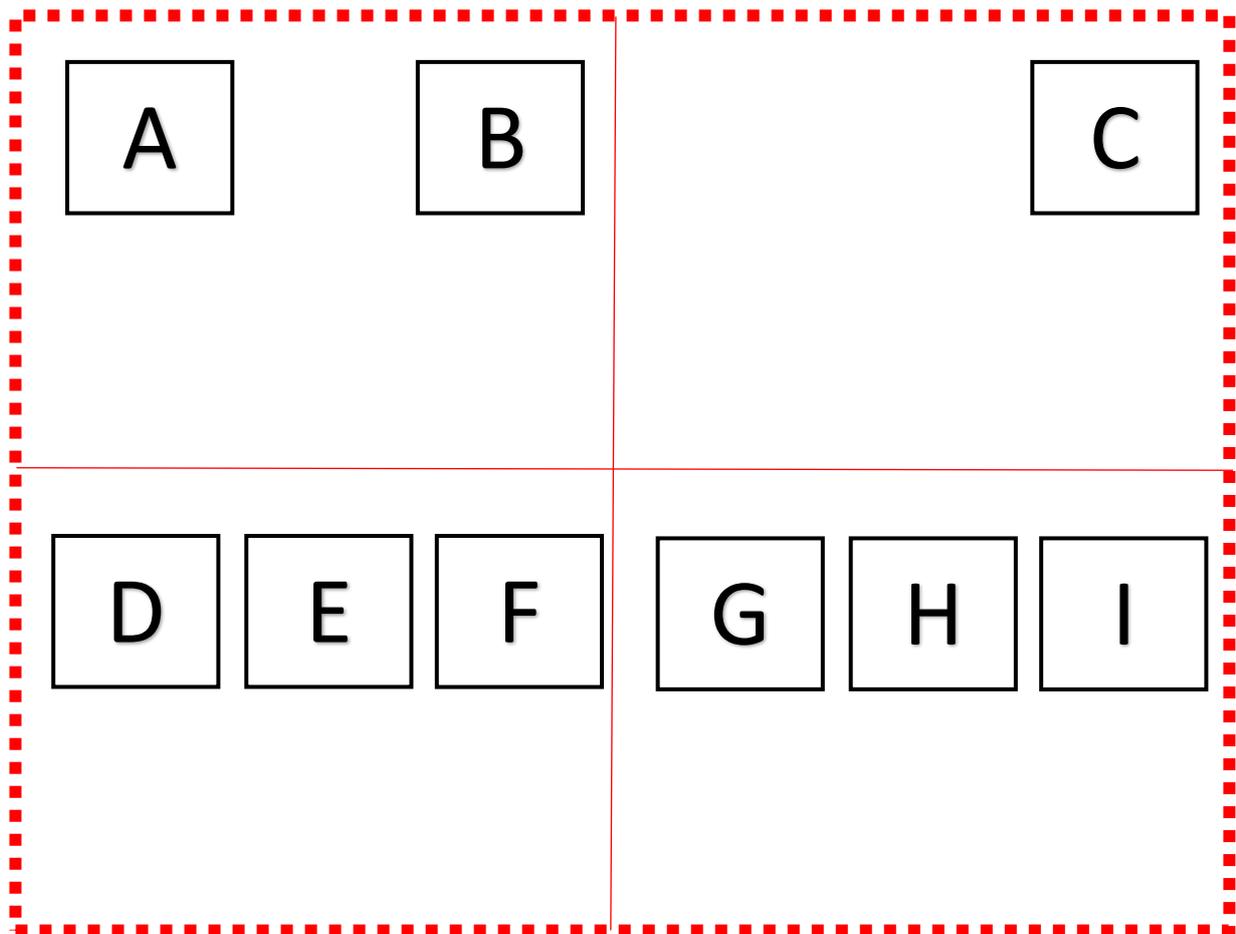
b. 18th February 1851

d. 12th March 1862 (aged 11)¹



¹ Headstone of Sarah Jane Best. Best Family Cemetery at Flowerdale.

Location of Graves Within the Plot



KEY

A – Adalena Best [1845-1874]

B – Benjamin Paul Best [1853-1901]

C – Francis George Best [1853-1910]

D – Sarah Jane Best [1851-1862]

E – Robert Holt Best [1841-1855]

F – Robert Holt Best [1813-1853]

G – Edward John Stephen Pearson [1860-1863]

H – Edward Charles Pearson [1826-1887]

I – Clara Pearson [nee Brien] [1821-1899]

Location of graves unknown

- Bertie Cecil Best [1884-1891]
- John Reginald Holt Best [1882-1900]

In 2023 the Best Family Cemetery was controlled and maintained by the Wagga Wagga City Council. In May 2023 an interpretive sign was installed by Littlewood Signs. The sign was part of a project researched by members of the Wagga Wagga & District Historical Society [WWDHS] and others. The project was jointly funded by the Wagga Wagga City Council and the WWDHS.



Above, Left & Right: The May 2023 double sided interpretive sign, newly installed.



RELATED FAMILIES

**JAMES
RUDD
AND
WAGINGOBEREMBEE**

The Rudd Family of Wagingoberembee.

The connection between the Best and Rudd families was established through the marriage of James Joseph Rudd and Clara Agnes Best, the eldest daughter of Robert Holt Best.

James Joseph Rudd was born at Campbelltown on the 6th July 1835,¹ the son of James Joseph Rudd [senior] and Mary Rudd [nee Cullen].

In 1844, at the age of ten, James Joseph Rudd moved with his family, to live at Wagingoberembee.²

On the 20th December 1857 James [junior] married Clara Agnes Best in St Augustine's Church, at Yass.³ James and Clara had a total of eleven children.

When James Rudd [senior] passed away on the 27th April 1851 at Campbelltown,⁴ James [[junior] was old enough to assume responsibility for the management of the family farm.

James Joseph Rudd passed away on the 7th July 1893.⁵ James was fifty eight years old and his death had taken place at Wagingoberembee.⁶ His body was buried in the family cemetery on Wagingoberembee.

Wagingoberembee

James Rudd first settled at Wagingoberembee in 1833, having travelled down the Murrumbidgee in company with members of the Best family, who settled at Wagga Wagga in 1832. James continued on further downstream before selecting his new squatting run.⁷

James Rudd senior's presence was recorded at Wagingoberembee from 1837 through to 1848, in the Government Gazettes, and in those early days the spelling of the name varied but included Wowgumgoleramby and Wogangobiramby.⁸

In 1848 the run was described as follows,⁹

"No.146. Rudd, James. Name of run, Wogangobiramby. Estimated area, forty thousand three hundred and twenty acres. Estimated grazing capabilities, six hundred and forty cattle, or four thousand sheep. Bounded on the north by the Murrumbidgee River seven miles; on the west by R. P. Jenkin's Broweroner eight miles; on the south by Crown Lands seven miles; on the east by John Bray, Berry Jerry, ten miles, sixty three sections, or forty thousand three hundred and twenty acres, one fourth or ten thousand acres scrub; this includes the Old Man Creek, occupied by Henry Osborne."

¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 602/1835 V1835602 126.

² Freeman's Journal. 22nd July 1893, p19. / Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 13th July 1893, p3.

³ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 2948.

⁴ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 672/1851 V1851672 118.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Death registration # 9953.

⁶ Freeman's Journal. 22nd July 1893, p19. / NSW BDM's. Death registration # 672/1851 V1851672 118.

⁷ The Land. 19th April 1929, p20.

⁸ NSW Government Gazettes. 1837, p44; 1838, p472; 1839, Bingham Itineraries; 1840, p171 & 172; 1842, p1595-6; 1843, p1396; 1845, p1297-8; 1847, p579-81.

⁹ NSW Government Gazette. 1848, p3.

James Verdict Isidore Rudd assumed ownership of Wagingoberembee following the death of his father in 1893 and he [James Verdict Isidore] passed away on the 18th September 1934. His sons, James Joseph Rudd and Reginald Rudd, were already managing Wagingoberembee by this time.¹

Wagingoberembee was unique amongst the early squatting runs in that it was occupied by family members from 1832 through till 1940 – four generations of uninterrupted occupation. In March 1940 the family commenced selling pieces of the run.²

A 1934 description of the homestead site read as follows,³

“Wagingoberembee homestead is picturesquely situated on a knoll on the south bank of the Murrumbidgee river. From the homestead a scene of great rural beauty stretches south across the homestead paddocks and west along the Murrumbidgee river and over the Deepwater Station lands on the north bank. In a quiet spot in the gardens surrounding the homestead is the family enclosure, and Isidore Rudd was laid to rest beside his father, James Rudd, who, at 58 years, was buried there forty-one years ago. Side by side is a brother, Arthur, who died in the prime of athletic young manhood whilst at St. Joseph's College, Sydney, and whose body was brought home to Wagingoberembee for interment. A sister, Ruby, also lies there, and twin babies, brother and sister of Isidore Rudd. The stone bears an inscription of these names, accompanied by a beautiful Catholic prayer composed by a sister of Isidore Rudd's, a Dominican nun, in which order two of his sisters entered.”

James Verdict Isidore Rudd was born at Campbelltown in 1864.⁴ In April 1901 he married Ellen Mary Burns in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.⁵ The couple had five children, including Kathleen Marian Rudd [b.1908, d.1994]



Left: Kathleen Marian Rudd in 1921. Courtesy steveburns37 [ancestry.com]

Kathleen married Mitchell Transit Francis Russel at Wagga Wagga in 1934.⁶

Kathleen and Mitchell had one child, Tony Russel, who, like his dad, was an accountant.

According to Tony, when James Verdict Isidore Rudd died his estate was divided amongst his children. The eldest son, James [Jim], got the part of Wagingoberembee that included the homestead. The other son, Reg, got a part that included the woolshed [which he named Wauberrima] while the two girls also received an allocation of acres. Kathleen sold her holding to the

¹ Daily Advertiser. 19th September 1934, p2.

² Daily Advertiser. 20th March 1940, p6.

³ Daily Advertiser. 21st September 1934, p4.

⁴ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 7367.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 2639.

⁶ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 8542.

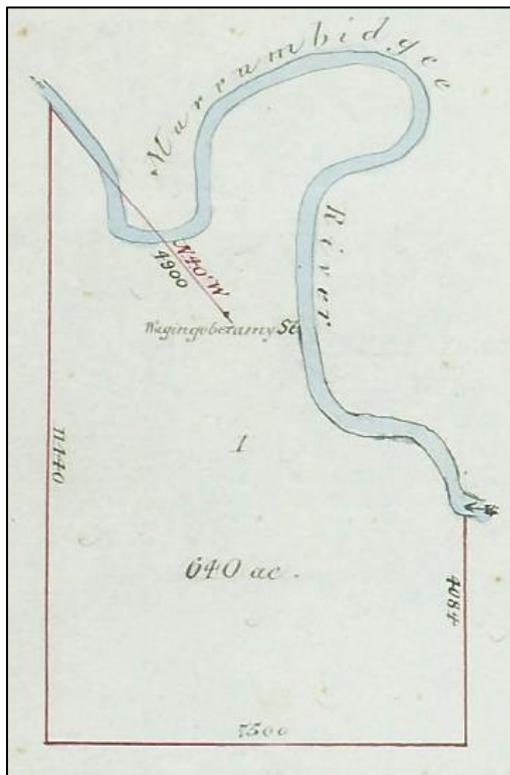
Gooden family, who declared that they had ended up with the “tail” portion of Wagingoberembee, so called their new property *Berembee*.

Jim never married and when he died, he left the property to Kathleen. It was pretty run down and needed some substantial investment to restore both the homestead and the farm. Kathleen was seventy-two years old at the time and her sister required home care, so Kathleen decided to sell and use part of the money to ensure her sister was well cared for. The holding, with the homestead was subsequently sold to Jack Brabham, the famous racing driver.¹

Tony Russel provided the following details,²

“Kathleen wouldn’t let anyone inspect the house, regarding them all as sticky beaks. The homestead was full of antiques and some especially beautiful furniture. It was too big for their current homes, and Kathleen, being familiar with antiques, sold most of the items off over a period of time, at good prices. She used to deal with Reg Hyland who traded in antiques. Jack Brabham was allowed to inspect the house before purchasing it, but only through the agent - everyone else was forbidden. The main building of the homestead had four bedrooms, a hall etc. The bricks were handmade. The walls were thickened at one time to allow a 2nd storey but the latter never eventuated. There was a separate kitchen to the rear of the main house, made of stone. Jim made some additions which connected the main house to the kitchen. The additions included a billiard room and a dining room.”

Tony could recall the site of the original homestead which had burnt down. All that was left were some stones in the ground. Tony thought that the Brabhams had demolished the old kitchen.



Freehold

The Wagingoberembee homestead was always located on portion 1, in the parish of Wauberrima.

Portion 1 was purchased from the crown by James Rudd in March 1867 [pre-emptive right]. James paid six hundred and forty pounds for the six hundred and forty acre block.³ The family would have held a lease on the land prior to that.

Left: Portion 1 as purchased by James Rudd in 1867. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

In May 1894 James Verdict Isadore Rudd and Francis William Paul Rudd were listed as the legal owners [by transmission]. It is assumed the two men were the executors of their father’s estate.

In March 1896, James Verdict Isadore Rudd became the legal owner of the property.

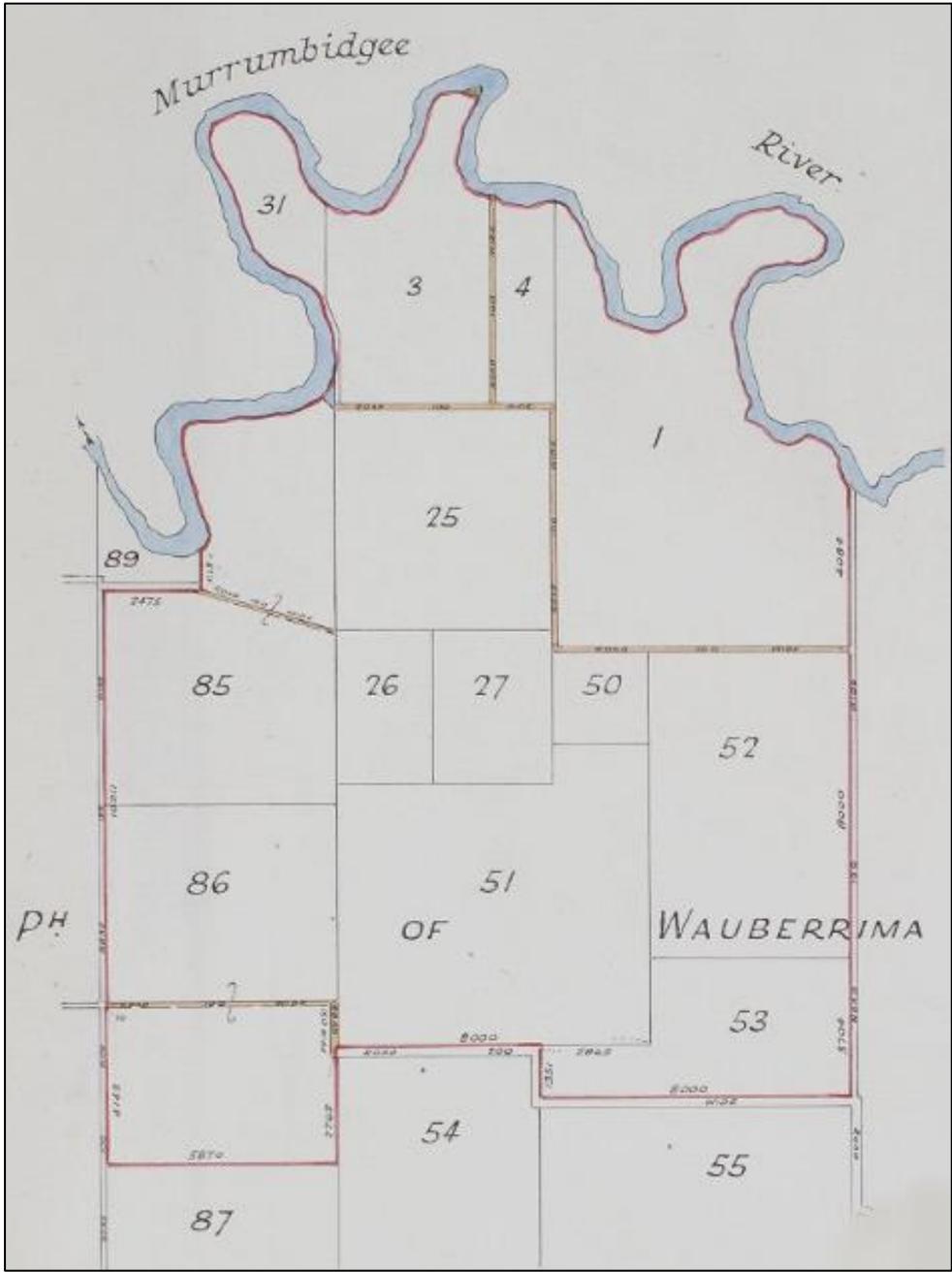
¹ Tony Russell. 16th December 2012.

² Tony Russell. 16th December 2012.

³ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 46, folio 7.

Following the death of James Verdict Isadore Rudd, his sons, James Joseph Rudd and Reginald Rudd, became the legal owners of the land as joint tenants.¹

Portion 1 was now one of numerous lots held under a single deed. The holding consisted of some nineteen portions, or part portions, situated in parishes of Bulgary and Wauberrima.² The two brothers sold off parts of their holdings over a period of time, but always retained the homestead block as part of their holding. At some point in time [probably 1969] the remaining holding was split to create two entities. The first was DP. 213041 [lots 1 to 3] [Volume 9249, folios 190-192]. The second was the residual area [volume 10987, folio 236].



Above: The portions of land in the parish of Wauberrima, as held by the sons of James Verdict Isadore Rudd in 1936. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 46, folio 7.

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 4764, folios 50, 51.



Above: A contemporary aerial view of the Wagingoberembee homestead. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services. SIX.

**JAMES
BOURKE
AND
GUMLY
GUMLY**

James Bourke and Gumly Gumly

The connection between the Best and Bourke families was established through the marriage of James Bourke [junior] to Martha Susannah Best, the second daughter of Robert Holt Best. It is believed that James Bourke [senior] was born at Campbelltown c.1804, the son of Thomas Bourke and Sarah Bourke [nee Richards]. [The family name was often written as Burke]. On the 20th May 1827 James married Mary Bent at Campbelltown.¹ Mary was the daughter of John Bent and Frances Bent [nee Wrixon]. Between 1827 and 1834 Mary bore four children.

According to RJE Gormly, James Bourke [senior] established the Gumly Gumly run in 1832, shortly before the Bests settled the Wogga Wogga run.² Some family histories record that James Bourke [senior] died on the 28th July 1835, but no record could be found to confirm this. What is known is that his widow later married the infamous John Peter at Sutton Forest on the 10th February 1837.³ There was never any issue from this marriage. Following the marriage, the lease for Gumly Gumly was transferred into the name of John Peter.

In 1848, the run was described as follows,⁴

“# 134. Peter John. Name of run, Gumly Gumly. Estimated area, thirty thousand seven hundred and twenty acres. Estimated grazing capabilities, six thousand sheep. Gumly Gumly station commences at its eastern corner at the junction of Kyamba Creek with the Murrumbidgee, including the Kyamba Island, immediately opposite the junction of the said creek with the Murrumbidgee, where the river divides, running along the northern branch of the river so as to include the island and past its junction with the main stream five miles in a direct due west line (sinuosities not included) to a marked tree line boundary at Mr. Best's station, Wagga Wagga, which forms the western corner on the bank of the Murrumbidgee, from thence along this marked tree line for two miles running due south to the point of Best's range, from thence for one mile in a line south-west to two waterholes in the Stringybark Creek, one of which waterholes it includes from thence for one mile in a line south south-east to the Swampy Plain, from thence for half a mile in a line due west to the back of a creek called the Stringybark Spring Creek, following the Stringybark Spring Creek up to its head about four miles, passing the springs in which it takes its rise, to a gap in the range immediately above the springs; from this point along the ridge of a leading range in a general south-east line for seven miles to a point joining its south corner, from thence along the top of a leading range running in a general north east line for ten miles, striking upon the Kyamba Creek about four miles above its junction with the Murrumbidgee, which creek it follows to its junction, where the eastern boundary corner commences as described above.”

The original Gumly Gumly run had a river frontage that extended from the Kyeamba Creek on the east to a western point about half a mile east of the Wagga Wagga pumping station.⁵ The western boundary then extended through what became the

¹ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 222/1827 V1827222 127.

² Daily Advertiser. 18th June 1949, p3.

³ NSW BDM's. Marriage registration # 1764/1837 V18371764 21.

⁴ NSW Government Gazette. 1848, p3.

⁵ Daily Advertiser. 18th June 1949, p3.

Wagga Wagga Monumental Cemetery and then through the centre of what was later known as Lake Albert.

In March 1874 a prime piece of the Gumly Gumly holdings was sold to John Donnelly.¹ The new holding consisted of some 2,056 acres with the river forming the northern boundary. It featured a substantial brick cottage, fit for a family, with all the necessary outhouses and improvements.²

The history of the property post this date has been confined to the homestead blocks.

John Peter died in 1878 in London, England,³ having created great wealth for himself and his wife.

Mary Bent

Mary Peter [nee Bourke, nee Bent] passed away on the 23rd September 1884 at her residence, *Chandos*, Broadmeadows in Victoria, at the age of seventy-three.⁴

The Children of James and Mary Bourke

Michael John Bourke

Michael John Bourke was born at Campbelltown on the 9th September 1827.⁵ In November 1867 he married Lucy Elizabeth O'Hea in Melbourne, Victoria.⁶ He passed away on the 14th April 1887, at Moonee Ponds, in Victoria,⁷ aged sixty. His body was removed to Wagga Wagga for burial at that place.⁸ According to RJE Gormly, Michael managed the Sandy Creek run for a period [believed to have been before his marriage].

Thomas Bourke

Thomas Bourke was born on the 3rd September 1829, at Campbelltown.⁹ Thomas never married and passed away at the relatively young age of twenty-seven. His death took place at *Bulilabla*, on the Lower Murrumbidgee on the 24th March 1857.¹⁰

Sarah Bourke

Sarah Bourke was born on the 16th September 1831, presumably at Campbelltown.¹¹ Nothing else is known of Sarah.

¹ Wagga Wagga Express. 25th March 1874, p1.

² Wagga Wagga Express. 7th February 1874, p3.

³ Riverine Grazier. 20th February 1878, p2.

⁴ Argus. 25th September 1884, p1.

⁵ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 913/1827 V1827913 127 or 939/1827 V1827939 128 or 1065/1827 V18271065 125.

⁶ VIC BDM's. Marriage registration # 3991.

⁷ VIC BDM's. Death registration # 6211. / Argus. 15th April 1887, p1.

⁸ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 16th April 1887, p2.

⁹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 1538/1829 V18291538 127 or 1560/1830 V18301560 128 or 1580/1830 V18301580 128 or 1652/1830 V18301652 125.

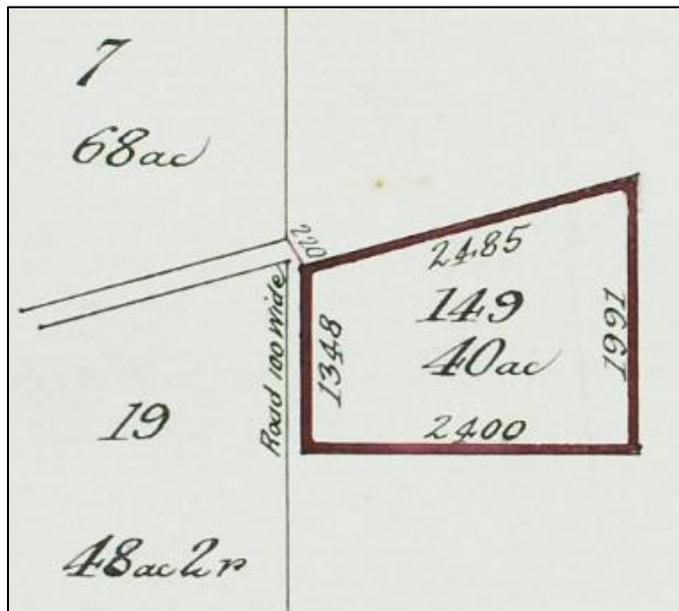
¹⁰ Freeman's Journal. 25th April 1857, p5. / VIC BDM's. Death registration # 6892.

¹¹ NSW BDM's. Birth registration # 1925/1831 V18311925 128 or 1938/1831 V18311938 127.

Gumly Gumly Homestead.

The old Gumly Gumly homestead, owned by the Donnelly family, was located on portion 2 in the parish of Gumly Gumly ¹ [See crown plan M.89.1457]. Later, the Donnelly brothers built a new homestead on portion 149 [a forty-acre block].²

Portion 149 was purchased from the crown by Patrick Joseph Bede Donnelly, Michael Austin Donnelly and Edward Wilfred Donnelly in November 1884. The three men were acting in their capacity as executors of their father's estate.³ The forty-acre block was purchased for the sum of one hundred and twenty pounds and was obtained under the category of "improved crown lands."



Left: Portion 149 as purchased by the estate of the late John Donnelly in 1884.

Following the death of Michael Austin Donnelly, the two remaining brothers became the sole proprietors in 1889, and in that same year Patrick Joseph Bede Donnelly conveyed his share to Edward Wilfred Donnelly.

In August 1900 Edward Wilfred Donnelly and his wife, Ida Donnelly, became the legal owners as joint tenants.

When Edward Wilfred Donnelly passed away, his widow, Selina Mary Ida Donnelly became the sole owner.

When Mrs SL Donnelly advertised the homestead for sale in August 1912, it was described as a forty-acre block on the Tarcutta Road, featuring a brick home of ten rooms and all necessary outbuildings with gas and water laid on.⁴ In March 1920 Selina conveyed the property to John William Charles Westendorf, a farmer of Jindera.⁵ In June 1941 Westendorf transferred the property to Ernest John Stephens, a farmer of Coolamon.⁶

On the 13th April 1943, Stephens sold a part of the holding to the Presbyterian Church⁷ but retained the largest piece of the land.⁸

¹ Daily Advertiser. 18th June 1949, p3.

² Daily Advertiser. 18th June 1949, p3.

³ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 727, folio 245.

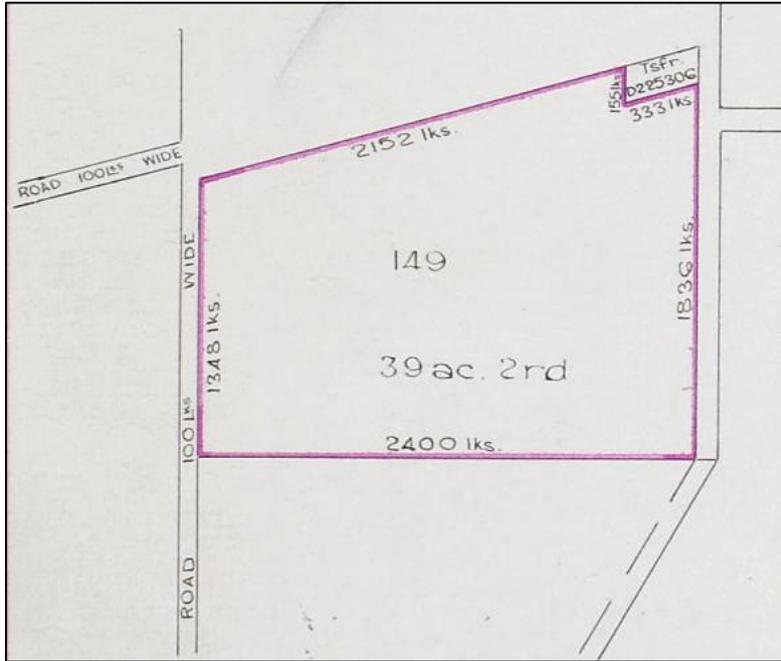
⁴ Daily Advertiser. 22nd August 1912, p3.

⁵ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 727, folio 245.

⁶ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 727, folio 245.

⁷ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 5393, folio 39.

⁸ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 5397, folio 81.



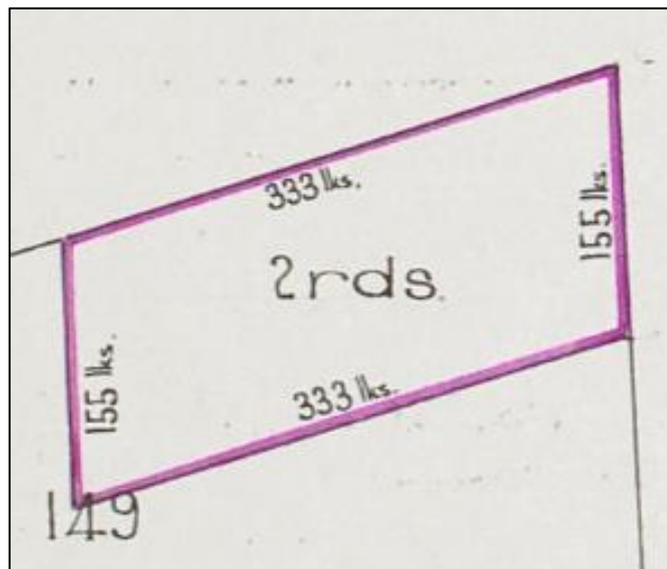
Left: The area of portion 149 retained by Stephens in 1943. The tiny area in the top right of the portion was the piece sold to the property trust of the Presbyterian Church. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

Below: The piece of land purchased by the Presbyterian Church Property Trust. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

This small holding was subsequently converted to a computer folio. [DP.1.348132].

St Ninian's Presbyterian Church

This small area was donated by Mr & Mrs EJ Stephens for the purpose of a Sunday School. Mrs Maud Adelaide Grace Stephens had been a strong supporter of the church and the Sunday school activities at Gumly Gumly during her residency in the district.¹ St Ninian's Presbyterian Church was subsequently erected on this piece of land.



Stephens conveyed the larger part of portion 149 to a group of men in October 1950. The group consisted of Robert John Martin, a teacher of Wentworthville; Frank Henry Butler, a telephone lineman of Burwood; Harold McGrath, a house furnisher of Concord; and Thomas Ulrich Agst, a manager of Sydney - as joint tenants.² It is assumed these men were trustees for the Presbyterian Church. Thomas Agst was in fact the founder and general manager of the United Protestant Association.³

¹ Daily Advertiser. 20th June 1950, p2.

² NSW Land registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 5397, folio 81.

³ Daily Advertiser. 9th September 1952, p2.



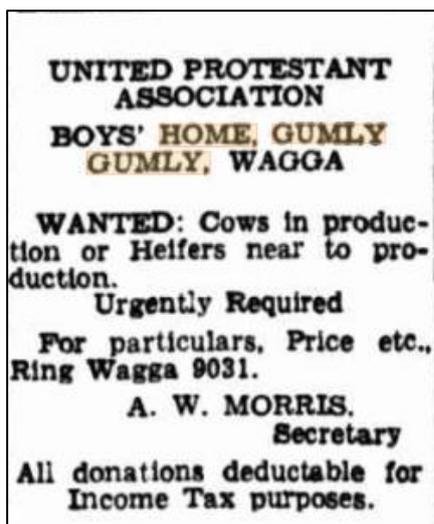
Left: The former St Ninian's Church at the corner of Pioneer Avenue and Gumly Road.

Mr & Mrs Stephens left Gumly Gumly in 1953 and were given a farewell party by their friends. The couple were presented with an eight-day clock, by some fifty locals who were in attendance.¹ In 1954 Ernest and Maud Stephens were living at 72 Bourke Street, Wagga Wagga.²

The Gumleigh Boys Home

Although the United Protestant Association [UPA] owned the property, they were prevented from opening a boys' home for a number of years due to a lack of finance. From as early as March 1952 efforts were being made to raise funds for such a home.³ In that same month a "working bee" was held to modify the home in order that it might serve as a boys' home. Members of the Salvation Army, the Church of Christ and the Methodist Church were all in attendance for that purpose. Also in attendance were Mr AR Dow, the Home Superintendent, and Mr HH Dunn, the president of the UPA Council.⁴ Further working bees took place and the activities undertaken included the installation of a

well. Fred White donated the use of his crane, which was operated by Mr A Nixon, and used to drop a concrete cylinder into a hole to create the well. Mr L Boutcher, the dairy supervisor with the Agricultural Department, had provided plans for a model dairy, which was to be conducted on the property for the benefit of the occupants.⁵



In May 1952 the UPA district council resolved to purchase six heifers, two milking cows and one stud bull to establish a commercial dairy herd.⁶ Construction of a brick dairy had already commenced and was expected to be completed within six weeks.

Left: An advertisement seeking dairy cows for the Gumly Boys' Home in May 1952.

¹ Daily Advertiser. 20th June 1950, p2.

² Australia. Electoral Rolls. 1954. [ancestry.com]

³ Daily Advertiser. 25th March 1952, p5.

⁴ Daily Advertiser. 17th March 1952, p2.

⁵ Daily Advertiser. 28th April 1952, p3.

⁶ Daily Advertiser. 5th May 1952, p2

Work on the home would have been seriously disrupted by the extreme flood in June of 1952, with many of the local residents being moved to “*special igloo type huts*” at Forest Hill.¹

The new dairy was officially opened by the NSW Minister for Agriculture, Mr Eddie Graham, in October 1952. On that occasion it was revealed that the UPA had paid five thousand pounds for the property [in October 1950]. Assets on the farm were now valued at two thousand pounds, and the latter was designed to host a herd of twenty five cows. It was planned that the home would house from twenty-five to thirty orphan boys aged between five and fifteen, drawn from the local district and from Sydney. It was intended that 25% of the operating costs would come from the sale of milk and that the other 75% would come from donations. It was not all positive though. Mr HH Dunn, the president of the local UPA committee expressed disappointment that the local community had not provided greater support for the complex. A substantial sum of three thousand and three hundred pounds was still owing on the project and Dunn thought that this “*should have been paid off.*” He even went so far to express his “*shame*” that the public had not financed the institution.²

The first two boys to enter the institution were Christopher Davis [aged 12] and his brother John Davis [aged 10½], who arrived at the home on the 20th October 1953. The boys were said to be “*fatherless,*” while their mother, an English woman, had recently been evicted from a house at the Herne Bay Settlement. Modifications to the home were yet to be completed so the boys were temporarily residing with Mr & Mrs M Semmler, the superintendent and matron of the home.³

Under the management of the Semmlers and with the assistance of the two boys, the farm developed to the point where it managed twenty milking cows and one hundred chooks. Three large Lucerne paddocks provided stock feed and six acres of irrigation had been accomplished. They grew all of their own vegetables and were in the process of planting a variety of fruit trees. They were receiving income from the sales of surplus goods.⁴

Mrs Semmler’s father was connected with the UPA Boys’ Home, *Melrose*, at Pendle Hill in Sydney. Most of the boys at that home were orphans from England.

The biggest impediment to accepting more boys continued to be the lack of finances. In September 1954 the UPA still had a liability of two thousand and nine hundred pounds against the home. Thomas Agst advised the local committee that it would require an extension to the existing building in order to accommodate another eight boys and that this would cost fifteen hundred pounds. In order to accommodate twenty boys, as was planned, that would require funds of some five thousand pounds. The local committee had resolved, in September 1954, to submit plans for stage one of the additions to the Kyeamba Shire Council.⁵ The new works were set to commence in January 1955.

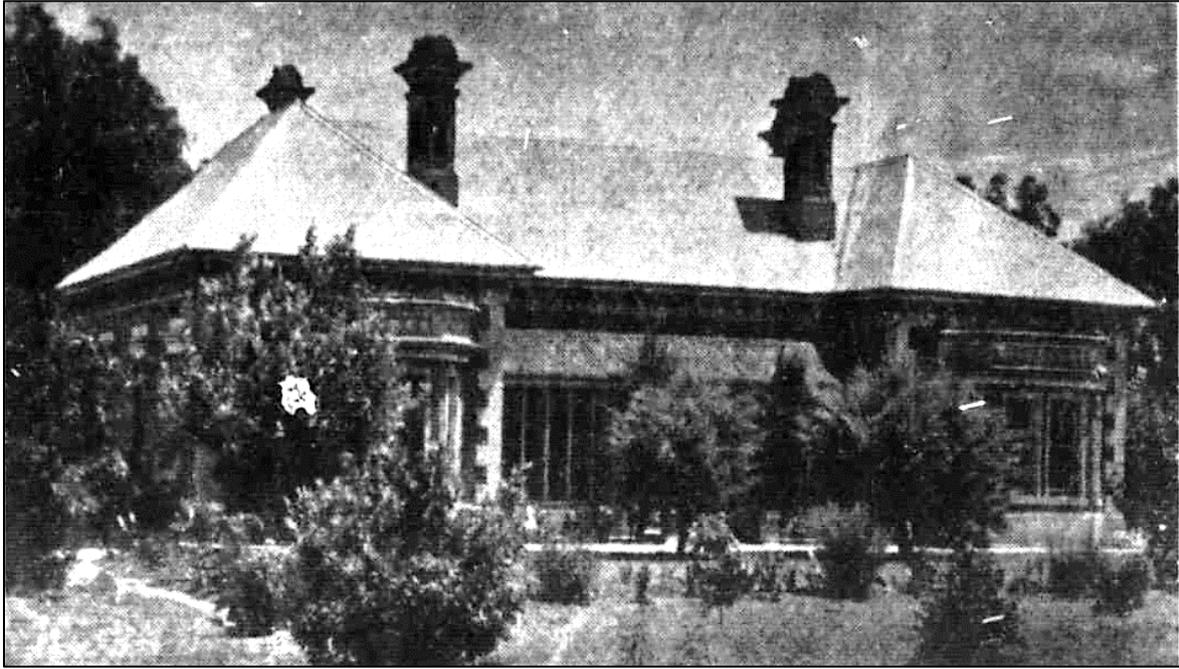
¹ Daily Advertiser. 19th June 1952, p2.

² Daily Advertiser. 20th October 1952, p2.

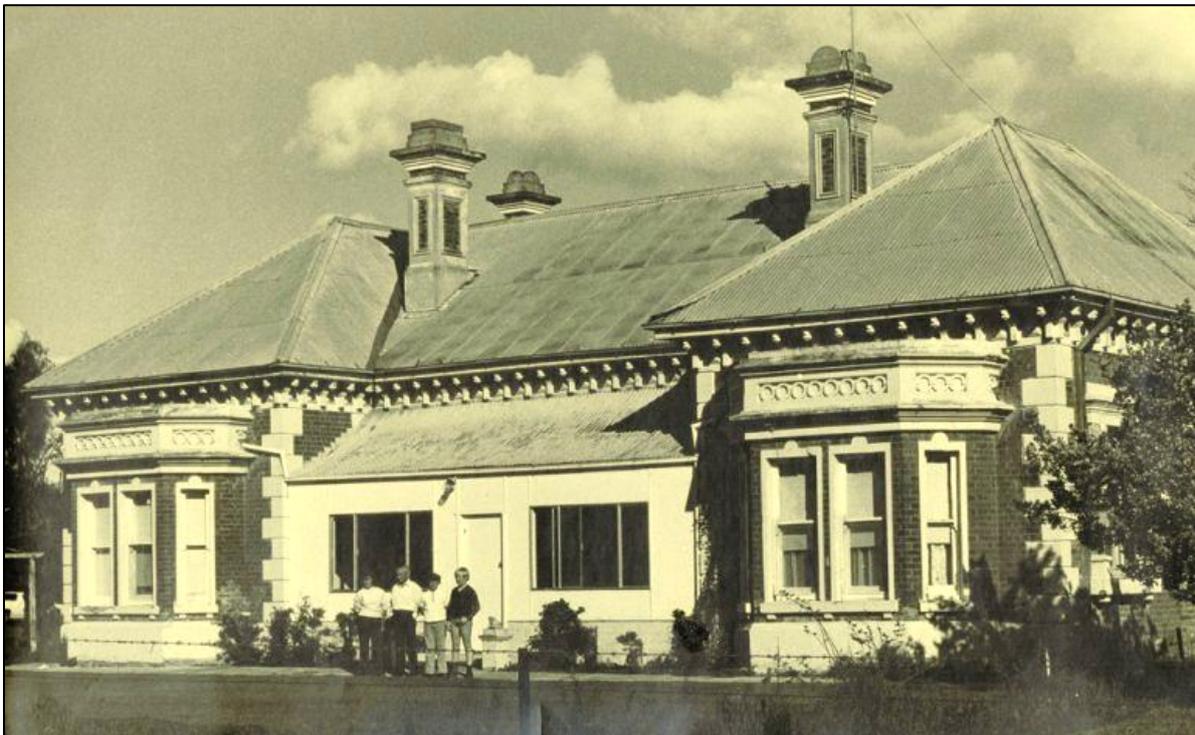
³ Daily Advertiser. 21st October 1953, p2.

⁴ Daily Advertiser. 29th December 1954, p3.

⁵ Daily Advertiser. 22nd September 1954, p2.



Above: The Gumly Gumly homestead as it appeared in December 1954.¹ The home was said to be around 100 years old but that was not correct. Portion 149, on which the house is located, was never under freehold title until 1884, and it is assumed the home dates from the mid to late 1880's.



Above: The Gumleigh Boys' Home. The people at front could possibly be Mr & Mrs Semmler and the two Davis boys.²

¹ Daily Advertiser. 29th December 1954, p3.

² Accessed on the 5th November 2020 - <https://www.upa.org.au/former-children-upa-care>.

In August 1957 the United Protestant Association Trust Ltd became the legal owner of the property.¹ The Gumleigh Boys Home was closed in 1983 and in April 1984 Gerry Steve Hanning and Sandra Helen Hanning assumed ownership of this holding.² The title was subsequently converted to a computer folio [DP.149.1088333].



Above: A fundraising stall at the Gumleigh Boys' Home. ³ Courtesy CSURA.

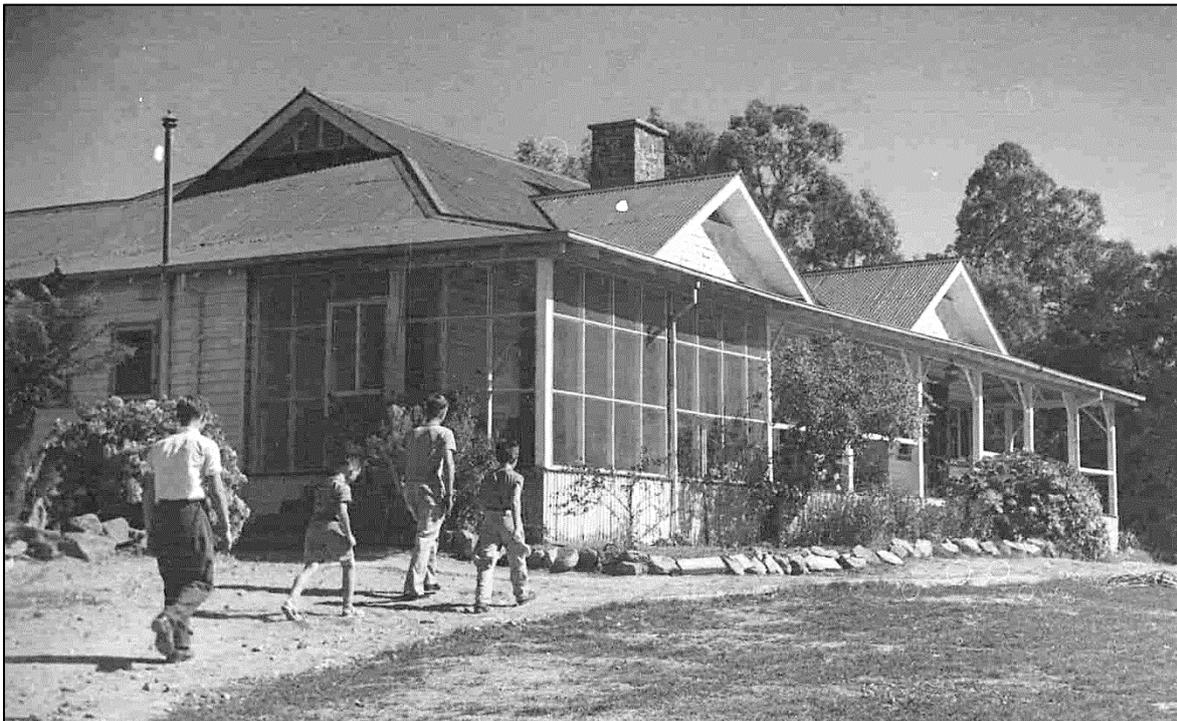
¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 5397, folio 81.

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 5397, folio 81.

³ CSU Regional Archives [RW1574.227.708]



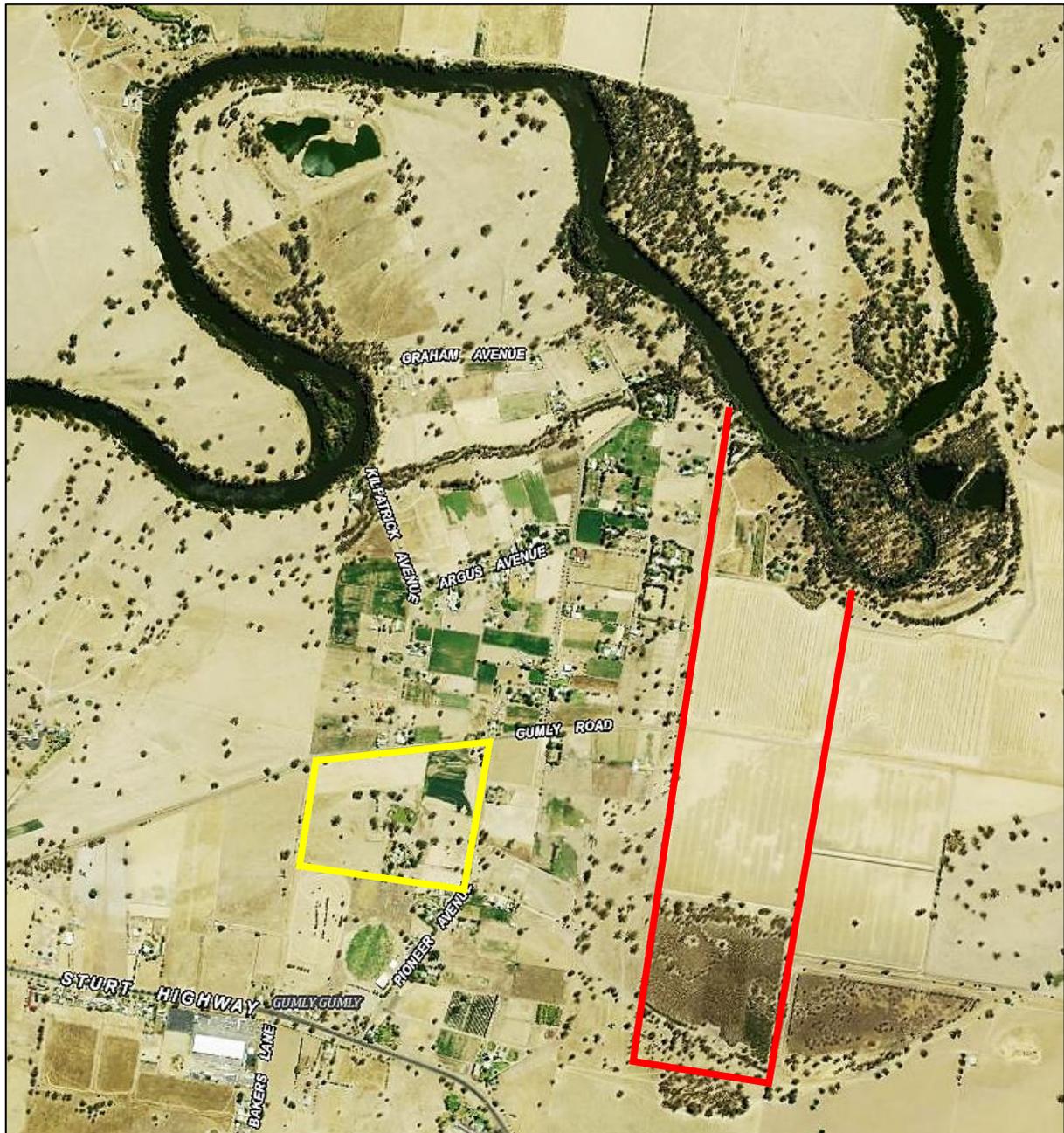
Above: The Gumleigh Boys' Home in the early days. ¹



Above: A later version of the Gumleigh Boys' Home building. The unique architectural features of the historic building had now been butchered. Courtesy CSURA. ²

¹ Accessed on 5th November 2020 - [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/image_viewer.htm?objects/images/ND0000484_Gumleigh%20U PA.jpg,ND0000484](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/image_viewer.htm?objects/images/ND0000484_Gumleigh%20U%20PA.jpg,ND0000484)

² CSU Regional Archives. {RW1574.227.708}



Above: A contemporary aerial view of Gumly Gumly showing the boundaries of the original portion 2 [red boundary], on which the first homestead stood, and portion 149 [yellow boundary], on which the newer homestead was built. Courtesy Google maps.

SANDY CREEK STATION

Sandy Creek Station

In 1845 John Peter was the lessee of the O'Brien and Sandy Creek runs in the Murrumbidgee district.¹ John Peter was still listed as the lessee of the Sandy Creek run in 1847² and 1848.³

The description of the property in 1848 read as follows,

"No. 136. Peter, John. Name of run, Sandy Creek. Estimated area, twenty-three thousand and forty acres. Estimated grazing capabilities, three thousand six hundred sheep. Sandy Creek station commences from a point in the gap of the range immediately above the Stringybark springs mentioned in the description of Gumly Gumly station, at its western corner on a line south-south-west for six and a half miles to a point on the summit of a range bounding Mr. Owen's and Wall's stations, from thence along the top of the range in a south-east direction for six and a half miles to an eminence called Survey Hill, from thence along the top of the said range two miles in a direction north-east by east to a point forming the south corner of the station, from thence in a line running north-north-east for five miles until it strikes upon the south corner of the Gumly Gumly station."⁴

By April 1854,⁵ Michael Bourke [or Burke] was listed as occupying Sandy Creek, as he was again in March 1855.⁶

Michael Bourke was still occupying the run in May 1859⁷ but when the property was transferred to Edward Charles Pearson, sometime during 1864, it was conveyed by John Peter.⁸

According to Morris, Pearson then combined Sandy Creek with the southern portion of the Wagga Wagga run and called it the Sandy Creek estate.⁹

¹ NSW Government Gazette. 1845, pp1297-8.

² NSW Government Gazette. 1847, pp579-581.

³ NSW Government Gazette. 1848, pp1351-1378.

⁴ NSW Government Gazette. 1848, p3.

⁵ Sydney Morning Herald. 4th April 1854, p2.

⁶ NSW Government Gazette. 1855, p904.

⁷ Wagga Wagga Express. 14th May 1859, p3.

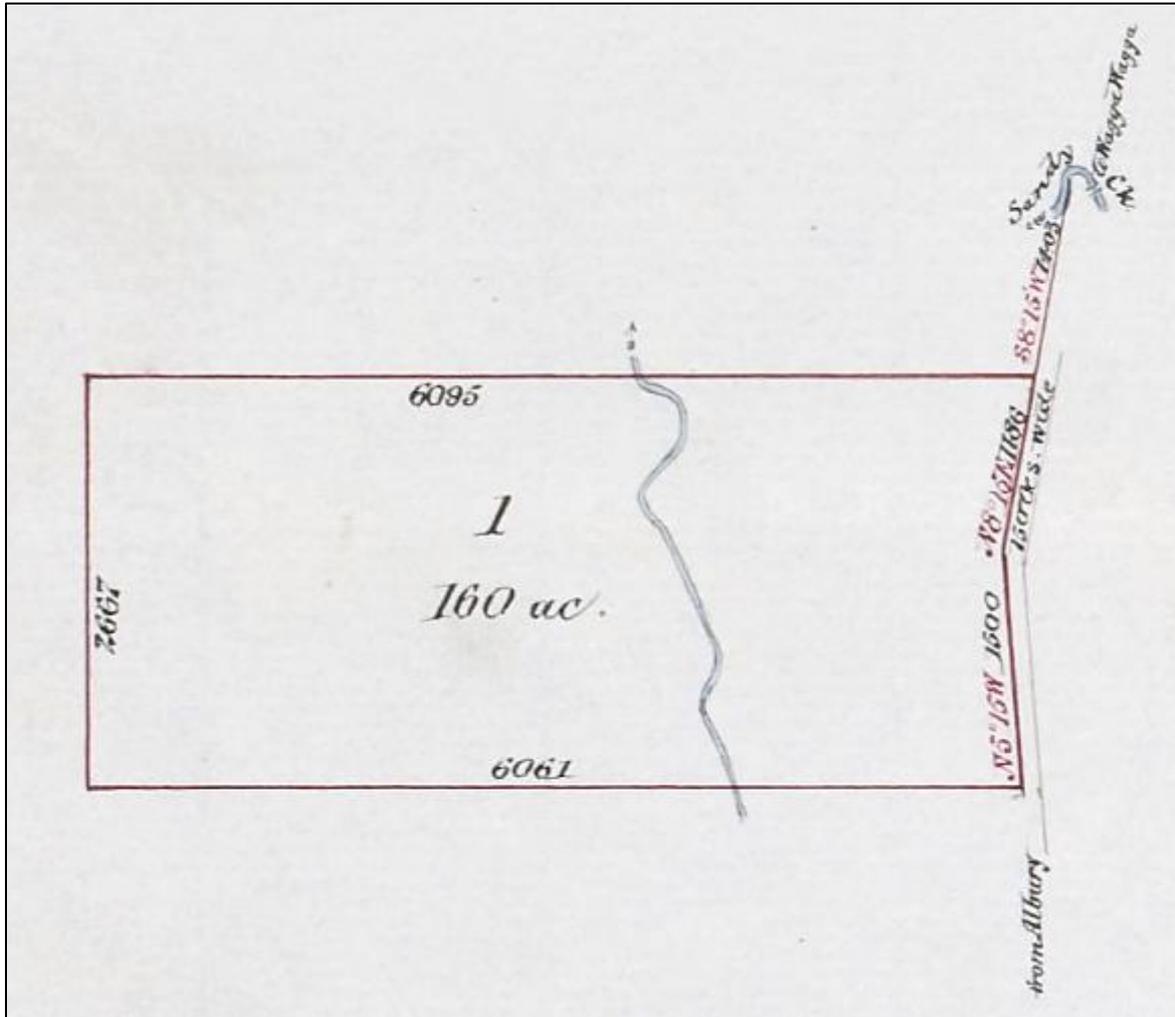
⁸ NSW Government Gazette. 1865, p409.

⁹ The Best Family Cemetery. Wagga Wagga. Conservation Management Plan. 2003. Sherry Morris et al.

Sandy Creek – the Homestead selection.

The Sandy Creek homestead was, and is, located on Portion 1, in the parish of Sandy Creek [160 acres]

Portion 1 was originally purchased from the crown by Edward Charles Pearson on the 16th January 1866, for the sum of one hundred and sixty pounds. The property had an area of one hundred and sixty acres.¹



Above: Portion 1, as purchased by Edward Pearson in 1866. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

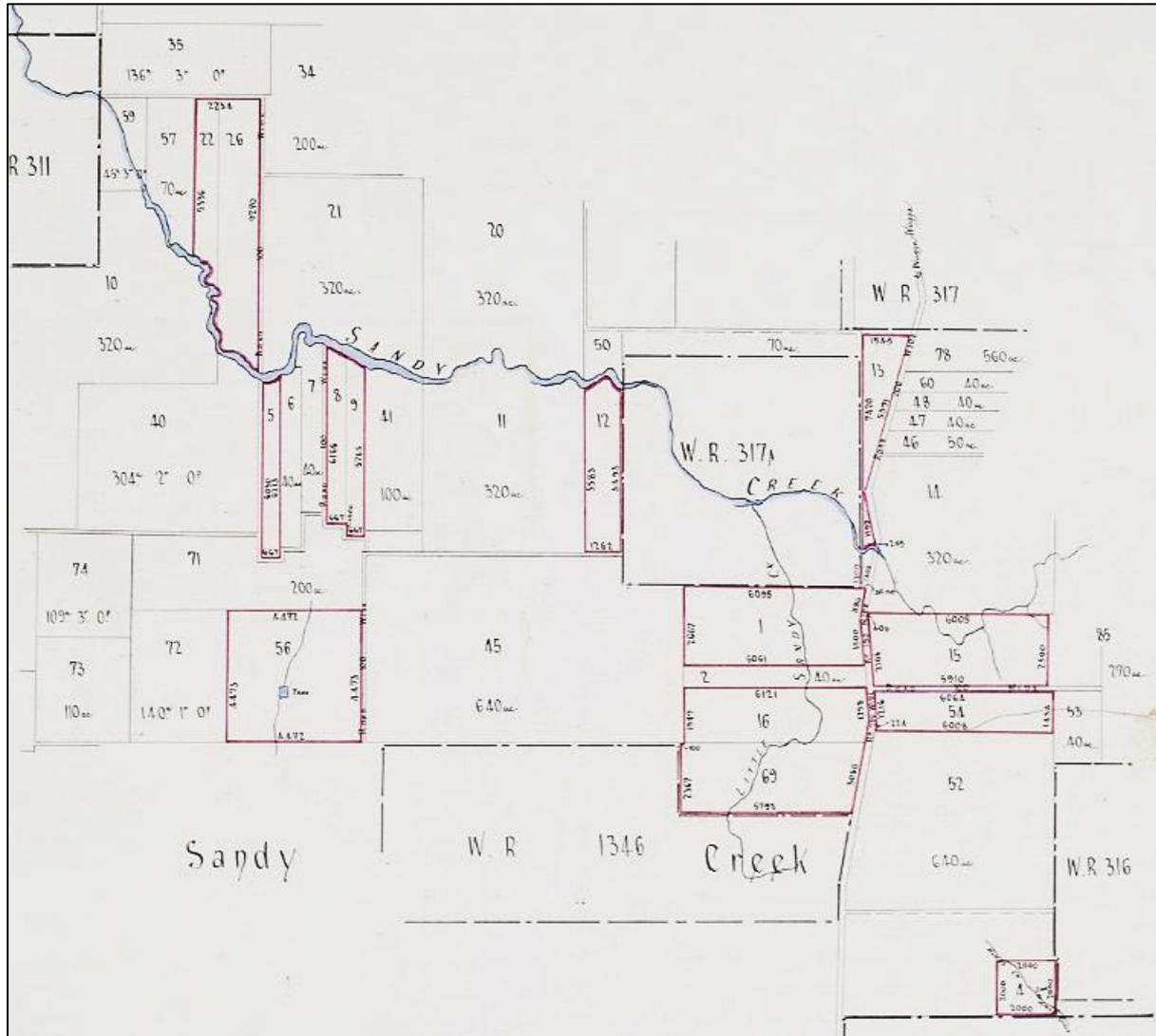
In November 1890, the title was transferred to Stephen John Pearson, as administrator of the deceased estate of Edward Pearson.

In December 1891, the property was conveyed to Benjamin Paul Best and Francis George Best, both graziers of Sandy Creek, and Charles John Tompson, a stock and station agent of Wagga Wagga, as tenants in common.²

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 24, folio 185.

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 1050, folios 135-137.

Portion 1 was now part of a much larger holding made up of some thirty-five lots. The three men sold off some parts of their holdings but continued to hold the majority of the lots.¹ Then in January 1899 the two Best brothers conveyed their shares of the residual properties to Charles John Tompson.² Tompson's holdings consisted of some twenty five lots in the parishes of Coffin Rock, Pearson and Sandy Creek.



Above: Charles Tompson's holdings in 1899. Courtesy NSW Land Registry Services.

Tompson carried out some further aggregation of lots in 1907, then proceeded to sell off chunks of the Sandy Creek run,³ including one block to Robert St Ringan McMicking in January 1909.⁴ McMicking's holding consisted of some nine lots under one title.⁵

¹ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 1287, folios 27.

² NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 1050, folios 135-137.

³ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 1842, folios 136 and 137.

⁴ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 2012, folio 55.

⁵ NSW Land Registry Services. Title Deed. Volume 2012, folio 55.

Sandy Creek Homestead

In 1869 a roving reporter travelled past what he termed "*Sandy Creek, Mr Pearson's snug-looking homestead, with its dark background of hills and wealth of green meadows before it.*" The reporter next stopped at the little inn at Mangoplah, with which he was quite taken.¹

The Sandy Creek homestead was destroyed by fire on the evening of the 25th December 1912. It was then the home of Captain WA Mitchell. The incident occurred while the family were gathered in the house for Christmas celebrations. The fire was blamed on an electric short of the wiring. The homestead was described as "*modern,*" with a hot and cold water supply [drawn from a well], and electric light and refrigeration, with electricity provided by an engine and generator. It was stated that the Pearson and Best families had built the first station homestead in the district, on this same site over one hundred years earlier.²



Above: Sandy Creek homestead. Courtesy Sherry Morris.

Breaking Up of the Sandy Creek Run

By August 1896 the breakup of the Sandy Creek Run had begun. The government announced that after the 1st October certain crown lands [leased] that formed part of the Sandy Creek and Wagga Wagga holdings would be set aside for Homestead Selection. There were five portions initially [no's 180-184] each with an area of 486 acres and all in the parish of Rowan.³

Deliberate government action to break up the large squatting runs saw extensive resumptions of crown lands, as can be seen from the following report in the local press in November 1896,⁴

"In the Wagga district the following lands will be made available for homestead selection: Book Book, 1055 acres; Berrembed, 1920 acre; Toole's Creek, 550 acres; Bullenbong, 6252 acres; Cawabbe, 2886 acres; O'Brien's Creek, 7560 acres; Kyeamba, 2320; Hanging Rock, 375 acres; Junee racecourse and T.S.R.,

¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 25th September 1869, p2.

² Daily Advertiser. 27th December 1941, p2.

³ NSW Government Gazette. 1896, p5413.

⁴ Wagga Wagga Express. 12th November 1896, p2.

1002 acres; Forest Reserves, 9035 and 1251; parish of Ganmain, 15,290 acres; withdrawal from Ganmain holding, 35,660 acres, and T.S.R. from Wagga to Narandera, 2000 acres.

In addition to the above noted areas, 10,410 acres on O'Brien's Creek holding; 3477 acres, within Forest Reserves 1871 and 1874, parish Woomahrigong, and 7561 acres on Book Book holding will be made available for settlement lease, whilst for the purposes of homestead selection and settlement lease, an area of 5172 acres within Borambola holding, and 3374 acres within Sandy Creek holding are being made ready. In addition to the area noted above 32,000 acres on Barellan, and 43,600 acres on Euratha Holdings, land district of Narandera, and 4900 acres on O'Brien's Creek, and 2000 acres on Hanging Rock holdings, land district of Wagga Wagga, are being dealt with for the purposes of improvement leases."

In 1908 the Sandy Creek Estate was split up into thirty-two blocks and sold by public auction. On the day of the sale, 10th November 1908, eleven of the lots were sold including the homestead block. The other twenty-one blocks were all passed in for private sale, having failed to reach the reserve.

The homestead block was purchased by Ringan McMicken of Mannus, Tumburumba, for £5 18s per acre [total cost].

A description of the block read as follows,¹

"Area about 1330 acres; contains rich alluvial flats; fine undulating wheat growing slopes, and an excellent grazing ridge; permanently watered by two main creeks, a very large dam and minor tanks; subdivided into various suitable small paddocks, and has a very nice, comfortable residence of 7 rooms with verandah, also detached bedroom, bathroom, office, kitchen, servant's room, storeroom, and laundry, also substantial stables, coach house, sheds and men's huts."

The woolshed block sold to Gideon Watson of Wagga Wagga, for £5 17s 6d per acre [total cost £2,764 3s 9d]. The description for this block read as follows,²

"Area about 478 acres; all suitable for cultivation; watered by tanks and Sandy Creek; subdivided into small paddocks; woolshed comparatively new and specially planned for convenience, fitted for 16 shearers, and with a big receiving shed attached at rear capable of holding 2,200 sheep and also drafting and all necessary yards."

The woolshed had been built some four years earlier at a cost of £1,100.³

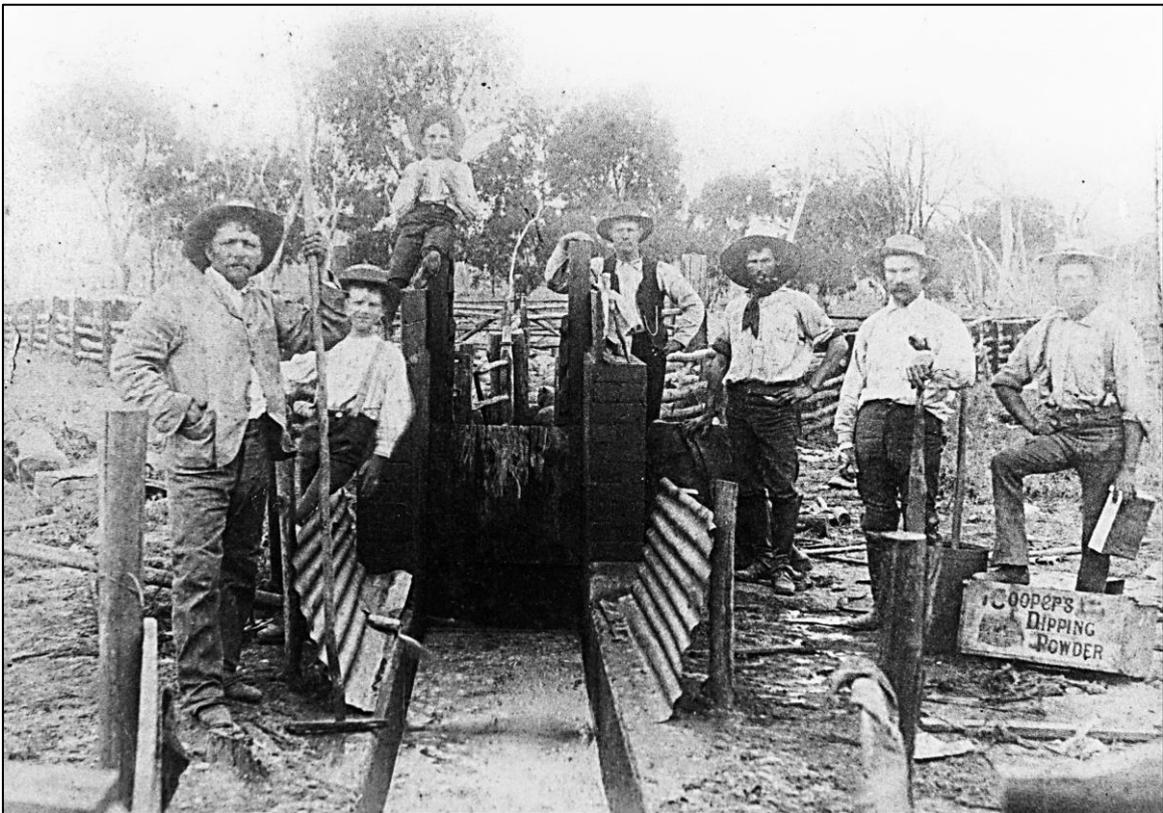
¹ Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 12th November 1908, p3.

² Wagga Wagga Advertiser. 12th November 1908, p3.

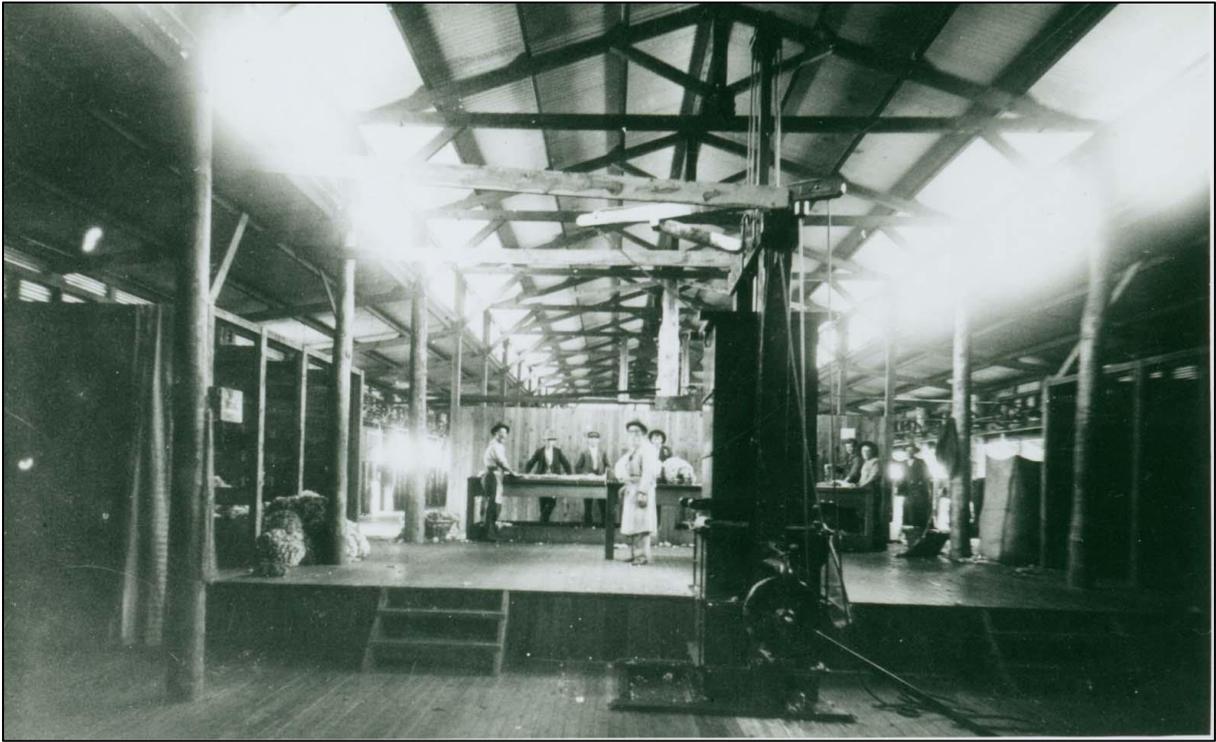
³ Albury Banner. 13th November 1908, p45.



Above: Sale at Sandy Creek. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina.



Above: Sheep dipping at Sandy Creek, c.1898. Left: Frank Best and his two sons, Ted and Sid. WR Nixon is gentleman with prodder in his hand. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina. [BGS2008_602]



Above: Inside the Sandy Creek woolshed. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina.



Above: Wool being carted from Sandy Creek, early 1900's. The man second from left is believed to be Frank Best. Courtesy Museum of the Riverina.

