

*IN SEARCH OF ....*

*THE  
SOUTHERN  
HIGHLANDS*

**by John McColgan**

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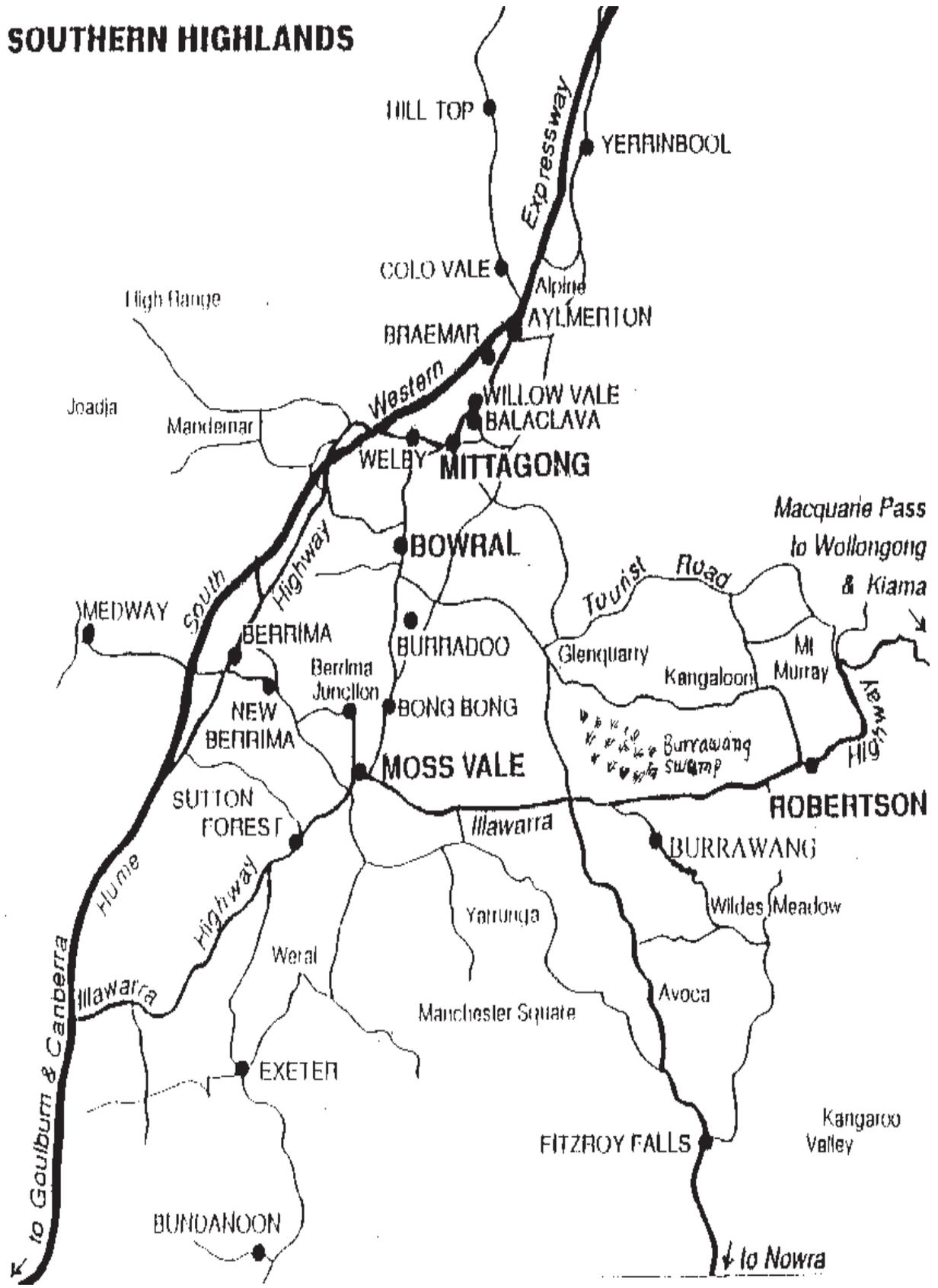
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# SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS



## **PREFACE BY AUTHOR.**

One of the difficult things that an author has to deal with when gathering a quantity of essays into a volume is to decide in which order to place them.

It was fairly simple in my previous book “Southern Highland Story” because it was a straightforward history of the Berrima District which is composed of Mittagong, Bowral, Moss Vale, Berrima, and the surrounding villages during the period of 1798-1980, and only required to be assembled in chronological order to achieve this result.

In this second book, I have the chance to include the type of stories and general information about the area that I had reluctantly, NOT included in “Southern Highland Story” because, while historical in nature, they are more the background stories of people and events in the Berrima District.

It is a true saying that “today’s events are tomorrow’s history” and I’m sure the everyday actions of past generations will provide an insight into many aspects of the Southern Highlands experiences.

The material and knowledge put together over many years, is the result of both my research and a lifetime of local knowledge extending over several McColgan generations, since about 1840. This includes many items that were more in the nature of incidents, and range through a whole category of humour, tragedy, and sometimes pathos. I believe these items are quite informative and interesting, even though they did not appear in the first book.

A good number are too small to be written as a story, being little more than a paragraph, but are worth recording for posterity, so I have kept them together in one chapter called “Historical Footprints” for, like the proverbial “footprints in the sands of time,” if they are not recorded somewhere, they are lost forever.

I sincerely hope that this book “IN SEARCH OF THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS.” will enable the reader to enjoy the many stories within its covers, and some may also find mention of their ancestors.

Some of these items are whimsical in nature, and some are serious, but then, so is life as we all know it.

**JOHN McCOLGAN. Mittagong Historian.**

**WOOLPACK INN.**

The course of the original main south road was through Lower Mittagong settlement, over the Mittagong Range to Bong Bong Village, then Sutton Forest, before continuing on to the County of Argyle (near Goulburn.)

By 1829-30, serious doubts were raised over the future of Bong Bong Village (near the Wingecarribee River,) because of the erratic water supply from the river, which fluctuated from stagnant pools in dry weather, to serious flooding of the settlement during heavy rain. Major Mitchell formed the opinion that the village had little future, summed up in his own words, "I have never seen an ancient town of any importance which was not situated near a good river."

He also expressed frustration with the reluctance of Sutton Forest land owners to part with land for subdivision so the village of Sutton Forest could be enlarged on the Medway Rivulet to replace Bong Bong.

It was then decided to relocate to a new area for the settlement at Berrima which was also found to have a deeper and more reliable water supply.

Plans for the village of Berrima were drawn up by Surveyor Robert Hoddle and approved by Governor Darling 31-5-1831.

Berrima was to become the Capital of Camden County (which covers the Berrima District) and would be the manufacturing and administration centre.

The Berrima siting required a "new line of road" to be built from Catherines Hill to Berrima, (which is now the Hume Highway) before rejoining the Old Argyle Road at Sutton Forest.

This deviation would cause the bulk of traffic to use the new road to Berrima and avoid crossing the steep Mittagong Range route. At the same time, the volume of traffic on the new road offered opportunities for early inns offering hospitality to weary travellers.

For the period of horse-drawn traffic, an inn was usually sited on the outside fringe of a town or village in order to gain the advantage of being the first site encountered for food and refreshment before reaching any settlement.

During 1832 the "Woolpack Inn" was established by John Chalker (son of the first Mittagong settler William Chalker) near the bridge at Braemar. The original site is said to be adjacent to where the old Gotting home stands today on Braemar Creek. Some of the very old brick buildings or stables still standing nearby, may have been part of John Chalker's establishment, which was still operating during the 1840's.

The Woolpack Inn, and it's owner John Chalker, share another part of Mittagong History some 10 years later in 1842, when John Chalker was instrumental in the capture of mass-murderer Jack Lynch, who used to prey on travellers to kill and rob them.

John Chalker's evidence and co-operation with Berrima police in regard to the murder of a teamster named Landrigan, led to the arrest and conviction of Jack Lynch at a farm near Crossroads. Lynch was later hanged at Berrima Gaol.

This brought to an end the mysterious deaths and disappearances of travellers between Sydney and Goulburn over several years.

## *IN SEARCH OF THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS*

### **PIGS CAN'T FLY BUT THEY CAN GET QUITE "HIGH."**

In 1835 George Cutter delicensed the Kangaroo Inn at Lower Mittagong settlement, and sold it to the early Australian explorer, Captain Charles Sturt.

Sturt immediately inserted an article in "The Australian" on 4th August 1835 advising,— "To the inhabitants of Bong Bong, Berrima, and their neighbours, having purchased the late property of Mr. Cutter at Mittagong Range... and taken possession thereof... that the Mill will continue to be worked for the convenience of the public... Every attention will be paid to those who may send grain to be ground. All applications to be made to the Miller...22nd. July 1835. Mittagong."

Like most other settlers, Sturt was dependant for his income on farming or dairying products, but because his free servants (time expired convicts) were believed to be dishonest, he gave the job of taking his butter to market in Sydney to a life-term convict worker named Turner.

To his wife's protests about this decision, Sturt replied that Turner "was downed on his luck and should be given a chance to reinstate his name."

In due course, the convict set off for Sydney in a cart loaded with butter and pigs, but before he had gone more than a couple of miles he picked up a stranger described as having "the gift of the gab" and together they enjoyed talking and singing to pass the long journey, combined with several stops at inns along the way.

What else happened on the journey is not known until the cart was found by the market constable (who had to verify delivery of produce.)

In the cart was Turner, hopelessly drunk, surrounded by pigs dead from thirst. Both the stranger and the butter was gone.

For these misdeeds, Turner was sentenced to 50 lashes and a week in gaol, but lucky for him, a friend of Charles Sturt saw the magistrate and prevailed on him to set Turner free. The convict returned to Mittagong as quickly as possible, and to prove he hadn't sold the pigs, he brought the dead animals home with him.

When he arrived, Charles Sturt was away, and when he tried to explain himself to Mrs. Sturt, she said she believed his story and to take the cart away PLEASE.

Mrs. Sturt, to quote from her book, "Life of Charles Sturt," was —"Oppressed by an insufferable stench long before the cart appeared, and which grew worse and worse till the crestfallen Turner turned up."

The wreckage was condemned to prompt burial, in spite of Turner's entreaties that it be kept for his master to see. His master however is said to have no doubt about the dead pigs, for their memory was still fragrant when he came home hours later, wondering what had poisoned the air.

Charles Sturt only owned the Cutter property some two years before he sold it and moved to Varroville near Campbelltown in 1837.

### **A LOOK AT AUSTRALIA 1831.**

Australia today is vastly different to the Australia of 1831, which was a convict colony with harsh laws and punishments. Serious crimes such as murder, armed robbery, and cattle stealing merited death by hanging.

Even small offences in the lower courts of Petty Sessions attracted severe punishment in

some cases, and some of which make an interesting study today.

We find that indeed, as Shakespeare once said, "Love laughs at locksmiths." and the old saying "Drink is the curse of the working man" is sometimes reversed to where "work is the curse of the drinking man" as they are sentenced to floggings, iron gangs, treadmills, or hard labour. The ladies are often sent back to labour in the Female Factory at Parramatta for their sins.

The following items are extracted from "**Police Incidents.**" as published in the **Sydney Herald during 1831.**—————

**May 23rd. Ann McDonald**, a quarrelsome character, who from her forensic talent, among everyone about her master's house, and attempting to suspend herself between heaven and earth with her garters, was ordered for one month to the second class of the factory.—

**Patrick Hearty** was committed to take his trial for stealing from Mr. R. Cooper's distillery a porter (wine) hogshead, value 12s. 6d., he was rolling it down George Street when he was apprehended.—

**Margaret Hill** for attending the races, instead of her mistress' work, was dismissed, on expressing contrition, with the advice, "Go, and sin no more."—

**James Sullivan** for kicking up a rumpus in the Market, because a bullock had eaten one of his cabbages, was discharged, as it did not appear he was drunk, but only a little thereto inclining.—

**Margaret Murphy**, for being all the worse for liquor the previous evening, cashed up five bob, and was set at liberty instanter.—

**Isabella Wass**, for being muzzy and amputating a woman's finger, with a fine set of masticators (teeth), was consigned to the third class of the factory for one month.—

**May 26th. Lawrence Brennan** assigned to the Australian Agricultural Company, was charged with coming up from Pt. Stephens on the plea that he was a free man, his sentence which was for seven years having expired, but on being taken to the Barracks, it appeared he was a prisoner for life. The Bench after remarking that he was attempting to play off on him "a la Hogan," sentenced him to 100 lashes.—

**Joseph Stanton** was fully committed to take his trial for filching from the shop of Mr. Spicer of George Street, three bottles of mustard, a piece of Scotch muslin, seven looking glasses, and twenty one balls of cotton. He was observed by Mr. Field, the Chief Constable of Pt. Stephens, pocketing the mustard, and was taken into custody by him; on a constable being sent for, he exclaimed, "oh my God, I'm ruined," and wished to settle with Mr. Spicer. The whole of the goods were found on him when he was searched.—

**John Lee** was charged by Billy Blue alias the Standard & c., with stealing his boat which was tied to this wharf on the North Shore. It appeared about six weeks ago the boat was stolen, and a few days since the boat was seen near the prisoner's house, in Cockle Bay, who claimed it, having, as he said, found it some time previous, and that he thought it belonged to the Monitor cutter. The prisoner was fully committed to trial.—

A person called **Doctor Boston**, endeavoured on Tuesday to foist up a charge of robbery against a member of a highly respectable family residing in Sydney. It appeared however, that the Doctor has been in the habit of annoying the female part of the family with his avowals, and having gone to the house on Sunday for the purpose of reiterating them, he was very properly kicked out by the gentleman in question, which constituted the whole of the robbery charge. The Bench dismissed the charge expressing their indignation at so foul and scandalous a charge, and wishing it was in their power to visit the slanderer with a severe punishment.—

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**Nov. 7th. Julia White** was charged with stowing under her bed a lad named Thomas Condon, who was heard sighing forth when discovered- "Be mine dear maid, this faithful heart, can never be untrue."

When he was dragged forth and consigned, together with his inamorata, to a cool cell. Julia was sent to the factory for three months, and Thomas to be milled for 14 days.—

**Sam Davis** for priggish(sic) a pair of trowsers (sic) from the shop of a person named McCulloch, was fully committed to take his trial.—

**Caroline Wood**, the very pink of fashion, was charged with absenting herself from her mistress' service, and returning groggy and abusive, was sent two months to the third class of the factory.

**Nov. 9th. James Golding** was fully committed to take his trial for stealing a horse, the property of Mr. McGilvery, which he sold for £12, when taken into custody, he had spent all the money save £3 12s. He said by way of defence, that Mr. McGilvery had ordered him to sell the horse, but not finding him at home, had spent the money.—

**Thomas Gibbs**, assigned to Mr. Wentworth, was sent to an iron gang for six months, for entering his master's store at 12 0'clock at night, and helping himself to a bucket of beer, when he was grabbed by a man who had been placed in the store, as a visit was expected by some one, the store having been plundered for several nights together.—

**Nov. 11th. Bridget Lyon**, possessing a great taste for silk stockings and pamps (sic) belonging to her master, and having also an affection for the rum bottle, was sent to the factory for one month.—

**James Ryan** was charged with being in the streets perfectly naked; a more deplorable object was never placed at the bar; as he had been interrupting people in the streets while in this state, he was sent to gaol for want of securities to keep the peace.—

**Senor Domino Quiney** shipped as per invoice from Canton, with a phiz (face) as black as charcoal, stumped up five bob for some rum antics exhibited by him in the streets the previous evening.—

**Nov. 21st. John Morris**, enjoying himself in a grog shop, which he declared he had mistaken for the church, was sent to the cells for three days.—

**Susan Irving**, drunk and hugging a male servant in the next house around the neck, most lovingly. Three months to Gordon's Villa.—

**John Walsh** with an incurable taste for hot punch, was ordered 25 lashes to correct the taste.—

**Nov. 22nd. Jane Hewson**, going on a trip of pleasure to Liverpool for ten days, with her fancy man, as she described him, was sent to the factory for one month.—

**Nov. 29th. John Jones**, drunk as any gentleman need wish to be, was sent 3 hours to the stocks.—

**James O'Toole**, for nearly starving to death two horses belonging to his master, and selling their corn for rum, with which he treated all the brickmakers in the neighbourhood, was sent three months to an iron gang.—

**Joseph Baddington**, drunk, amorous, and clamorous, was sent three hours to the stocks.—

**Jane Hill**, drunk, as it was her husband's birthday she was discharged, but cautioned to let it come only once a year.—

**Harriet White**, with her hair dishevelled, and drunkish, was sent two months to the third class in the factory.—

**William Christopher**, absenting himself from his master, because he could not stand work any longer, was sent to the mill for seven days.—

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**Dec. 6th. Mary Faux**, was charged as being drunk the previous evening. Mary declared she only went to see the illumination (sic). The Bench considering as one of jubilee, ordered her to be discharged.—

**Sarah Satcliff**, an ungrateful hussy, with the rotundity of a rum puncheon, was charged with having an inveterate hankering after the male sex; factory fare for one month.—

**William Power** was charged with milling the glaze of three lamps, as he said, for the purpose of receiving board and lodging at the King's expense, having tasted of the good fare on a former occasion. The Bench, in compliance with his request, sent him to gaol in default of sureties to keep the peace.—

**Dec. 20th. Elizabeth Marmion** was sent to take her trial for feloniously, wilfully, maliciously, and unlawfully wringing the neck of a fowl, the property of Mr. Cornelius Prout, and making broth of the carcase of the said fowl.—

**Ann Smith**, for being found seated on the knee of a son of Neptune (sailor), while a lass of the same kidney occupied the other, and Jack was roaring forth,

“How happy could I be with either,  
Were t'other dear charmer away.”

was ordered six weeks seclusion in the factory.—

**Dec. 28th. Margaret Doyle** for being troubled with the rum fever twice in the one day, was sent to try the Factory for six weeks as a cure.

### AND SO ENDED SOME OF THE HUMAN STORIES FOR 1831.

\*\*\*\*\*

### IT'S A SMALL WORLD.

An interesting article appeared in the S.H.News during 1968 titled

“Agricultural Club deals with it's formation to serve Council of Agricultural Societies.”

The club building in Macquarie St. Sydney was purchased in 1950.

Early records show the land was sold to a John Tawell in 1841, who build a Quaker Meeting House.

John Tawell came to Australia as a convict for forgery in the early 1800's, and eventually made a substantial name for himself in the business world. He finally returned to England, where he poisoned a woman and was hanged.

The Quaker Meeting House became a Baptist Chapel, after being auctioned in 1843. In 1862, Cohen & Levy bought the place for £ 500, and in 1878 it was sold to a Mrs.House, and after her death the Agricultural Society purchased it from her estate in 1950.

**QUESTION.** So what does this have to do with Mittagong history?

Well the same John Tawell mentioned earlier was the owner of Portion 39 Parish of Colo, in the last century. This area is now Mittagong Sports Oval.

It was never part of the Fitzroy Iron Works lease and subsequent Mittagong Land Company auction of 1884, but was owned by John Tawell. Neither was it a part of the later Oaklands subdivision.

Mittagong history shows an attempted subdivision of Mittagong land during 1841 to create a village of Gainsborough, which failed owing to a lack of buyers.

Gainsborough subdivision has always been a little vague. Recent study of early Mittagong Municipal Council ratebook reveals that Gainsborough was the area surrounding

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Nattai River through the old Fresh Food & Ice Company and Maltings, continuing across the highway, the present-day golf course, possibly John Tawell's area of the Mittagong Sports Ground, and may have included the existing blocks and buildings on the south side of the main road between Beatrice and Fitzroy Sts. shown on the 1884 subdivision map, but not advertised or numbered for sale.

It is believed that part of the Gainsborough area was the site of the Fitzroy Inn (Oaklands Guest House) constructed to comply with the new accommodation requirements of 1845.

The rather odd places composing the Gainsborough area today, are not so odd when you consider that the railway line was 26 years in the future, and did not carve through it until 1867.

In the year 1841, it would have been an excellent site for a village on the headwater of Nattai River for a dependable water supply, with the new line of road to Berrima passing through.

The setting up of Mittagong Municipal Council in 1889 required a listing of land for levying rates.

The area of Gainsborough seems to have caused a problem for Council Clerk W. Hudspeth. He was faced with a problem of a subdivision 48 years ago, with land that had been owned and sold by various owners over the years, and a resumption of land right through the middle by the railways in 1867.

Possibly because of the pressure to issue rate notices for the new council, he just listed names, valuations, and rate amounts for this area. No Section or Lot Nos. are listed.

The next Council Clerk, Trevor Groube, during 1894-95 seems to have made a partial solution. He lists the Gainsborough area as having Sections 1, 2, and 3 but the Lot numbers are a little vague. The home of Matthew Forde the builder was between the railway line and today's sportsground, (now the highway.) His father managed the Fitzroy Inn which was, by this date, one of the Government Cottage Homes for children. The Fresh Food & Ice Co. occupied 4 acres on Nattai River south of the railway line (opposite today's Caravan Park.) William Drabble's house and land still stands today between the Maltings and Drabbles Bridge. (Drabble had his house and land resumed and purchased by the railways before the double line railway was built in 1918, because it was believed to be in the way of the proposed railway construction. After the line was built, it was found that Drabble's house was NOT in the way of the line, so he re-purchased the house and remaining land at a profit.)

Matthew Burke owned the triangular block on the Mittagong side of the Maltings Bridge (now a park) and at one stage had a shop there.

The name Eyre may have represented the land previously owned by John Tawell, (Mittagong Sports Ground) who by the year 1894 would have kept his appointment with the gallows in England some years before.

The Berrima District Farm & Dairy Co. which took over the Fresh Food & Ice Co. factory in 1888 increased their land holding from the original 4 acres at some time, because they were able to sell 25 acres (including John Tawell's old property) to Mittagong Municipal Council in 1922 for construction of the present Mittagong Sports Reserve.

**HISTORIC FITZROY IRON “BLOOM” RETURNS TO MITTAGONG.**  
**1995.**

The small Fitzroy iron “bloom” as seen in photograph was made at the Mittagong Fitzroy Iron Works during the last century, and it is shown by it’s proud owner Mr Willy Hall of Mittagong.

Very likely the only one in existence today, it’s return to Mittagong is an extraordinary coincidence of events.

Willy’s grandfather, Mr. Bowen Bryant was a partner in a Sydney firm, Bryant Bros. who manufactured fans.

Just after World War 2, the foundry supplying metalwork to Bryant Bros. decided to close down, and told Bowen Bryant he could take anything of any use left in the yard. It was sorting through the residue left in the yard that Bowen unearthed the old Fitzroy iron “bloom.”

Because he lived in Mittagong at some time around the turn of the century, Bowen Bryant recognised the object and kept it as a souvenir, where it remained in his shed for many years until his recent death.

Once again it was unearthed when Willy Hall went down to help his grandmother tidy up his grandfather’s effects, and was given to Willy, who brought it back to Mittagong.

One of a batch of smallish “blooms,” the details are——

1100mm (3ft 7 1/2ins) long,

80mm (3 1/8ins) wide

65mm (2 9/16) deep

Weight. 31.6 Kg. (69 lbs.)

These small “blooms” were usually made for sale to blacksmiths during last century, and could be heated in the forge or furnace for shaping to their requirements.



*Mr Willy Hall displays the Fitzroy Iron bloom.*

**IN THE DAYS WHEN PETROL WAS UNWANTED.**

During the last century, before the advent of the motor car, the petrol/benzine produced during refining of shale oil for kerosene was largely unwanted except for a small quantity of benzine kept for cleaning purposes.

This meant that the highly-volatile fuel had to be disposed of in a safe and methodical manner.

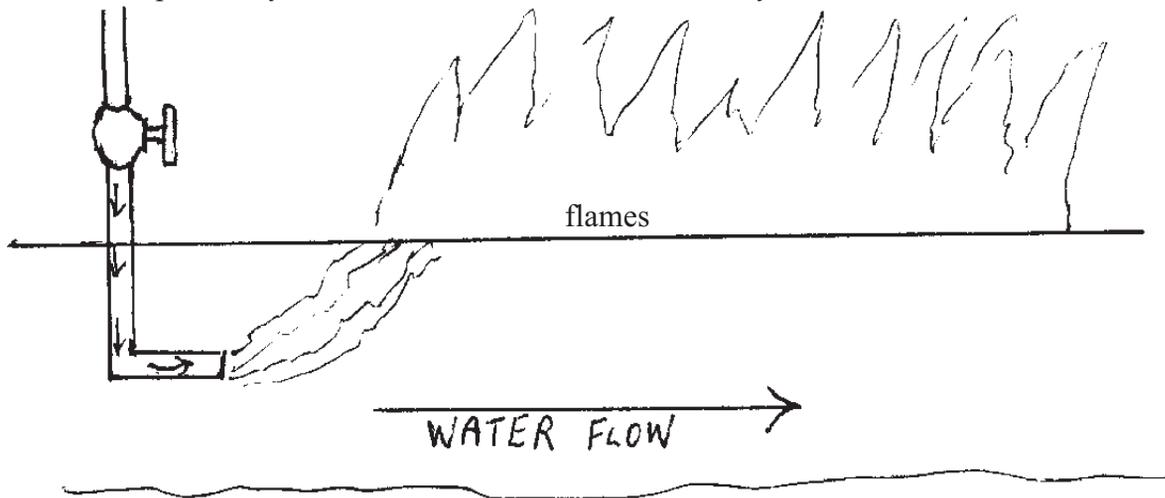
When you read the old reports that the petrol produced at Joadja was poured down the creek and burnt, the first reaction is to visualise with horror, the damage to the environment and poisoning the creek.

While the old timers may not be renowned for their care of the environment, the truth is that it was the only way to dispose of it, and the damage to the creek would be negligible with their system, which was simple and effective.

Firstly, the pipe through which the petrol flowed was controlled by a valve and was discharged in the creek underwater, so there was no danger of a fire or a flashback to the source, because none of the flame or heat surrounded the pipe.

The petrol would rise and float on the surface of the water until it was consumed by the fire. In this case being a highly-volatile fuel, it's consumption in the fire would be almost 100%, so they could control the length of the burning fire in the creek by the flow speed of the water and the quantity of petrol released, merely using the surface of the water as a safe burning receptacle.

It would be quite likely the water was useable and drinkable beyond the fire zone.



**FACT OR FICTION?**

Some things in history are black and white, other things, NOT so black and white, but varying shades of grey.

There are times when researching history that all the evidence and facts point in a certain direction, and the conclusion seems obvious, but with further investigation the conclusion is a far different one. Those who jump to conclusions often find they are making a claim that is entirely different to the event that happened.

To illustrate this point we will look at the claim that in 1878/79 the rails for Joadja

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tramway line were made with Mittagong iron lying surplus at Mittagong Iron Works when the English firm of Fitzroy Bessemer Steel Haematite Iron and Steel Company went into liquidation during 1877.

The facts supporting this story are that —

1. There was reported to be about 1,000 tons of iron “lying at grass” when smelting ceased in March 1877.

2. E.G. Larkin and partners received an order to roll railway lines for the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company at the Fitzroy Iron Works site to build the Joadja tramway line to Mittagong. The line was completed to Mittagong by December 1880.

On this evidence you would be entitled to say that the railway lines for the Joadja tramway were made at the Mittagong Iron Works, but the answer to this is both yes and no.

The “Mining Standard” newspaper of the 1880’s tells us that Larkin’s contract to supply lines for the Joadja tramway was initially for 50 tons, but A.K.O. continued to accept further product after this amount was completed, until some stage when a dispute erupted over the quality of the lines supplied by Larkin.

It would appear that it was a “manufactured dispute” by the Joadja company because the accusation of poor quality was countered by Larkin offering to drop a 20 ton weight on his rails supported at 2 ft. intervals for testing, on the terms that if his rails cracked, he would supply all the rails free, but if they did not crack, A.K.O. would agree to pay him double his price for supplies of same.

With this offer, A.K.O. were forced to admit that the reason for cancelling further supplies was because they could now import rails cheaper than Larkin’s price.

The answer then, to the Joadja tramway lines is both yes and no.

Some of the Joadja railway line was supplied and rolled from Fitzroy Iron Works, while some of the railway line was imported from England. How much of each was never stated, and probably never will be known.

### **THE IRON WORKS WATER PIPE.**

Researchers of Mittagong history are familiar with the Mittagong Land Company subdivision map of April 1884, which includes the previous subdivision of the early village of New Sheffield during 1865 (represented by Sections marked with letters of the alphabet.) This area is bordered on the north of the Main Road by Bessemer St, Leopold St, and Louisa St.

While it may not be generally known, the Mittagong Land Company held not one, but two land subdivision sales during 1884. The second one was advertised and held on December 6th. of the same year, and required two cloth plans to be exhibited. One was the same as the April plan, but had all the blocks sold to date indicated by dark shading, while the light-coloured blocks indicated which blocks were still available for purchase within that plan.

The second cloth plan was required because it dealt with the subdivision of land west and south of the town including the Bowral Road past the Joadja transshipment yard and blocks which were not included or listed in the April sale.

One item of interest on this December plan is the straight line marked from Lake Alexandra (about where the present-day overflow outlet is situated,) direct to the Iron Works site which is clearly marked “pipe.” This line also appears on the April plan but without any information. We know the line did not refer to the old coal-skip line, which crossed the em-

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bankment and turned sharply to junction with the previous line towards Albert St. The only reasonable conclusion to the word “pipe” is that, having created the lake in 1875 with the coal-skip line embankment, the Iron Works must have taken advantage of the greater storage of water by installing a pump at the lake and a pipe for the water over the rise, direct to the works.

This would have been of great benefit to the Iron Works with the blast furnace now operating as a “hot blast” system, the need for reliable water supply was vital. Not only was water needed for the stationary steam engines providing motive power, but the tuyeres (blast air jets) in the furnace required water-cooling to prevent them melting from the combination of heated air (600F.) and furnace heat. Once before, the works had to cease operation due to lack of water.

The lake, providing a guaranteed reservoir was probably a very important part of manager David Smith’s long-range planning, and certainly he would have had to evaluate the loss of some 12 blocks of land for sale by the Iron works (covered by the lake’s water) which could have been avoided by bridging the creek. It appears that Mittagong historians may have to re-evaluate the lake’s importance to the Iron Works operation, that it was not just an accidental result caused by the embankment across the gully.

The closing of the Iron Mines in March 1877, two years after the line was built, had little to do with the operation of the Iron Mines at the time, which was producing iron efficiently and was reported to have a stockpile of iron at grass (said to be 1000 tons.) The decision to liquidate the Fitzroy Bessemer Steel Haematite and Iron Mining Co. was made by the directors of the company in England, based on losses incurred getting the works into production which outweighed any profit from iron sales to date.

It was strictly a profit-and-loss decision made from half a world away, and may not have been a true indication of the Iron Works potential.

### **HOW THE IRON WORKS ACTIVITY APPEARED TO MITTAGONG RESIDENTS IN THE 20th. CENTURY.**

Well before the turn of the century (1877), production of iron had ceased entirely, but in spite of this a considerable number of people believed that interest would be revived, and once again the iron works would start producing. The economic depression in Australia between 1890 and about 1904 had caused the demise of many industries in the district including the Box Vale Colliery, and Joadja. (the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Co. also went into liquidation in 1906.)

The Mittagong Land Co. as owners of the land and equipment belonging to the previous Fitzroy Iron and Coal Co. had no interest in mining and photographs taken early this century showed a great deal of the stone and buildings had already been sold and removed. Very likely the number of stone houses built during the 1890’s in Mittagong used some of this material. As they had disposed of all the plant and machinery it became obvious the days of the iron works were over.

From before the turn of the century the perceived health-giving qualities of the mineral spring were recognised, and day trippers by rail provided a regular gathering of people at the Lady Mary Fitzroy Spring to sample the waters, on the South side of the highway (near the existing R.S.L. club). This could have been classed as the beginning of the tourist industry in the Southern Highlands.

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Roofed picnic tables, sheds and toilets were provided at the site.

**MITTAGONG STONE.** (Obsidian.) The impurities removed during iron smelting as slag were used around Mittagong for road building. This slag is mainly green in colour because of the natural colour associated with limonite ore, with various shades from black to white running through it. Particularly attractive because of its shiny appearance showing a grain flowing and frozen in perpetuity as it cooled, it was freely available around Mittagong streets 20 years ago, but with street reformation and sealing is now hard to find. Mittagong Stone may eventually become rare as a semi-precious stone.

**MITTAGONG MEMORIAL HALL.** It was claimed in the Iron Week Centenary Booklet of 1948 that the Memorial Hall (previous to 1954 known as the School of Arts Hall.) was constructed from dressed sandstone blocks obtained from the blast furnace at the Iron Works. This is patently absurd. The blast furnace was still standing until 1927, but the School of Arts Hall was built in 1911 precipitated by the weatherboard Canterbury Hall being destroyed by fire 27-10-1910. The blast furnace was demolished in 1927 and sold to local stonemason Henry Nankerville who recut the stone to construct two houses. A local resident living at the time (Mr. John Ryan) stated the stone for the hall was brought in from Joadja and the flooring, stage and roof were transferred from Joadja Hall to the new building. This was confirmed and further clarified on two separate occasions in notes written by Nattai Shire Clerk Claude Lee, who wrote that it was the Miners Hall from Joadja which was demolished, and ALL materials were transported to Mittagong, including timber, dancefloor, coloured windows, and STONE. This was the last job for the Joadja tramway.

The Miners Hall was re-erected on the School of Arts property by local builder Matthew Forde (at a concession price according to his notes) and the grand opening was held in September 1911. There is said to be a small amount of stone obtained from the old Iron Works site, perhaps the kerbstone around the buildings, but the building budget would only allow for a fairly small purchase.

**COAL SHAFT NEAR THE IRON WORKS SITE.** This shaft remained open until late 1940's with an old square timber beam across the top and no fence around it.

It was a very deep and dangerous shaft filled with water to a level about a hundred feet down below the opening. It is remarkable there was no tragedy with children over the years. It was later filled in by council with a bulldozer previous to the Iron Week Festival in 1948 requiring a massive amount of fill.

**LAKE ALEXANDRA.** This lake was created by the embankment required to run the coal line across the gully from what is now Mt. Alexandra to the iron works when a coalskip line was built in 1875 by David Smith manager of the company, to replace the previous long line running around the end of the mountain. The plan was to haul anthracite coal and smelting coke over the mountain by gravitation method instead of the previous horse-drawn methods around the end of the mountain. One report states that water from the lake was used for their "steam engines." This can lead to confusion with researchers today. In the last century the term "steam engine" was used as distinct from "locomotive" to refer to stationary steam-power-driven engines such as the one on top of Mt. Alexandra for winching the coal-skips, and others used to provide motive power for equipment at the blast furnace. There is no record of any small locomotive owned or used by the iron works for the period, however it appears the creation of the lake as a

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reservoir was intended to guarantee water supplies during the “hot blast smelting” because a water pipe was run over the rise at Pioneer Street to the Iron Works itself.

The new skip-line ran up the northern side of the mountain from the mine, over the top, and down the slope to where the lake now stands. The only evidence remaining today is the outline of the small embankment running up to a tunnel about 30 feet long cut through solid rock on the northern side of the mountain, and of course, the lake embankment. On the apex there is a set of heavy bolts set in the rock with lead that can still be seen. These would have been to hold the steam engine winch for hauling coal skips up the slope, and perhaps anchoring for heavy cable.

**IRON WORKS PRODUCTS.** To the average Mittagong resident the most well-known product of the Iron Works still in existence are the few remaining “Lions Restant.” cast in pig iron. One of these hung in the Mittagong Shire Council chambers, and since amalgamation now hangs in Wingecarribee Shire Council chambers. Another one donated by Mittagong resident Bob Nichols hangs in Mittagong Public School. Others of the 50 produced are probably held privately in the district and elsewhere.

By association, the lion emblem was adopted by Mittagong Shire Council, and most Mittagong sporting bodies are referred to as the Lions.

Another product of Fitzroy Iron Works that can be seen today are the roof braces of the Methodist (Uniting Church) in Albert Street. These were done in 1865 to build the church/school, which was also used by the Board of Education as the first public school in Mittagong for a time, until the school was built in Queen Street in 1878.

Cast iron street lampposts, which were cast by William Brazenall Jnr. in his small foundry stood around Mittagong streets and on the railway station platform for many years up until about the 1950’s. These are sometimes wrongly stated to have been made by the Iron Works, but they were made from cast-iron ingots. The Iron Works were not operational in 1890 and their iron (if any remained) was pig iron, NOT cast-iron. Although these posts ceased to be used as kerosene street lights in 1920, their continued presence for many years in Mittagong Streets was no doubt governed by the fact that the P.M.G. (Post Office) had found them convenient to attach cast-iron Post Office boxes for mail. (Letters posted in these boxes were cleared daily by the Post Office) It is not difficult to imagine the objections if council had ordered the P.M.G. to remove their boxes so the posts could be removed. Later this postal service was abolished.

Two of these posts (minus the lamp frame section) were installed at the Iron Works Memorial Cairn in 1948 for Iron Week Centenary Celebrations.

During the 1950’s and 1960’s many of the old Mittagong buildings were demolished to build service stations etc. The Mittagong Shire Council compelled the removal of the many ornate cast-iron posts and lacework supporting shop awnings and verandahs in the Main Street and presumably lost forever, but there would still be many samples of Brazenall’s cast iron in older buildings around the district.

The old verandah posts had a hollow centre which was filled with wood- charcoal. This would indicate their casting method (to reduce the weight of the post and save on iron material) was to pour the molten metal around a wooden pole at the centre. Although the heat would burn the wood, the metal would “set” before the wood was consumed. The remarkable aspect of inspecting these posts is that when the metal “set” the wood was consumed by heat without oxygen which resulted in a “petrified” effect. Although over 100 years old, the grain of the wood in the pole, including notches, was preserved in the charcoal as perfectly as if done yesterday.

**RECYCLING DURING THE LAST CENTURY or**  
**“WHAT BECOMES OF THINGS?”**

A Sydney reporter for “The Illustrated Sydney News” of 1870 was invited to inspect the Sydney Iron Works at Pymont and in his article published on 26th October of the same year, indulges in a little philophosy, proving that re-cycling is not an idea of recent vintage. His article, using the quaint and often flowery terminology of the last century may interest today’s reader and appears as follows, “Some time ago a famous writer of fiction propounded the question “What becomes of things?” as the heading of a very interesting article. We have only to step into some of our manufactories to see this question answered, by watching with our own eyes the utilisation of many things which, in the opinion of the careless and the improvident, have done their service for which they were intended and are (therefore) now counted as useless.

If we were to carry the investigation into the great storehouses and laboratories of Nature, we would find this exemplified, that with Nature no material is wasted - we may lose sight of it for a time, but it starts up eventually in a thousand new, and beautiful and useful forms. But there is no necessity for us to pore this minutely into the matter to be convinced of this truism.”

“In manufactories under man’s own guidance we can see the rags that have dropped piecemeal from the limbs of a beggar, transformed into the elaborate note paper on which some high-born dame traces her lofty sentiments, or into the book-page in which to convey knowledge to the mind of a student. We see the tossed aside fragments of some splendid decanter, out of which Dives ( term for an “many a man”) has poured his costly wines, melted into the glass-pot, and reproduced as a doctor’s phial from which Dives takes the bitter draught (medicine) his intemperance has necessitated, and by some unerring decree of vengeance we find the old discarded crowbar, which has done many a burglar service, eventually assuming the shape of chains and fetters to grace the limbs of the same offenders.”

The writer then goes on to describe what he had seen at the Sydney Iron Works he had visited.

“We saw immense piles of ancient iron articles of every conceivable shape, and for all imaginable purposes - from great broken masses of huge disused machinery down to nuts and bolts and even nails! Old buckets, iron plates, boilers, pots, and saucepans, are made into bundles and placed into ovens of terrible temperature, (puddling furnaces) in which the heat is so great that though the masses are not melted, their parts are sufficiently fused to make them adhere together, and they are then brought under the action of the steam hammer. (tilt hammer) They are kneaded and worked and by and by reproduced in wide flat slabs of about 6 inches in width and an inch in thickness. We saw these pieces of cold iron subjected to the action of a quaint machine, of the shears family. One half of, what may be termed by a little descriptive licence, a pair of scissors - rose and fell - like the bill of a great bird waiting to be fed, and as the substantive plate was placed in it’s jaws it sliced it through as easily and as clean as we could slice a turnip.”

The author goes on to describe the other workings of the City Iron Works, and reminds the readers that although it was not designed to smelt metal from the iron ore - they labour to make old iron into new.

**ANTHRACITE COAL, THE COKE OVEN, AND THE IRON WORKS.**

During the period, 1873-1877 the Iron Works was operated by an English company called The Fitzroy, Bessemer Steel, Haematite, Iron and Steel Company (Limited.)

In 1873 the first manager, an engineer Mr David Smith, was sent out from England to put the idle works in operation once again.

David Smith made many alterations, not only at the works, but he also decided to use the nearby seam of anthracite coal on the north side of Mt. Alexandra for smelting iron in the furnace.

To achieve what he believed would be efficient handling of coal, he built a coal-skip line over the mountain for the “gravitation system” of hauling coal. This system uses the weight of coal skips going downhill to help haul the coal-skips coming uphill by means of a steel cable attaching them together. A steam winch mounted on top of the mountain also ran with the cable to overcome any imbalance in weight between rising or descending coal-skips with added power haulage.

The new manager David Lawson, sent out in late 1875 by the company to replace David Smith decided the anthracite coal was “unsuitable,” and acquired coking coal from Bulli. (At that stage, mining the local Box Vale coking coal had not begun.)

The reason why coking coal is preferred lies in the fact that iron ore is composed of iron oxide, and in smelting, the oxides must be drastically reduced to leave purer iron. This is achieved by adding carbon (the chemical opposite.)

A coking coal that leaves coke after burning (carbon) further reduces the oxides and is preferred.

Anthracite coal burns with great heat, but when consumed, it collapses to a fine ash. Because it produces little carbon, it is necessary to add more coke to the molten mix to achieve the necessary result, and the use of a coke oven is necessary to produce it.

David Smith had built a coke oven behind Mt. Alexandra for this purpose in order to use anthracite.

To describe anthracite as “unsuitable” for smelting iron is not an accurate description. There are records of many thousands of tons of iron produced with anthracite coal in various locations around the world during last century. The whole decision appears to be dictated by availability and/or cost. If anthracite is used, then the cost of production for extra coke is added. If coking coal is used, then the cost of transportation is added. Whichever is the lower becomes economically preferred.

Perhaps David Lawson’s decision was influenced by his instructions before leaving England. His predecessor (Smith) had spent a great deal of money on the skip line and the embankment creating Lake Alexandra for a dependable water supply, and he may have felt some dramatic changes not only had to be made, but also SEEN to be made.

The tyranny of distance, and slow communications between England and Australia of some two months each way may explain the company’s decision to close the works in March 1877, at a time when they had reduced the cost of production to £5 a ton, and an American market in California was willing to pay 12 shillings a ton above that price because of the high quality of Fitzroy iron.

It would be like an army winning a battle, and then surrendering to the enemy.



*The remains of the old Iron Works coke oven  
behind Mount Alexandra*

**ROLL OUT THE BARREL.**

During World War 2 (1939-1945) there was a “cheer up” song to lift people’s spirits during the darker days of war. The name of this song was “Roll out the Barrel,” sung to a rollicking tune, the words of which were as follows—

“Roll out the barrel, we’ll have a barrel of fun  
Roll out the barrel, we’ve got the blues on the run.  
Sing ‘Boomps-a-rarrel’ ring out a song of good cheer  
Now’s the time to roll out the barrel, because the gang’s all here.”

‘The idea of rolling out a barrel of beer to celebrate a happy event is appealing, but there is nothing new about it. In fact, we can record a similar event much earlier during the last century. The year, 1867.

This was the year when railway contractors Larkin and Wakeford completed the construction of the original single railway line between Picton and Mittagong. (This line is today known as the Loop Line, but was then the Main Southern Line.)

The construction of the line had experienced it’s share of a variety of problems ranging from the tragic to the hilarious. Some examples of the opposite extremes are probably best illustrated at the same spot by the Hill Top cutting, which has an inscription on the rock wall at the base recording the accidental deaths of several workers during rock blasting, and alternatively 75 ft. (22.8 M) above the line, a bridge spans the cutting called the Saddle Bridge, over which the road passes. This bridge was said to be named because when it was first being built, one of the Larkin family, who was drunk, rode his horse over a timber beam spanning the cutting which was no more than 12 or 14 ins. wide. He planned to ride back over the beam but workers dragged him from his horse, which was trembling with fear.

In spite of all the obstacles and difficult terrain, the line had been completed to Mittagong, ready for the official opening by the beginning of March 1867.

The railway station, stationmaster’s house, and the goods shed had been built in ad-