

South Coast History Society Inc.

RecollectionS

Issue 12, February 2019

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Too much of our interesting local heritage has vanished – like this unusual Allan Truss Bridge at Quaama. So, we have identified 101 significant surviving objects in the Bega Shire (including one exceptionally interesting bridge) that epitomize the area's 'Hidden Heritage' and are now compiling libraries of information about each – as you will discover, commencing on page 16.

Timber Truss bridges in NSW were built from the 1860s to the 1930s, and the different types are named after their designers, who were Public Works Department engineers. One hundred and five Allan Truss bridges, named after Percy Allan (1861–1930), were built between 1894 and 1929 and 25 have survived. The distinctive Dry River bridge was the second Allan Truss bridge to be built.

Two years ago Dr Lenore Coltheart gave a most interesting presentation at South Coast History Day about Timber Truss Bridges. She has since compiled a book about them, 'The Timber Truss Bridge Book', which the RMS will soon be publishing as an e-book, with a print version to follow. We can't wait to read it.

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Can the Rabbits!

Rabbits became a serious problem in the NSW South-East in the first decade of the Twentieth Century. Various methods were employed in an effort to control them, including poisoning and netting:

'A meeting of landholders was held [in Burragate] on Thursday afternoon to consider the rabbit question. A syndicate was formed to purchase a Hicks' Ideal Poison Cart



The factory crew, c. 1911

and start operations against "bunny" as soon as possible.' (Bega Budget, 24.8.1906) 'Five poison carts are operating over Towamba way, and already several dogs and poddies have fallen victims.' (Southern Star, 12.9.1906) 'Mr. Alex Binnie, of Log Farm, is fighting him for all he is worth, and has just wire-netted about 60 acres of his cultivation land to cope with the pest.' (Bega Budget, 14.10.1908)

The trapping and skinning of rabbits proved to be a profitable sideline for local farmers:

'A Towamba correspondent to the Budget says the rabbit trapping industry has been wonderfully flourishing this winter in that locality. He alone has accounted for, and sold



A Hicks 'Ideal' Poison Cart. Stratford & District Historical Society.

5000 skins, besides attending to the dairy.' (Bega Budget, 14.8.1909)

The value of rabbit meat was also well-known: *'in places on the railway line rabbits are caught in millions and sent away by rail to Sydney where immense sums have been invested in large freezing works, and then placed in cold storage.'* But in the South-East *'we have no such facilities of transit here, and it is therefore useless to talk about freezing.'* (Bega Budget 30.10.1909) So, it was suggested that a rabbit cannery be established.

Several sites including Burragate, Candelo and Towamba, were investigated, but eventually it was decided the best location for the factory would be near Wyndham.

A Mr A Kraanstuyver, "a well-known and energetic farmer at the New Building Bridge", was appointed to sell 3,000 shares in the venture at £1 each to finance the venture. It took him 18 months to do so, and then it took another three months to build the

factory.

'Wednesday last will ever be remembered by the large crowd of people who gathered at Honeysuckle, Wyndham, to take part in the opening of the South Coast Rabbit and Meat Canning Company's factory ... Visitors were present from Bombala, Cathcart, Bega, Rocky Hall, Eden, Candelo, Pambula, Wolumla, and all the surrounding centres. The contingent from Bega was very large ... We estimate that between 800 and 1000 persons were on the ground at 2 pm ...

'One man remarked that he had tasted stewed rabbit, curried rabbit, baked rabbit, and boiled rabbit, but they were all put in the shade by canned Wyndham rabbit. It is far superior to much of the preserved beef sold in this district ... Altogether a most enjoyable time was spent by the visitors, and if the factory is only half as successful as the opening ceremony, then a new and flourishing industry has been established in the district which will benefit the farmer and business man alike.'

Needless to say, the workers were inconvenienced and delayed on account of the large crowd of inquisitive visitors, who were continually asking questions. But the workmen took it all in good part, and at all times were only too happy to impart their knowledge to the public ... He (the Chairman of Directors) thought the factory was in the proper place, being centrally situated and on the main road to the port. He urgently requested all landholders to support and assist the company by sending along all rabbits they possibly could ...

Just about the time when the crowd was most dense, Mr D Grant (of Rocky Hall) arrived with a two horse van loaded with rabbits. They were hanging from every part of the trap, even to the pole. Mr Grant was loudly cheered when he drove in the ground, and was immediately focussed by cameras.' (Pambula Voice, 7.7.1911)

The factory had been erected with the intention 'that the company would have from 40 to 60 tons (of canned rabbit)

weekly to cart to ... the port.' (Pambula Voice, 21.4.1911) 'For every rabbit caught he estimated that sixpence would be brought into the district. This meant a very considerable sum when it is remembered that thousands would be caught every week.' (Bega Budget, 8.7.1911)

And the Sydney Morning Herald confidently predicted 'The financial success of the venture is already assured on account of a great number of the farmers having shares in the company. This will turn what has hitherto been considered a pest into a revenue-producing commodity, as an unlimited market is already assured for the product ... It is expected that at the outset quite 40 men will be employed in and about the factory, and it is hoped within six months that employment will be found for 100. It is expected that 2,000 pairs of rabbits will be daily dealt with for five days in each week, and it is stated that one firm in England alone is prepared to handle all the tinned rabbits that can be turned out during the next five years. The British Admiralty is also expected to be a large purchaser. Mutton and veal will be also dealt with. When the works



Opening of the Rabbit Canning Factory, Honeysuckle Creek, Wyndham, July 1911.

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are in full swing, employment will be found for six expert tinsmiths, three skinners, and 60 or 70 trappers. If there should be a falling off in the supply of rabbits during the summer months store cattle, sheep, and poultry will be dealt with. (Sydney Morning Herald, 22.6.1911)

But that was not to be.

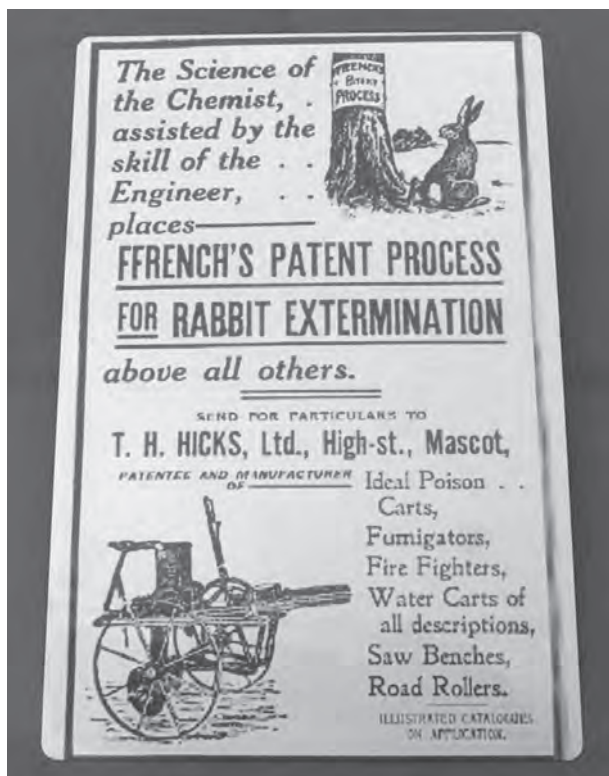
At first it appeared the venture was a success. 'The rabbit-canning factory at Wyndham on the South Coast, which was opened this month, has been kept busy, the supply of rabbits being plentiful. The matter of purchasing a motor lorry for the purpose of bringing in rabbits from the far-distant centres is now under consideration.' (Sydney Morning Herald, 20.7.1911) 'About nine tons of canned rabbit left the factory last week for shipment, and at present four teams are loading. Even bullock teams have

been requisitioned, Mr. Dave Farrell's taking 120 cases. The delay in the shipment of the canned rabbit was due to the

label having to be altered or added to, the word 'Australia' having to be put on ... Record loads of rabbits are still coming into the factory at Honeysuckle. Mr. A. Twyford, carrier from Candelo, got stuck on the Myrtle Creek mountain on Sunday night with 12,000 rabbits on. The roads have been very bad about here since the last rain. Lochiel and Pambula are beginning to send good supplies to the Factory, but Candelo and Wolumla are going to beat the Rocky Hall loads.' (Southern Star, 2.9.1911) 'Within five weeks of the opening of the canning factory at Wyndham, on the South Coast, N.S.W., it is estimated that 30,000 rabbits had been treated and 20,000 tins put out.' (The Farmer & Settler, 8.9.1911)

However, by September 11th 1912 the Shoalhaven Telegraph was reporting 'The Wyndham

Rabbit Canning Company is in rather a bad way. The deficiency to date is £1300.' Two days later the Bombala



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- Record your story and send it (as a Word attachment; maximum 2,000 words) to southcoasthistory@yahoo.com by **5pm on 14th February 2019**. Receipt of your entry will be confirmed within 48 hours.
- You may wish to show a draft of your essay to your favourite history teacher before submitting it, and seek their input and advice.
- This competition is open only to Years 10, 11 and 12 students in 2018 who attend school or live in the Bega Valley or Eurobodalla Shires.
- In entering this competition, you agree to South Coast History Society publishing your essay, should it be one of the winning essays, in 'Recollections'.
- For further information email southcoasthistory@yahoo.com or phone 0448 160 852.
- And HAVE FUN. (You will!)

How to Can a Rabbit

First, catch your rabbit.

'The rabbits, cleaned by trappers, are received at a convenient platform by an expert, who carefully looks over the bunnies and rejects any doubtful ones. The ears and feet are chopped off and bagged for shipment to Melbourne where they are converted into glue. The skinner, who had a reputation of being able to do 400 an hour, then gets to work. Many ridiculed the idea of such a record, but once he started it was soon seen that it could easily be accomplished. He first parts the skin a little from the flesh in about the centre of the rabbit, hangs the carcass by the middle on a hook, and gives the skin one pull and the rabbit is ready to be cut up. The same man is an expert in this department also, but

can do about twice as many animals in the time. Five hits of the chopper is all that is required, and bunny falls in pieces into a huge tub of brine. The flesh is treated to two or three courses of brine of various strengths, and is really pickled before being put into tins. The article is tinned before being cooked, only a pin-hole being left in the tin. This is soldered while the contents are hot, and the cooling process causes the vacuum so well known to people in the trade. With the addition of an attractive label the article is ready for market. All the tins are manufactured on the premises, and some surprisingly simple labor and time saving machinery is in use. The tin is cut to size by a guillotine, and is then turned and made the

shape of a tin, so that every tin will be exactly the same size. A tinsmith gets the tin round an iron cylinder and the edges are easily soldered. The bottoms fit exactly, and are soldered by being turned round in the solder so that just the edge is touched. But it is the machine that cuts the lids that is a surprise packet for the average onlooker. With it one man can cut 1500 complete lids an hour with the edges turned. It is worked by a 3-h-p. engine, and must have enormous power to do the work it does. Situated a few yards from the factory is a shed in which boys are engaged in putting the skins over wires to be dried, and the place contains hundreds in the drying process.' – Bega Budget, 8.7.1911

Times recorded 'The directors' report, showing the operations of the above company from its inception to June 30th, 1912 is to hand. Expenditure during that period was £4405 13s, and the deficiency is set out at £1300.' (There are suggestions that, after the seemingly initial success of the venture, the employees sought a pay rise which the factory was simply unable to afford, and this ultimately led to the closure of the company.)

The company was not to survive. 'At the half-yearly meeting of the Wyndham rabbit-canning factory the balance-sheet showed a loss of £70. It was decided, after discussion, to call a special meeting for May 17, to consider the advisability of winding-up the company, and to appoint a liquidator ... (but) Shareholders came forward generously and paid in advance their calls to 13s, enabled the directors to pay all outstanding liabilities and £200 off the overdraft, rescuing the company from liquidation. Inquiries to lease and purchase the factory have been received; also a proposal to install a plant to distil eucalyptus oil on a share basis ... The buildings and plant of the company are valued at £1,227.' (Sydney Morning Herald, 24.4.1913)

It seems the short-lived South Coast Rabbit and Meat Canning Company's factory was finally destroyed in bushfires in 1926. **R**

Sources: The Valley Genealogist, June 2001; 'Rabbits' – from Towambavalleyhistory.webhive.com.au



Rabbit Canning Factory at Wyndam, 1911. Note rabbit carcasses on carts.



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Wings Over the Valleys: Aviation on the Far South Coast 1911-1939.

by Andrew McManus

BACKGROUND

In 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright made the first generally-acknowledged flight in a heavier-than-air craft. A number of flights were made by other individuals, including Louis Bleriot who flew across the English Channel in 1909. By 1911, it could be claimed that aviation was more than a hobby for amateurs and tinkerers.

WINGS OVER TATHRA

In 1911 the first report of aircraft on the South Coast was made. According to the *Southern Star* of May 10th 1911, three men fishing from a boat off Tathra “saw what they state must have been an aeroplane. It was travelling in a northerly direction up the coast, and was at a good height, but very clearly visible to those in the boat”. They were widely disbelieved and advised to add more water to their whisky in future. (*Southern Star*, May 10th, 1911 p2).

THE MARCH OF THE AEROPLANE: A THOUGHTFUL EDITORIAL

Late in 1913, the *Bega Budget* published an article speculating on the future of aviation. Noting that the French government had established an airship mail service between Paris and Nice, the author suggested that “if mails can be safely transmitted by aeroplane, passengers could be carried by the same means”. The article concluded by claiming that “The enterprising man who first establishes a line of aeroplanes in Bega should make a fortune, while the now popular motor will be reserved for Tathra and other short trips. The aero – that will be the short name – could ‘walk’ the Cooma trip in about an hour.” (*Bega Budget*, November 12th, 1913 p 2).

The *Budget’s* optimistic vision of the future of air transport seems to have influenced the local population. In 1918 the paper reported that:

“Almost from the very commencement of the war various people have reported seeing an aeroplane along our coastal borders ...” (*Bega Budget*, **May 1st 1918** p2). In 1915, the *Budget* reported that an aeroplane “ ‘recently seen’ in Bega did not appear in any other part of the South Coast” and concluded that “it must have buried itself in the sand like a prawn.” (*Bega Budget*, **February 10th 1915** p2). The *Cobargo Chronicle* gave a few more details: “Mr. Alick Blomquist came out from Bega on Monday morning. He states that at about 4 a.m he saw the lights of an aeroplane crossing Bega, and when he reached Elmgrove the light was still visible travelling towards Cooma. The light threw a glare like a searchlight.” (*Cobargo Chronicle*, **February 12th, 1915** p 2.) The *Bombala Times* reported that “A number of Bega residents (according to a report in a local paper) have ‘seen an aeroplane.’ It was in the morning, too.” (*Bombala Times*, **February 12th, 1915** p3).

On February 27th 1915 the *Southern Record and Advertiser* reported that “the news of an aeroplane is wafted in to us from Tantawanglo. One family declare positively that they saw one pass down the river the other evening,

passing so near the house that a flash of light in the window called their attention to the flying visitor. Is it possible that aircraft are carrying on a secret mission in this country? It seems incredible — almost ridiculous but, as the old girl said a long time ago, ‘Yer never know what them Germans’ll do’. (*Southern Record and Advertiser*, February 27th, 1915 p1).

Perhaps surprisingly, this is the first suggestion that enemy aircraft might have been operating off the NSW South Coast. It is tempting to consider the possibility that the aircraft in question came from the German raider *Wolf*, which carried a seaplane and was active off our coast during World War I. However, *Wolf* did not leave Germany until late 1916 so no aircraft could have come from that source (<http://navymuseum.co.nz/hilfskreuzer-wolf/>).

THE BEGA AERODROME

There were no further aircraft sightings in 1916 or 1917 but in April 1918, an airstrip was set up on the Bega racecourse by the Department of Defence “and an aeroplane arrived there this week which created quite a stir”, as the *Southern Record and Advertiser* of April 27th 1918 informed its readers. On May 1st, the *Bega Budget* reported that “within the last week or so residents in and around the town have seen twinkling lights which they are positive were aircraft of some kind; but in every case people have been sceptical and attributed the hallucinations to highly strung nerves or an overdose of some blend of whisky. But since Monday morning 19 out of 20 people within a radius of 10 miles of Bega could take an oath they saw a real ‘plane.’” (*Bega Budget*, May 1st, 1918, p2).

Bega’s first aerodrome did not last long. By August 1918, the racecourse was no longer in use as an airstrip and some local complaints “constrained the Defence Dept to make good the damage done by the “aeroplane camp” which recently occupied Bega racecourse.” (*Cobargo Chronicle* August 24th 1918, p2).

AFTER THE WAR

There seem to have been no further aircraft sightings during the war years and in fact, the next news article about aircraft appeared in 1922 and dealt with “A *Moruya* sport who was at Bega races on Saturday tells us that while the aeroplane was at *Moruya*, he went aboard for a fly and just before he got aboard, a man whom he had just bought some palings from tapped him on the shoulder and said, ‘What about settling up for those palings.’ Clearly, not everyone had the *Moruya* “sport’s “faith in aircraft safety.” (*South Coast Times* July 7th, 1922, p22). Equally clearly, joyflights in aircraft were not uncommon.

HI-JINKS IN THE SKY?

In October 1930, a Mr E A Maddrell decided to distribute ‘How to Vote’ cards for the NSW state election, flying from Nowra to Bega to do so. While Mr Maddrell’s electioneering

stunt would have caught the public's attention, someone thought that it could be improved on. The *Nowra Leader* informed its readers that:

"On Friday a phone message was received in Bega that Mr. Maddrell, the independent candidate, would arrive in Bega on Saturday morning with Kingsford-Smith in his famous aeroplane, and a large crowd assembled at the racecourse. Mr. Dicker, secretary of the hospital, grasped the opportunity of making something for the hospital, and collected 6d [6 pence] entrance money.

Shortly after noon an aeroplane arrived over the town, and there was a great rush of cars and pedestrians to the racecourse and when the 'plane landed there was a wild rush. But the crowd was doomed to disappointment. The airman was not Smithy, but a Mr. Hill of National Airways, and Mr. Maddrell was with him all right. We understand that Mr. Maddrell denies having sent word that Kingford Smith was coming, but that was the 'phone message received in Bega."

Mr Maddrell dropped leaflets over Bega then returned to Nowra in the afternoon, the *Nowra Leader* commenting that *"the journey by 'plane here and back to Sydney cost only £18 which is less than would be charged for a special car."* (*Nowra Leader*, October 31st 1930, p3). The commercial possibilities of the aeroplane were certainly appreciated by some.

THE 'SOUTHERN CLOUD' DISAPPEARS, MARCH 1931.

At 8.10 am on March 21st 1931, the Southern Cloud, an Avro Ten 3-engined aircraft of Australian National Airways

left Sydney for Melbourne. The plane crashed in appalling weather and its remains were not to be found for 27 years. The search for the plane lasted 18 days and involved over 20 aircraft. The *Nowra Leader* of April 10th 1931 asked *"Was the Missing Plane seen near Bega?"* and went on to report that:

"Mr. John Went, a well-known resident of Numbugga, called at our office on Monday, reports the Bega "District News", and told us that on the Saturday the Southern Cloud disappeared he and several others of the household distinctly saw a large 'plane passing over the mountain near his place. That was between 1 and 2 o'clock, at a time when the gale was at its height. He watched the 'plane for some time, and saw it pass out of sight in the direction of Brogo. It was close enough to his farm to frighten one of the horses. He has no doubts at all about having seen it, and his story fits in with that of Mr. Les Schultz, of Double Creek, who was out prospecting on Mumbulla Mountain, and who tells us that he distinctly heard an aeroplane in a north-westerly direction from where he was. He heard it several times, and did not think any more of the incident until he read in the papers where a Goulburn woman had seen the 'plane going in a south-easterly direction, which would fit in with his idea of the sound coming from the north-west." (*Nowra Leader*, April 10th 1931, p4).

SMITHY COMES TO TOWN

The loss of the Southern Cloud and another Australian National Airways plane in Malaya spelt the end of the company, which had been founded in 1929 by Charles

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Kingsford Smith and his partner Charles Ulm. Smithy was forced to travel around the country giving joy-flights and in October 1932, Sir Charles, as he was then, flew into Bombala and then Bega.

On the 23rd, he landed at Bombala racecourse in the Southern Cross, accompanied by Captain Pat Hall in the Southern Cross Midget. The *Bombala Times* reported that, after a welcome by the mayor and the Returned Soldiers, "Sir Charles and his companions got to business, and bookings for seats and flights followed in quick succession". Both aircraft flew from 10.30 am until after 1 pm. "It is estimated, roughly," said the Times, "that the takings amounted to over £150. Sir Charles expressed himself as being highly delighted with the result. Out of 200 towns visited lately, it was said that Bombala showed the best financial result for a morning session." (*Bombala Times*, 28 October 1932, p1).



The Southern Cross at Jellat Flat

BEGA TAKES TO THE AIR

This was the headline in the *Bega District News* of Monday October 24th. The paper went on to report that "close on 2000 people" attended the landing of Kingsford Smith's two aircraft.

The *Bombala Times* reported on Friday October 28th that the flights in Bega made £200 and the Bega District News claimed that this figure was "an Australasian record in takings in one day" and added "so that puts Bega and Bombala on the map". The amount raised suggests that, at 10 shillings per flight, at least 400 people took the opportunity to fly. However, since flights in the Southern Cross Midget cost 5 shillings and children could fly for as little as 2 shillings and sixpence, the number of people who flew with either Smithy or Captain Hall was probably much higher. Bega did, indeed, take to the air.

ADASTRA AIRWAYS AND THE FIRST AIRMAILS.

Perhaps Smithy's visit was a factor in the development of an air service between Bega and Sydney. Certainly, in his trips to various country centres, Smithy proved that aircraft could operate from such places under fairly basic conditions.

In 1933, Adastra Airways, which had been established in 1930, was awarded a government subsidy to operate an airmail service between Bega and Sydney. Adastra had been founded by two former Australian Flying Corps pilots, F W Follett and H T Hammond with Captain Follett as manager and chief pilot.

On February 5th 1934, the company began a mail and passenger service from Sydney to Bega and return. The passenger fare was £4 each way, a huge amount in 1934 when the average weekly wage for men was £4 and for women, £2 pounds (*Sydney Morning Herald*, March 6th 1935, p13). In a letter to the business people of Bega, (actually carried on the inaugural flight) Captain Follett remarked that: "The importance of Bega and the glorious scenery traversed on the way is little realised owing to the town's comparative isolation and the distance from a rail head." Follett went on

to claim that "our equipment is sound and safe, maintained under the most expert supervision. Our organisation employs only the most reliable and experienced pilots and we therefore offer first class facilities for efficient and rapid transport." Follett concluded that the flight would take ten hours less than the trip by road. (F W Follett - C. Ayres, February 2nd 1934, collection of Bega Pioneers Museum, aviation file). Since 1928, steamships travelling down the coast had ceased to carry passengers so the air service was a welcome alternative despite its cost.

The *Bega District News* described the event:

"History was made last Monday when the first airmail from Sydney and from Bega to Sydney took place. Two of the Adastra Airways 'planes left Sydney at 8.30 and arrived here about 10.30 well ahead of time. It was a gloriously bright day and the 'planes made a fine sight as they circled over the town before landing at Jellat Jellat. There was some concern locally as to the safety of the landing ground owing to the presence of so much water and mud but both machines made a perfect landing. Captain Follet, who was in charge of the mail plane and pilot Adams who was in charge of the second plane were given a civic welcome by the Mayor Ald. John D'arcy."

The *News* noted that "Townpeople were greatly interested in the arrival of the first mail by air and although only short notice of it was given in Sydney, 442 letters were dispatched including one from Ald. Parker, Lord Mayor of Sydney to the Mayor of Bega. Most of the letters were from souvenir and stamp collectors."

The 'planes set off on the return trip at about 20 past two and were back at Mascot at 4.45.

A large number of letters were dispatched from Bega.

The article concluded by wondering: "What would the old hands who have passed away now think of our mails reaching Sydney in two hours?" (*Bega District News*,

February 6th 1934).

The plane flown by Follett was a de Havilland Fox Moth, (*Kyogle Examiner*, February 6th 1934, p3) a single-engined biplane introduced in 1932. It could carry up to four passengers and had a maximum speed of 171 km/h and a range of 684 km.



Capt F W Follett (on right).

DEMAND FOR AIR TRANSPORT

Despite the high cost of flights, there was no shortage of customers and in August 1935, Adastra had to increase its flights to five per week to meet with demand (*Illawarra*

Mercury, August 24th, 1935, p5). In May 1935, Nowra was included in the destinations (*Sydney Morning Herald*, May 21st, 1935, p10) and there is reference to a landing at Bermagui in 1937 (*Daily Telegraph*, April 22nd, 1937, p7). The popularity of air travel was clearly on the increase. In September 1935, the *Bombala Times* commented that: "Coastal towns are busy looking out sites for aerodromes. Air travel is becoming more popular, cheaper and more extensive. Bombala has a splendid site for an aerodrome on the racecourse but nothing is being done to advertise the fact. The day is not far distant when there will be a service between Melbourne and Sydney via the coast which might find it necessary to make Bombala a stopping place." Alas, despite extensive discussions in 1938 and 1948, Bombala never achieved a commercial airport. (*Bombala Times*, Fri 13th Sept 1935 p1)

THE EFFECTS OF AIR TRAVEL

It could be argued that the development of regular air services to the towns of the South Coast did much to reduce the isolation identified by Captain Follett in his letter of 1932. Mail and passengers could reach Sydney in two hours. In addition, recently released films were sent to Bega (*Bega District News*, February 8th 1934, p2). In January 1935 a "seriously ill" patient was flown to Sydney for an X-ray (*Daily Telegraph*, January 10th 1935, p4), which was the earliest use in the region of aircraft as air ambulances. In 1937 a purpose-built air ambulance was placed in service on



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AUSTRALIA**

the run (*Daily Telegraph*, May 10th, 1937, p2). The new air service was proving its worth.

The *Sydney Sun* claimed in 1935 that “Bega, on the South Coast, has become so air-minded that when Mr. N. Rodoni, pilot and instructor of Adastra Airways, visited the town at the week-end 17 pupils took lessons and many others wanted to fly. The instructor could not cope with the demand.” (*The Sun*, August 26th, 1935, p5).



A De Havilland Fox Moth circa 1934.

A RISKY BUSINESS?

However, air travel in the 1930s was not without its risks. The Fox Moths operated by Adastra were rugged and well-made, sister aircraft to the famous Tiger Moth but they carried no radio or radar and direction finding was by compass. It is not surprising that there were a number of incidents on some flights. As early as August 1934, one flight broke the record for speed to Sydney. Aided by a southerly gale, the Fox Moth reached speeds of 225 kmh. The pilot “reported a very comfortable trip, despite the weather” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, August 21st 1934, p7).

The flight of January 4th 1936 however was not nearly so comfortable. The plane was “severely buffeted by heavy rain encountered between Jervis Bay and Eden”. In an attempt to escape the “blinding squalls, Pilot N. Rodoni came down to 100 feet over the coast, but the rain was so heavy and incessant that the varnish was beaten off the ‘plane.” Significantly, “although the ‘plane suffered, it was not damaged sufficiently to be laid up for repairs”. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6th Jan 1936, p11).

In October 1936 another aircraft made a remarkable landing on the beach near Milton: “An Adastra Airways machine, flying from Sydney to Bega, made a forced landing on a beach after dropping a note for information. The pilot, who had run short of fuel after pushing through low cloud over Bateman’s Bay, asked on the note whether the beach was hard or soft. People on the beach picked up the note and wrote “Hard” in the sand, and the pilot landed safely on the beach.

Finding the surface unsuitable for taking off, the pilot secured a bullock team to tow the plane to a paddock three-quarters of a mile away.

The machine took off again after procuring fuel, and went to Bega, where a patient was placed aboard for transport to Sydney.” (*Daily Telegraph*, October 26th, 1936, p2).

In September 1938 a very serious mishap occurred to the Sydney-Bega flight: “Eye-witnesses said the ‘plane was at about 4000ft. when the engine seemed to fly to pieces. When the ‘plane came to rest the propeller was missing.” The pilot managed to make an emergency landing on Five Mile Beach near Jervis Bay and no-one was injured. (*Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, September 23rd 1938). A spare engine was sent and the plane flew back to Sydney.

In July, 1938 a “raging snowstorm” prevented the mail plane from leaving Bega. The pilot “feared that ice would form on the wings, and seriously overload the fully-booked plane which was also carrying mail.” The article records that “The four passengers, three women and a man, went to the airport but looked relieved when the trip was cancelled” and went on to say that “If weather permits, the plane will make two trips tomorrow to offset today’s delay.” (*Labor Daily*, July 2nd 1938, p1).

In 1938 a single-engined Waco biplane with two passengers on board, was forced to turn back to Sydney, after encountering rain so heavy that the pilot could not see through it. “Visibility was practically nil when we reached Kiama,” he said. “The only safe thing to do was return.” (*The Sun* August 25th 1938, p2).

At first glance, this list of mishaps makes rather alarming reading but it should be remembered that these seven incidents occurred over a period of four years and that Adastra was running five flights per week. Viewed in this light, the odds against an incident-free flight were actually



Photograph by Sam Smith

A restored Waco (present day).

quite low. What is also significant is that no lives were lost or injuries sustained. The quality of the pilots seems to have been very high. They managed to land on beaches and with an engine missing. Their common sense can be seen in the decisions to abort or cancel flights when the weather was unsuitable. Captain Follett's claim that "Our organisation employs on the most reliable and experienced pilots ..." seems to have been true.



An Adastra De Havilland Dragonfly at Frog's Hollow circa 1937.

A NEW AIRFIELD

There had been dissatisfaction with the Jellat Jellat field for some time. The road from Bega was of poor quality (Spindler, W R, 'Transport to Bega' in *Tales of the Far South Coast*, vol 2, April 1984, p33) and the runway itself was on an incline (Frog's Hollow Flyers, interview 21/10/18). In 1935, the Department of Civil Aviation decided to build a new aerodrome in a better location.

Halfway Hill, the site of the present Merimbula airport was one of the locations put forward by the locals and endorsed by Adastra. However, the Department decided to build the new facility at Frog's Hollow, 10 km south of Bega. The new aerodrome opened on May 10th 1937. (*Sydney*

Morning Herald, May 11th 1937, p9) This was followed by the opening of a new Moruya aerodrome on Feb 11th 1939 (*Braidwood Review and District Advocate*, 31st Jan 1939, p2).

THE END OF THE ADASTRA DAYS

In August 1940, the Federal Government cancelled the subsidy which had been paid to Adastra since 1934 and Adastra ceased to operate the Sydney-Bega mail route. After a six-week hiatus, the service was resumed by Butler Airways (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 7th, 1940, p7). Although Adastra no longer operated the Bega service, it had other routes and was moving steadily into aerial surveying. In 1973, Adastra became a subsidiary of East-West Airlines (McCarthy, John, *The Story of Adastra*, 1996, at <http://www.adastron.com/adastra/company/mccarthy.htm>). Butler Air Transport continued to operate the Bega route until 1959 when the company was taken over by Airlines of New South Wales (Museum of Australian Commercial Aviation, *Butler Air Transport*, at <http://www.aviationcollection.org/Butler/butler.htm>). In 1959, the new Merimbula airport was opened near Halfway Hill between Pambula and Merimbula.

CONCLUSION

In the thirty years covered by this collection of incidents, the progress of air transport on the South Coast was steady and impressive, considering the population base of the region. From the early days when anyone claiming to have seen a plane was thought to have been under the influence to the 1940s when five flights a week linked Sydney, Nowra and Bega, aviation moved steadily forwards, never backwards. Smithy came down and showed the potential of rural aviation and Adastra followed his example. The skilled pilots braved mechanical failure and inclement weather to deliver the mail and the passengers safely. The sick were flown to medical help and communications were kept up. **R**

READERS' FEEDBACK

An error in captioning the photo on the front cover of the December 2018 issue of 'Recollections' reinforces the necessity for historians to check, double check, triple check every 'fact' (irrespective of the seeming-reliability of the source) before accepting it. It appears the State Library of NSW has mis-described that photograph (and several internet sites have since furthered the mistake), because, as one of our readers suggests: "The vessel appears to be the "Merimbula" with her two white-painted 'cuddys' at the bow. It is definitely NOT the "Cobargo" as stated. "Cobargo" was equipped with three derricks serving the for'ard hold, two of them restrained by Sampson posts mounted directly in front of the bridge superstructure. Cobargo's mainmast was not fitted with crosstrees as seen in your cover photo, and lastly but most importantly the "Cobargo" was not

at Tathra wharf in 1915 as she was not built until the mid-20's!"



We've also learned that Candelo Public School is celebrating its 150th Anniversary on Saturday March 23rd with an Open Day at the school. Everyone is welcome to visit. (And there are more 150th school anniversaries to follow – including Merimbula Public School in 2020, Cobargo Public School in 2021.)




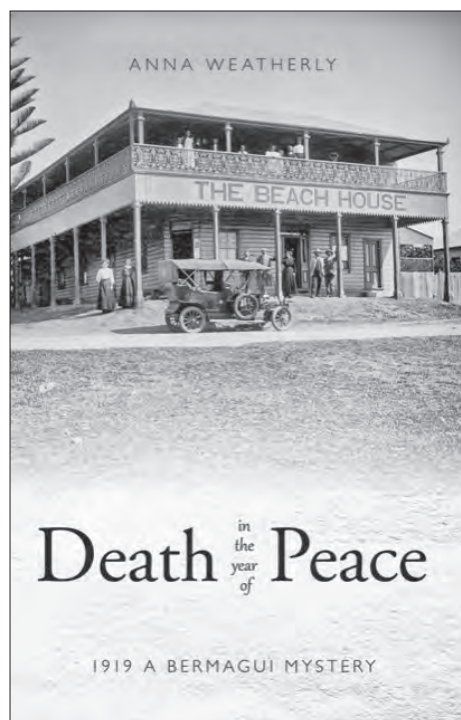
READERS' FEEDBACK (CONTINUED)



In 1919 much of the South Coast was experiencing severe drought, floods and the deadly Spanish Flu at a time it was welcoming soldiers home from World War I. These conditions were, of course,

extensively documented in local newspapers such as the 'Cobargo Chronicle' and now provide an interesting setting to a history-based murder mystery novel, 'Death in the Year of Peace: 1919, A Bermagui Mystery' by Anna Weatherley.

Anna will be guest speaker at our next FREE 'Talking History' morning tea at Bermagui Library on Friday 1st February at 10.30 am. We hope you will join us – but ask that you first advise Bermagui Library on 6499 2411 that you will be attending. Anna will also be speaking about her book at Well Thumbed Books in Cobargo at 10.30 am on Saturday 16th February. 'Death in the Year of Peace' is available from Mermaids in Bermagui, the Bermagui Museum, the Bermagui Visitors Centre, Mockingbird Lane in Central Tilba, Booktique in Merimbula, and other local outlets. 



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HISTORIES

Nurses of Australia: The Illustrated Story

by Deborah Burrows

This is an interesting book. But I cannot suggest it is a riveting read.

It's basically a chronological history of nursing in Australia. What it lacks (with the exception of its few pages about nursing in the Services during times of war) is the 'sizzle' of interesting stories that hundreds of thousands of nurses must have been able to tell over the past 230 years.

Having said that, *'Nurses of Australia'* is a reminder of how far nursing (and, indeed, medicine) has advanced over the past 230 years – how it was volunteer nurses who tended the sick and acted as midwives on the first fleets sailing to Australia and in the early years of the colony; how the Sisters of Charity provided the first trained nurses in Australia (and then founded St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney); how places like the Female Factory at Parramatta (disparagingly referred to by newspapers at the time as 'the Colonial Harem

and Lying-in-Hospital!') and the later Sydney Benevolent Asylum were so important to women's health and to the provision of basic medical assistance during childbirth; how the programs of education and training instituted by Florence Nightingale dramatically changed nursing in Australia; how regulatory and registration bodies emerged from the early 20th century and how these significantly advanced the standing of nurses; how nurses have risen to the challenges of working in war conditions and in remote environments, and how these have helped promote the status of nursing.

Don't Get Sick!

"When the General Hospital [in Sydney] opened in 1817, it was discovered that it lacked not only a morgue, but also both a patients' kitchen and a patients' washhouse. In desperation, patients were forced to store and cook their food on the wards. It is no wonder that vermin soon became a major problem. Patients also had to launder their clothing on the wards, but when they hung their washing on the hospital verandahs to dry, Governor Macquarie was appalled and prohibited the practice, which meant that the wards were not only laundries, but also drying rooms. Those who were too ill to do their own washing often lay in bed unclothed. Dr Watson referred to reports that attendants simply threw used dressings under the beds, to lie there uncollected.

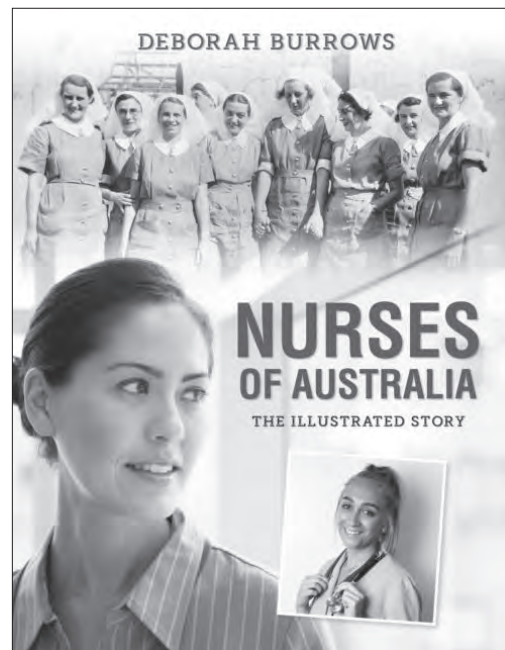
Nor were there any lavatories in the hospital itself; the hospital's privies were located outside, along a flagged path. Although convalescent patients could manage to get themselves there, Dr Watson reported that patients who could not walk were seen crawling on their hands and knees to the outside privies. It seems that the convict attendants did not see assisting patients to the lavatories as part of their duties. It was not until 1867 that provision was made for separate bathrooms and lavatories in each ward ...

No effort at classification of patients was made, so in the early years all patients – contagious or not, male or female – shared wards ...

In the early years, wardsmen and nurses did not remain in the hospital at night. Patients were locked in the wards each evening, to keep company with the rats, mice and bedbugs. As night air was considered dangerous to health, the ward windows were always kept tightly closed. With the cooking, drying laundry, unwashed bandages, unwashed patients and vermin, it is not surprising that attendants complained about the dank and heavy atmosphere when the doors were unlocked each morning ...

The food rations at the hospital, however, were generous. No matter what disease they suffered from, patients generally received rations of 1 pound (454 grams) each of meat and flour per day. Unsurprisingly, many patients were too ill or simply unwilling to consume the rations provided and soon a flourishing business developed, whereby any excess meat and flour was sold to the townspeople of Sydney. The main form of exchange was in spirits, and there are numerous accounts of the convict nurses and wardsmen being drunk on duty."

—From *'Nurses of Australia'*



But probably the most interesting aspect of this book is its record of the changing attitudes to and the roles played by women (nurses). Some examples: *"Throughout their training [in the late 19th century], all probationers lived in the nurses' home attached to their hospital and this was seen as an essential part of the training process. There they were under the control of the home sister, who was herself a trained nurse and who was responsible for their morals as well as looking after their physical wellbeing. The probationers' lives were strictly regulated in the home, and they were expected to behave according to the rules ...*

'To become a good nurse a young woman must possess considerable intelligence, a good education, healthy physique, good manners, an even temper, a sympathetic temperament, and deft, clever hands. To these she must add habits of observation, punctuality, obedience, cleanliness, a sense of proportion, and a capacity for and habit of accurate statement.' Applicants increasingly came from middle-class homes, as nursing came to be regarded as a suitable profession for girls who wanted to learn useful skills and engage in interesting work away from home. The strictness of the nurses' homes and the requirement that the girls 'live in' reassured parents that their daughters would be well looked after ...

When the Australasian Trained Nurses Association was formed in 1899, women were subordinates in both society and in health care and had little political sway. It was the male doctors on the boards of the ANTA and other nursing associations who acted as spokesmen for the associations ... and male medical practitioners continued to hold important roles in the ANTA and other nursing associations until well into the twentieth century, and it was not until 1929 that the ANTA's President was a female nurse rather than a male doctor ...

The ANTA wanted to ensure that the state boards that supervised the registration of nurses contained a 'fair proportion' of nurses as members...in 1906, the Private Hospitals Bill and, in 1907, the Nurses and Private Hospitals Bill were introduced into the NSW parliament by a Sydney physician, Dr Charles MacKellar. Both bills contained clauses that would establish a New South Wales register of trained nurses, but admission to the register would be controlled by the all-male NSW Board of Health. The ANTA took issue

with men who had no knowledge of nursing being able 'to administer the complex and responsible functions of the trained Nurse.'

The ANTA's objections were ignored. In fact, Dr MacKellar made it known that he would never agree to any nurses registration board on which nurses had representation ..."

And from 1869: "My own opinion is, that the whole race of midwives ought to be put down and their practice made illegal, just as irregular medical practice of other kinds is illegal ... the actual result of this [midwife training] is to create a class of half-educated women whose apparent superiority over the genuine hag-midwife induces a mistaken confidence in the mind of those who employ them, and which can hardly help tending in many cases to disastrous results."

Like all National Library of Australia Publishing books, *Nurses of Australia* is exceptionally well-designed and presented, and is generously illustrated with photographs and illustrations from the National Library's vast collection.

Nurses of Australia is available from around \$27.50. 

Interested in Local History?

If you enjoy reading *Recollections*, you might be interested in visiting some of our fine local museums:

Eden Killer Whale Museum, 184 Imlay St Eden. Open Monday – Saturday 9.15 am – 3.45 pm, Sunday 11.15 am – 3.45 pm.

Mary MacKillop Hall and Museum, Cnr Chandos and Calle Calle Sts Eden. Open Daily 10am – 4pm.

Old School Museum, Main St Merimbula. Open Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday 1.30 – 4 pm.

Bega Valley Genealogical Society, Old Pambula Courthouse & Museum, 42 Toalla St Pambula. Open Tuesdays 10 am – 4 pm, Thursdays 9.30 am – 12.30 pm, Saturdays 1 – 4 pm.

Bega Pioneers' Museum, 87 Bega St Bega. Open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10 am - 4 pm, Saturday 10 am - 2 pm.

Bega Cheese Heritage Centre, Lagoon St, North Bega. Open Daily 9am – 5pm.

Tathra Wharf Museum, Wharf Rd Tathra. Open Friday – Monday, 10 am – 4 pm.

Cobargo Museum, Princes Hwy Cobargo, Open Tuesday – Friday 10 am – 2 pm, Saturday 10am – 1 pm.

Bermagui Museum, Bermagui Community Centre, Bunga St Bermagui. Open Friday and Saturday 10 am – 2pm.

Montreal Goldfield, 769 Wallaga Lake Rd Bermagui. Open daily 2pm.


Narooma Lighthouse Museum, Narooma Visitor Information Centre, Princes Hwy Narooma. Open Monday to Friday 9.30 am – 4.30 pm, Saturday & Sunday 9.30am – 1.30 pm.

Moruya Museum, 85 Campbell St Moruya. Open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 am – 12 noon. Open every day in January from 11 am – 2pm, public holidays excepted.

The Old Courthouse Museum, 3 Museum Place Batemans Bay. Open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10 am – 3 pm.

Online: **Museum of the South East** at <https://southeastarts.org.au/mose-museum-of-the-south-east/>

Library branches in the Bega Valley & Eurobodalla Shires also have valuable collections of newspapers, books and photographs.

The friendly, usually well-informed volunteers at museums should be able to answer your questions or, at the least, point you in the right direction to get any information you require. 

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Our quest to compile a list of 101 objects that epitomise the history and heritage of the Bega Shire has proven to be extremely interesting and lots of fun. We've learned a lot of things about our history that we didn't previously know and have discovered – perhaps unsurprisingly – that there are many more interesting historic objects scattered throughout the community than we had ever imagined. So the exercise has already been extremely valuable, if only because we've discovered the existence of things we (and many others) previously didn't know existed.

Selecting only 101 objects was a major challenge to the three local heritage advisors who compiled the list – even after they decided, early in their deliberations, that few buildings would be included among the 101 objects because several other lists of historic buildings in the Shire exist – such as Schedule 5 to the Bega Valley Local Environment Plan 2013. The local heritage advisors suggested there was little point in simply duplicating these lists.

Our list of 101 Bega Valley 'Hidden Heritage' objects is now at www.bit.ly/101objectsindex. Several examples from the diverse range of 101 objects are featured below.

All 101 objects will be presented in several special 'Recollections'-size magazines that will be issued over coming months. The first, describing around 30 of the objects, will be available in early March – so keep an eye out for it at outlets from which 'Recollections' is normally available. (Issue 13 of 'Recollections' will be available from early April.)

But then the real fun begins! We are compiling

comprehensive libraries of information about each of these 101 objects. These will be freely available to anyone interested.

These will also be 'open' libraries, so anyone with additional information about any of the objects or their historical significance will be able to add to what has been previously provided.

How we are approaching this: a team of researchers is compiling some initial information about each of the items, about their local and historical significances, and about associated objects and themes—for example, the file of information about Wallaga Lake Bridge [see below] might be expanded to include information about many other bridges in the Shire—once this initial information is available, you (and anyone else) can add additional material to the libraries, so we look on each library as something that will continually expand. Several libraries, containing their initial information, are already accessible – again, details are at www.bit.ly/101objectsindex.

We envisage all 101 libraries will become extremely useful resources to historians, to local schools, to the local tourism industry, to local museums, and to many others.

A seminar/workshop providing more information about each of these 101 Hidden Heritage objects will be held on the morning of **Saturday 27th April**. This will be followed by an afternoon bus tour to view some places and objects with local heritage significance and to explore the local area 'through local Aboriginal eyes'. This is guaranteed to be a day that you will not want to miss. More details will be included in the next issue of 'Recollections'. 



The Kalaru Brick Kilns

Five old brick kilns are a distinctive feature beside the Tathra Road at the western end of Kalaru (between Tathra and Bega).

The first of these was built in 1939 and they were used for clay brickmaking until 1990. Huge quantities of bricks were manufactured in them. These were used in Bega, Tathra and other south coast towns, as well as in buildings and power stations that were constructed by the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Authority.

But the story of these brickworks really starts over 50 years earlier.

In 1883 a 24-year-old bricklayer's assistant and moulder of handmade bricks, William Stafford, arrived in Sydney from England. He first found work in Sydney as a bricklayer, but soon moved to the country to lay bricks on culverts and railway tunnels

on the railway lines that were being constructed between Sydney and Goulburn and in the Bathurst-Blayney-Cowra area.

At that time he met, and soon married, a widow by the name of Harriet McGovern. Her husband had been killed



Three of the five down-draught kilns.

when the brakes on his wagon failed and he was run over by his wagon and a team of eight horses on Goulburn Hill. Harriet had four children – Patrick and Jimmy (who coincidentally were employed by another brickmaker in Carcoar as a ‘pug boys’ [working in the pug mill where the clay, water and other additives were mixed]) and two girls.

Combining young Patrick’s knowledge with his own experience, William Stafford began making bricks for the Goulburn-line railway tunnels. When the line was completed, William and Patrick moved to Cooma where they established a brickworks.

When the Pambula goldfields opened in the early 1890s, William started making bricks on the Lochiel Road – his first contract being to supply bricks for the Pambula Police Station and Courthouse (now the home of the Bega Valley Genealogical Society).

William and Harriet had five sons, and a daughter. All these sons became brickmakers, as did Jimmy McGovern. So the Stafford-McGovern families manufactured bricks at many sites around the south coast and the Monaro, with hand-made bricks often being produced on-site because this was usually cheaper than transporting bricks from a central brickworks, and continued to do so until the early 1950s.

In the early 1920s, Lot Stafford, the third of William and Harriet’s sons, established a brickworks in Bega in the area of Kisses Lagoon, at the western end of the town, and in 1927 moved further east along the Tathra Road to what proved to be a flood-prone site.

Around 1933 Lot purchased 40 acres in Kalaru (the site of the surviving brickworks) and set up business there. He initially built two up-draught kilns and a drying shed for the manufacturing of hand-made bricks.

By the mid-1930s demand for bricks from Stafford’s new brickworks exceeded production capacity, so production of hand-made bricks was phased out in 1936–37 and was replaced by mechanised dry-press brick manufacturing, utilising machinery purchased from brickworks that had once operated in Moss Vale and Captains Flat.

It was discovered, however, that the existing up-draft brick kilns did not deliver temperatures that were high enough to satisfactorily fire dry-press bricks so, in 1939, the first of five down-draught kilns was erected—the middle one in the row nearest to the Tathra Road, which was capable of firing 50,000 bricks in a single batch.

World War II building restrictions, however, effectively closed down the new Kalaru brickworks – an exception being given for it to produce enough bricks to build nurses quarters in Bega.

After the war demand for bricks soared—for example,

1.2 million bricks were supplied for the construction of Bega Hospital; the Staffords also produced some specially-shaped hexagon shaped bricks for the hospital’s chimney stack—so four additional down-draught kilns were erected at Kalaru and a second dry-press production line was installed. At this time about 16 men were employed making bricks

and considerable work was provided by the brickworks to trucking companies and wood suppliers. (As an aside, the earliest trucks could only carry around 3 tons or 1,000 bricks per delivery and an average house would require about 25,000 bricks.)

The Stafford’s brickworks at Kalaru

was the closest brickworks to the Snowy Mountains, so bricks were supplied to the Snowy Mountains Scheme as fast as they could be produced – with bricks being hand loaded onto and off table-top trucks, and the trucks having to traverse unsealed potholed roads for many years. **R**

These historic brick kilns at Kalaru are believed to be the last in the country to fire bricks that were hand moulded in entirely wood-fuelled kilns. Sources: ‘*Foundations of the Past. The history of the Stafford Family and Brickmaking*’ by Ron Stafford, 2006, and ‘*100 years of Stafford Family History*’, 1996



The first of the down-draught kilns constructed at Kalaru.

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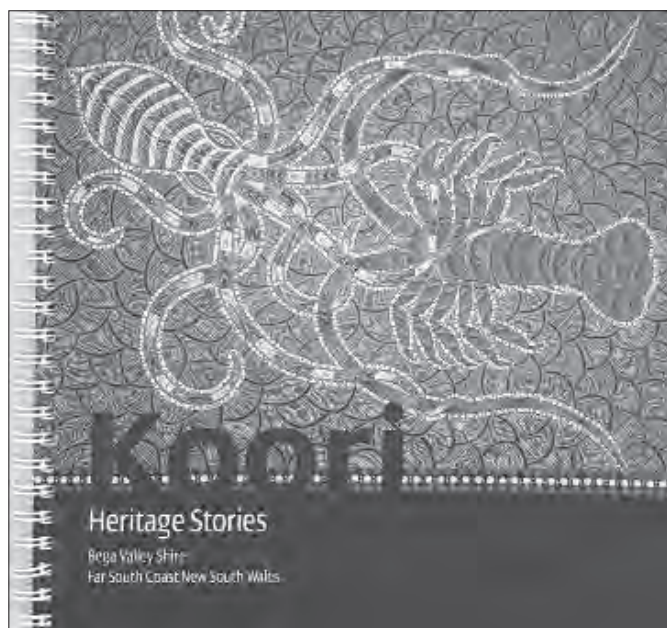




Several books have been included among the 101 significant Bega Shire's Hidden Heritage items, the Bega Valley Shire 'Koori Heritage Stories' being one of them.

Published in 2012, it features stories from 26 individuals that were extracted from oral histories provided by more than 40 Koori elders to a team led by Susan Dale Donaldson.

The stories are, as Mayor Bill Taylor observed at the launch of the book, 'simple, clear-eyed accounts of what it meant to grow up as a Koori and the importance of community, family and connection to the land.'



Whilst there is mention of historic disadvantage and, in a number of cases, displacement, the stories are told without bitterness – a feature that sets this book apart from many other histories written or recounted by Aboriginals.


'Koori Heritage Stories' is important because it recorded the recollections of a disappearing generation. Indeed, in

the course of the project four of the elders involved passed away.

It is also an especially important historical document because it covers an era of monumental change for the local Koori people – from, as one contributor put it, 'I remember the day welfare came in with the 'coppers', ambulance and fire engine. They all came in together and grabbed us [kids], the whole seven of us... They took away my chance to grow up with my mum'; to the start of the Land Rights movement in the mid-1960s; to being allowed, for the first time in the late 1960s, to live and settle in local towns; to being legally recognized as Australian citizens in 1967.

The book, in particular, highlights the significant roles that Aboriginals played in (now largely defunct) industries such as sleeper cutting, timber milling, pea and bean picking, and fish canning on the South Coast, and how (particularly with bean and pea picking) these employment opportunities melded into vividly-remembered and significant family and Yuin cultural activities.

Local Aboriginals view this 'Koori Heritage Stories' project as being particularly important. It was really the first time many had been asked to record their personal experiences and have them published in a book that was developed, written and illustrated by their own people – providing them with a greatly-appreciated, perhaps well-overdue, sense of recognition, ownership and acceptance.

'Koori Heritage Stories' was produced as part of a larger Aboriginal cultural heritage study and was a joint venture involving the Bega Valley Shire Council, the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, National Parks and Wildlife, the Biamanga National Park Board of Management, the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and the three local Aboriginal Land Councils. 

Sources: *Koori Heritage Stories*; *Bega District News*, 30.11.2012; information from Carley McGregor and Graham Moore of Bega Valley Shire Council.

The Wallaga Lake Bridge

The Wallaga Lake Bridge is a multi-span beam bridge that gently rises at its centre. It is one-lane in width with posts and rails on both sides of the roadway. The distinctive rise



in the middle of the bridge was included to provide some additional strength across the entire length of the bridge.

It was constructed in 1894 by the Public Works

Department and was opened by John Jauncey, a pioneer landowner of the Tilba district.

It is considered to have high aesthetic and historic value. Its degree of significance, as assessed by Bega Valley Shire's former Heritage Advisor in 2009, is rated as 5 [out of 5] or 'very high'.

A 2009 Council study

of timber bridges conceded that it is now 'arguably inadequate' and may need to be replaced with a new bridge constructed on a different alignment, but that the current Wallaga Lake Bridge will then likely be retained because of its tourism value.

Wallaga Lake bridge is historically important because it connected Tilba to port facilities in Bermagui and thereby greatly stimulated local commerce. It may have been built at the request of Tilba cheese producers to help them transport their product to the steamer service connecting Bermagui to Sydney.

The Shire's Heritage Advisor Trevor King regards the magnificent setting within which the bridge is situated strongly contributes to the high aesthetic appeal of the bridge and adds significance to the bridge as a heritage object. The glistening waters of Wallaga Lake, the abundant birdlife, occasional recreational fishers and the dominating presence of Gulaga Mountain (Mount Dromedary) all combine to create a physical context that is aesthetically unique, promoting an atmosphere of calmness, protection, beauty and serenity.

The bridge is a northern gateway to the Shire. There can be few local government areas within Australia that can boast such a stunningly beautiful entry point!

It is highly-valued by people from Bermagui, Tilba and surrounding areas, so is also of social significance because it is important to that community's sense of place.

Surviving arched timber bridges of this nature are very rare in NSW and this bridge may now be the only remaining example in the state. It is probably also the oldest wooden bridge on a major road in NSW.

The Wallaga Lake Bridge is featured on the cover of 'Pictorial History Bega Valley Shire' by Helen Swinbourne and Judy Winters and was a location in the films 'The Man Who Sued God' starring Billy Connolly (2001) and 'Unbroken' directed by Angelina Jolie (2014)

A note about beam bridges: Beam bridges are the simplest structural form of bridge. Unlike, for example, timber truss bridges they have no built-in supports, other than their piers, and so can span only short distances. This



Opening Wallaga Lake Bridge, 1894. Photo: National Library of Australia, nla.obj-140333373

disadvantage is overcome (as is clearly demonstrated in the Wallaga Lake Bridge) by constructing a series of beam bridges that are joined together, creating what is known as a continuous span. **R**



Sources: 'Bridging with Charm' by Tim the Yowie Man at www.traveller.com.au; 'Wallaga Lake Bridge' at www.rs.locationshub.com; Information from Trevor King of Bega Valley Shire Council.



Filming 'Unbroken' directed by Angelina Jolie in 2014 on Wallaga Lake Bridge.



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The Bemboka General Store

In many Australian villages and small country towns the General Store is the 'heart' of the town and its staff (often the family of the owner of the store) play a pivotal role in the local community.

The Bemboka store is a classic example. It was run continuously by the Hobbs family for 80 years, supplying everything from teaspoons to veterinary supplies 7 days a week ... and petrol could be purchased 'any hour night or day'.

A chapter researched and written by Christine Gazzard (nee Hobbs) in the '*Bemboka, Village in a Valley*' history, published in 1996, provides this insight [it has been slightly edited] into the running of the Bemboka general store and a glimpse of what 'customer service' in earlier times meant:



Lance Redgrave and Nicholas Hobbs, lessees of Walter Curry Allen's store, 1920–23, pictured with Eric McCracken's solid-tired delivery truck.

'Walter Curry Allen traded in the building known as the Commercial Arcade, Colombo, from 1899 until 1912. His brothers helped him with the construction, and his general store was filled to capacity with goods of every description. The Allen family lived under the store in an area later used as a storeroom.

The store was leased to Michael Wall and his wife, Emily, from 1912 to 1919. They too stocked a wide variety of goods including drapery, groceries, boots and shoes.

L R Hurrell took the lease of the store over for one year from 1919 until 1920. Mr Hurrell's stock included ironmongery, patent medicines, crockery, glassware, drapery, boots and groceries.

In 1920, N H Hobbs and Lance Redgrave met in the Randwick Repatriation Hospital. They were on final leave from World War I and approached the warehouses in Sydney to enquire about country stores. They were given a list of towns including Urunga and Bemboka. In March 1920, on his final day of furlough which entitled him to free first-class travel, N H Hobbs booked his trunk on the train and took the journey from his home town of Gosford to Nimmitabel and then on to Bemboka. He and Lance

Redgrave leased the Commercial Stores from Walter Allen.

This time marked the beginning of transport changes in the area. In 1920 the store had no petrol pumps. A year later N H Hobbs purchased a 1921 Model T Ford – the third car in Bemboka. By the late 1920s there would be eight pumps lined along the front of the building advertising Texaco, Atlantic, Plume, Shell and Voco brands in both super and standard varieties.

Prior to the installation of pumps, petrol was purchased in four-gallon drums and poured into the cars. When pumps were installed, these were operated by hand for over 20 years until the coming of electricity in the early 1940s.

As the demand for petrol increased, so did the size of the drums. Heavy steel 44-gallon drums were shipped to the port of Tathra, rolled off the boats and loaded on to the waiting transport. Upon arrival at Bemboka they would be rolled on to a wooden cradle and decanted, one by one, into the 500-gallon underground tanks.

Another new line promoted by Hobbs and Redgrave was the three-piece Whitmont suit. Nicholas Hobbs had taught from 1903 to 1910, but left teaching to assist his father as a tailor and mercer in Gosford. Equipped with this tailoring experience, the new shopkeepers were able to accurately measure customers for Whitmont suits. These suits were then cut out, tacked and seamed together in Sydney, and returned by ship via the Tathra port to Hobbs and Redgrave.

The customer would be called in for a final fitting and adjustments would be chalked on to the suit. The suit would then be returned to Sydney with a covering letter explaining the alterations. The whole process took several weeks.

Farm machinery was also stocked on a consignment basis.

Problems with transport were frequent and the customer experienced long delays. The lorry service was one way of getting large items to and from the port. If the lorry broke down, [bullock or horse] teams could be used, but they were a costly addition to the price of the item. Rough seas could also delay the ships coming from Sydney.

In 1923, N H Hobbs married a local girl, Lucy Carpenter, and Lance Redgrave sought another business at Marrar [near Juneee]. N H Hobbs continued to build up his variety of stock. Sales of motor bikes were recorded in the late 1920s. These bikes were purchased on terms through Bennett and Woods. In 1928 Jack Delves (builder) purchased a BSA bike (affectionately called the 'Bastard Stops Anywhere') for £79/5/6. He paid £22 deposit and then £4 per month.

As the local storekeeper, Nick was involved in many community projects. The *Bega District News* records that when Mr Hobbs first expressed his view at a show meeting, Mr J J Green told him to sit down as he was only a newcomer. (He had been in Bemboka for eight years!)

Buying product at competitive prices was another challenge faced by the storekeeper. During the 1930s a petrol price war developed and Mr Hobbs was advised by telegram: NOW IS THE TIME TO BUY, so he purchased 100

x 44gallon drums of petrol from the Atlantic Petrol Company, which was shipped to the Tathra port. A short time later, the local inflammable liquid inspector (the policeman) was asked to check on the licensed storage area. Of course, he found this to be inadequate. He sympathised with the position and said, 'We'll beat them, Nick. You own that paddock down the back so we'll draw up a set of plans of a shed down there to cover the quantity of fuel.' This was done and licensed on paper. A year later when the licence was due for renewal it was thought prudent to have the fictitious shed demolished!

During the 1930s any profit was invested in further stock. Records of the 1934 suppliers included Arnotts (biscuits), Dalton Bros (sugar and groceries), Kandos Cement Co, S Hoffnung & Co (wire, galvanised iron), A E Matthews (boots), Williams & Hill (shoes), Brash Macarthur (linoleum), Gibson & Co (tea), Merimbula Bacon, Cable Frock Co, Shell Co, Sanitarium Health Foods, Edwards, Dunlop & Co (stationery), James Hardie and Co (fibrolite), Nestles Milk Co, Chapmans, Bonds, Berlei Ltd, Fowlers Vacola, Yates & Co, Texas Co (petrol). Many of these companies passed the test of time and were still supplying Hobbs Store in 1996.

Sweeping the black ormonoid floor was the first job every morning in the store. There was one spreader who would sprinkle every aisle with tea leaves. Then the sweepers would go into action, each sweeping an aisle. Later, hardwood sawdust was used to prevent dust.

In the mid 1930s, night entertainment was provided at the store. Test matches between Australia and England were broadcast through loud speakers on Hobbs verandah. At 8.00 pm on Saturday nights large crowds would gather to listen.

A big staff was necessary as many products were purchased in bulk and needed weighing – currants, sultanas, dates, biscuits, sugar, flour, rice, nutmeg, mustard, alum, washing soda (people made their own soap), vinegar, etc. Milking the house cow, in the bails behind the store,



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was another staff requirement from 1920 until 1965. The lolly mixing was always a favourite job of new staff. When an account was paid, Hobbs traditionally handed out a bag of mixed sweets.

Strong men were needed on the staff as there was much lifting to be done. In the 1940s super phosphate and wheat came in 180 pound bags. There were 12 bags to the ton. The product was collected at the rail head at Nimmitabel and unloaded manually. Bran, pollard and crushed wheat, the standard dairy produce to feed to cows while in the bails, came in 140 pound and 120 pound bags and these also had to be unloaded from the delivery trucks, wheeled by trolley into the feed storage room and then reloaded on to the cream trucks for delivery to the farmers. The main method of delivery was by cream truck.

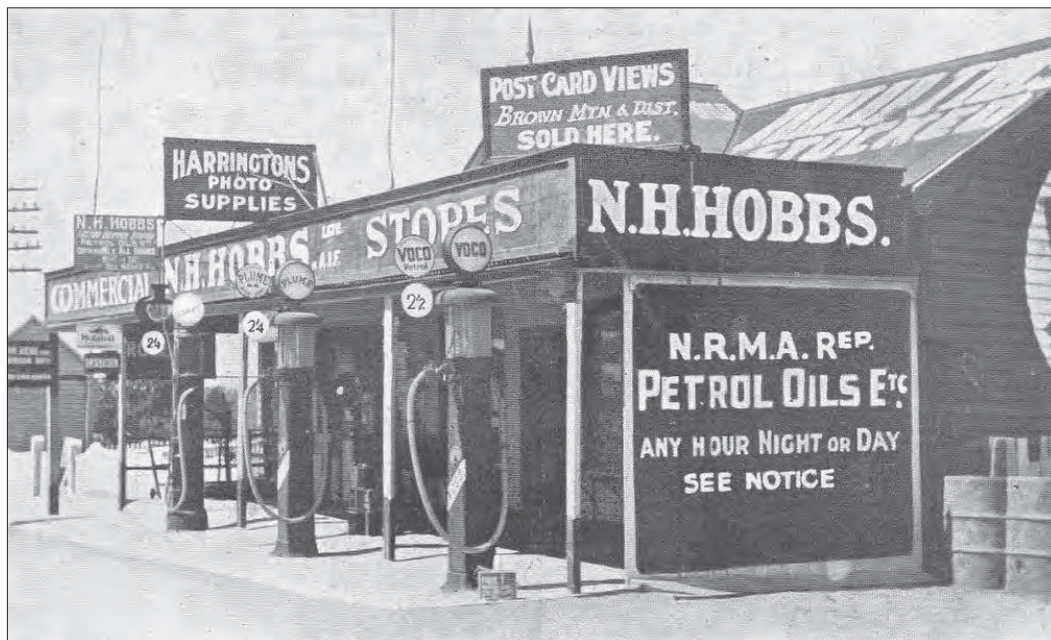
The cream truck collected and sorted the empty cream cans from the Bemboka Factory the night before the set delivery day. The 75 dairy farmers relied on this truck for deliveries of produce, groceries, bread, mail and newspapers.

Late night shopping is not just a modern day city feature. Trading hours up until the late 1940s were 48 hours per week including:

Wednesday 8.00 am – 1.00 pm

Saturday 8.00 am – 9.00 pm

Many ladies enjoyed late night shopping, especially at the start of the new credit month. While they shopped, the men played billiards at the School of Arts, socialised at the hotel or played cards and enjoyed pies and peas at the fruit shops. Rationing of everyday items such as tea, butter (2 ounces per person per week), sugar, clothing and



petrol was enforced during the Second World War years. In 1940, private users of petrol were allowed petrol for just 16 miles per week. Hobbs Store became a mecca on the Far South Coast and Monaro for the purchasing of crockery, hardware and other goods not on ration.

Petrol deliveries changed when the Tathra port was closed in 1954. Des Heffernan was contracted to collect semi-trailer

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* Back issues of *Recollections* are at www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX. where X is the issue number (1 to 11, except issue 3 which is 3- and issue 10 which is 10-).

loads of petrol drums from Nowra. On arrival at the store, the drums were still hand-decanted into the underground tanks. Over time, bulk petrol became available from the docks at Eden. N H Hobbs joined the Ampol Company in the 1940s, and Jack Hobbs was presented with a plaque in 1990 to commemorate 45 years' association with the company – the oldest NSW distributorship. By 1980, N H Hobbs & Son had purchased their own bulk petrol truck. This enabled them to collect bulk fuel from Eden and pump this straight into the underground tanks. Also, farm delivery became much less labour intensive as most farmers had overhead or on-ground storage facilities.

Finn's building across the road from Hobbs Store (later Bemboka Hardware) was used by Hobbs from 1936. Most of the time it was used as a furniture showroom. Each November and December the furniture would give way to toys, and many small children, with sticky fingers and bright eyes, would wander along the aisles, looking longingly at the assorted dolls, cowboy suits and Cyclops waggons and scooters.

After World War II, the store started a delivery service once a month to Kameruka in a 1929 Chevrolet converted into a utility. It was not unusual to deliver linoleum and toys to Kameruka farms after the children had gone to bed on Christmas Eve. One customer is remembered ordering lino for his wife at Christmas. When asked the size he said, *'You know, Jack, the same size as last year – we always get new lino for the kitchen at Christmas.'* Many of the rooms in the farm houses were out of square. The lino was rolled out on the top shop verandah and cut with a large pair of scissors.

The war years changed life for many families. The Hobbs family was not an exception as the eldest child, Ronald, was killed in 1944. Jack, the second son, joined his father in the business in 1945 and the store became known as N H Hobbs and Son. Nicholas Hobb was still a staunch supporter of the football and hockey teams and an enthusiastic fund raiser for the proposed new Memorial Hall. He died in 1963, and at this time Jack's wife, Margaret (a former teacher) joined the business.

This was the beginning of changes in processed foods. The store ordered its first freezer and a dairy case, and the town folk were able to buy frozen icecreams, peas and dinners. Of course, to go along with the TV dinners the homes needed television. Roy Howard, through Hobbs Store, visited locals and was able to offer televisions on terms, to take advantage of the ABC booster station operating on Brown Mountain.* Biscuits were no longer weighed out individually. Packaged items such as sugar, prunes, flour and rice became the norm.

For many years grocery orders had been assembled in the store by the staff. The customer would send a list with the delivery person, telephone the order in, or bring a list to the store and wait. The order would be handwritten, item by item, on to one or several dockets. Then, the staff would rush around the store, collecting items and recording the prices, until a huge pile of groceries was assembled on the counter. Some items, such as soap, would be wrapped in newspaper to prevent spoiling of the foodstuffs. Cardboard boxes would be carefully chosen, groceries packed in and the boxes tied with rope which was dangling down from above the counter. The boxes were then labelled for delivery or carried to the waiting customer's vehicle.

Over time the roads improved. The once dusty Brown Mountain road was sealed [in 1968] and the time taken

for the Bemboka-Bega journey was almost halved. The reliance on the general store diminished as more local residents were employed in Bega.

In 1984, Margaret Hobbs died at the early age of 57 years. Jack Hobbs chose to stay on in his business and was joined by his son, John, and daughter, Christine. Trading continued to be on a seven-day-a-week basis. Competition from the supermarkets, with their greater buying power, saw a change in the operation of Hobbs Store. Handwritten grocery orders to Davis & Penney in Bega were replaced by an electronic telephone ordering system to a Melbourne buying group, Composite Buyers. Even though freight per pallet was \$40, the buying power of this independent group allowed the country store to continue to compete through the Budget Rite banner.

Traditionally, price tickets were handwritten and thumb-tacked to the shelves. Prices often remained unchanged from year to year. By the mid-1980s these price tickets



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were removed and price guns were used in the store to roll the prices on to grocery items. Packing nights were introduced to ensure that shelves were replenished. Rotation of perishable items became imperative with the introduction of 'use by' dates.

A new Liquor Licence was granted in 1987, adding to the variety offered by the store to the local and passing trade. The Licensing Magistrate, in his summary, described the store as offering an extraordinary range of services including groceries, petrol, ladies and men's wear, hardware, veterinary requirements, machinery including motor bikes, produce, toys, saddlery, electrical goods, gas services and fertiliser.



To accommodate the liquor in the main store, it was necessary to utilise the Finn store building on the opposite side of Loftus Street. All hardware and veterinary goods were moved to the new location under the careful supervision of Peter Gottaas, staff member. For three years the business continued under two roofs. In June 1900, Peter and Johanna Gottaas purchased the hardware business and commenced trading as Bemboka Hardware. In November 1990, Jack Hobbs retired after 45 years in business, and long-time staff member, Brad Bobbin and his wife, Maree, became proprietors.'

The history of Hobbs Store and the Brown Mountain Road (Snowy Mountains Highway) are interconnected, with Hobbs Store playing a major service role to travellers on the Brown Mountain Road, especially in the many decades before the road was sealed. One of the 101 items

in the 'Hidden Heritage' selection, related to this road, is a telescope used by William D Burton who, between January and July 1887, was the the contractor of the first part – and probably most challenging part – of the road between Bemboka (then the two towns of Colombo and Lyttelton) and Nimitybelle. **R**

Sources: *'Bemboka, Village in a Valley'* (1996); information provided by Pat Raymond of Pambula.

* Stephanie Hansen's UOW Thesis, *'On being forgotten'*, provides more detail about this arrangement: "As the 1960s progressed and the demand for television grew, the district's major electrical outlets (Armstrong & Evans in Eden, Bruce Devlin in Bega, Roy Howard in Bega) took over the market. Strong competition quickly developed. As relations were amicable enough for the rival dealers to set [i.e. fix] prices, success lay in reaching prospective clientele and securing a sale ahead of the competition. To this end Roy Howard approached Jack Hobbs, proprietor of the general store in Bemboka, just prior to the opening of the Brown Mountain translator station in 1966 [10 years after a television service was made available in Sydney and five years after television was introduced to Canberra!]. Hobbs was asked to introduce Howard to local community members, so the subject of television could be broached. A great number of sets were sold through this association. By way of thanks, Howard gave Hobbs a television set, his first."



This project is assisted by the NSW Government through the Heritage Near Me program.



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