The Pioneer

AUSTRALASIAN PIONEERS' CLUB

June 2015

CONTENTS

Front Cover: Sketch of the Town of Bathurst
in 1818 made by George Evans.

EDITORIAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Robert Whitelaw (Chairman)

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Correction

In the October 2014 edition of *The Pioneer* two
italicised paragraphs are misplaced. They appear
on page 17, commencing with the words "This year
marks the 210th anniversary ..." and concluding
"...west of the infant settlement in ..."

They are not part of the preceding footnote ascribed to
the editor of United Empire. They are the introductory
paragraphs to the article "Major Johnston's Other
Rebellion" which commences on the following page (18).

THE PIONEERS' AND WORLD WAR 1

A new club in Sydney with some 360 members, the **Australasian Pioneers' Club** held its fourth Annual General Meeting on 30 July 1914 at its leased clubhouse rooms in Siddeley Chambers at 114 Hunter Street. War was declared 4 days later.

War is normally a difficult time for all clubs—energetic, younger members enlist and are not seen for years. Many let their membership lapse when departing overseas. Serving members who continue with their membership pay reduced subscriptions. Club revenue falls and many activities are also restrained by wartime restrictions. For a club just finding its feet, this situation can be especially challenging.

Plans to build a Clubhouse in nearby Bligh Street opposite the Union Club were put to one side. However, under the presidencies of **John Lethbridge King** (1913-1915) and particularly, the Hon. **Reginald James Black** (1915-1928), the Pioneers' was able to hold membership at about 270 and to start to build its archival collections and lecture programs. In February 1916, importantly, it acquired a liquor licence from the wartime confiscations of the German Club and in March 1918 moved the club to Broughton House, 169 Phillip Street.

The Club has a classic World War 1 Honour Roll mounted in the 3rd floor lobby at its Bent Street rooms, next to the new Pioneers' display cabinet. Like all such Rolls, it may have omissions, retrospective inclusions (from members who joined after the War) and may overlook members who served in British regiments. Also, in the nature of such things, it does not necessarily record the war contributions of Club members who may have been unable to enlist because of age, health, family circumstances or reserved occupations.

Nevertheless, the Honour Roll is an important snapshot of enlistments by persons who were already or who after the War became members of the Pioneers'. It contains 62 names and records the names of six members who died while serving overseas:

George Richmond Bowman (died France, October 1918) aged 32

Leslie Neale Bull (died England, February 1919) aged 29

Wallace Cox (died Gallipoli, August 1915) aged 33

Raymond Langley Hassall (died France, September 1918) aged 40

Arthur Wellesley Oakes (died Gallipoli, August 1915) aged 25

Sydney Harold Osborne Wilshire (died France, July 1917) aged 27

Closer to the anniversary of their individual deaths, in future editions, *The Pioneer* will contain short biographies of each of these six members.

Mindful of the national celebrations surrounding the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, the Board accepted with much appreciation the kind offer of Craig Lee (Vice-President, Union,

University and Schools Club) to place a wreath at Lone Pine War Memorial recording the sacrifice there of William Cox and Arthur Wellesley Oakes.

The Pioneers' card (laminated better to survive the weather and signed by our President) carried the simple message:

REMEMBERED

Robert Whitelaw
Editor

"A DELIGHTFUL SPOT"

THE PROCLAMATION OF BATHURST IN 1815 AND BEYOND

By Dr Robin McLachlan
Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Charles Sturt University (Bathurst)

This is an edited transcript of the lecture delivered on 10 February 2015 to the annual Proclamation Day Lunch.

I am honoured to be invited to deliver the final lecture in a trilogy of Proclamation Day lectures exploring the important events that took place in the colony of New South Wales two hundred and more years ago.

In 1813 a way was found through the barrier of the Blue Mountains to the interior. Or rather, as John Low (the first speaker in the trilogy) argued, in 1813 the "dauntless three" provided the final chapter in a tale of many earlier endeavours, each adding to the growing store of knowledge and experience.

Last year, Professor Ian Jack took you beyond the Mountains in the company of Surveyor George Evans, who was charged in November 1813 by Governor Macquarie to reconnoitre this "New Discovered Country" and assess its agricultural value. Evans, who offered a positive report on "the beautiful country" he encountered, has always

been much appreciated in Bathurst where, as Professor Jack noted, we have a fine public statue in his honour. It was erected, with wartime interruptions, as the principal monument to mark the events associated with Bathurst's centenary one hundred years ago.

Then came the Western Road. One hundred and one and a half miles in length, from Emu Crossing on the Nepean River to a "centric" location on the recently named Bathurst Plains, begun in July 1814 and completed in January 1815. Governor Macquarie, accompanied by Mrs Macquarie and his entourage, travelled the road to the depot established by Mr Cox at the road's terminus on the south bank of the Macquarie River, arriving there on 4th May 1815.

The location of that depot became the site for the town of Bathurst. William Cox, or perhaps the poor state of his

The Governor's Tent and Flag Staff

health, fixed on this location. He could have gone further, perhaps on to Mount Pleasant, but the place he chose met the necessary requirements. It was central to the plains explored by Evans, alongside the waters of the Macquarie River but well above its flood plains.

We have now reached the point where my paper properly begins. We will witness Governor Macquarie's Flag Staff ceremony on the morning of 7 May and give some thought to just exactly what happened that day. And then we will visit the settlement established by Governor Macquarie on that visit. Unfortunately, we will have time for only the briefest of visits. I will take you on a guided tour of just two of its many

buildings and introduce you to some of the settlement's residents.

My authority in being your tour guide comes as the historian engaged by Bathurst Regional Council to assist with the preparation of an archaeological management plan for the first settlement site, followed by a commission to interpret the site for Bathurst's bicentennial this year. We have created a heritage walk with some sixteen interpretation panels located on the sites of settlement buildings or places of significant events. We have named this walk: "A Delightful Spot – The Bathurst Government Settlement Heritage Trail".

On 5 May 1815 Captain Henry Antill, Macquarie's Brigade Major, supervised the setting up of the Governor's famous Bengal Tent a little distance away from the noise and nuisance of Cox's depot camp. To quote from Antill's journal: "The spot which was chosen for the Governor's large tent was upon a little rising ground about three hundred yards from the men's huts; a small tent was placed on each side with a clear space in front upon which a small flagstaff was erected." He continues: "This was a delightful spot for a town, commanding a view of the surrounding country for a considerable extent …" [Mackaness, p.83]

The tent became Government House for that time and place. Logically, and by convention, Antill placed the flag staff—symbolic of the Empire and The Governor's authority—in front of the temporary Government House. In a few days the tent would be struck and the governor would depart. The Flag Staff, however, would remain, and it would become, by "Official Communication" in the *Sydney Gazette* of 10 June 1815, the first gazetted site in inland Australia. As such, it served to mark the official location of the proposed town of Bathurst and the inland terminus of Mr Cox's Road.

The Flag Staff also became, and logically so, the survey base point to be used for subsequent land development, including the surveying of Bathurst according to the town plan of 1833. This precise mathematical connection between the present day and the 1815 Flag Staff is embedded permanently in the streets of Bathurst. When you visit Bathurst, you will be able to see the homage Bathurst has given Macquarie's Flag Staff with the Bathurst Bicentenary Flag Staff and concourse.

To return to 7 May 1815 and the ceremony that took place before the Flag Staff that morning, I will read Governor Macquarie's own account in his journal:

> "Sunday 7 May 1815!!! After breakfast, all the gentlemen and other people assembled for Prayers and Divine Service; but previous thereof they were all mustered for the purpose of witnessing my christening the new intended town on this beautiful spot, which I accordingly named Bathurst in honour of the noble Earl of that name, now His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies. The British Union Jack was first hoisted on the new flagg [sic] staff on this auspicious occasion, the Military fired 3 vollies [sic] and the whole of the people assembled (being 75 in number) gave three cheers in honour of the ceremony." [Macquarie, p.101]

For many decades, Bathurst has commemorated this Flag Staff ceremony on the Sunday nearest the anniversary date. It is referred to as Proclamation Day and the essence of the day's ceremony is to celebrate the day on which Governor Macquarie proclaimed the establishment of the town of Bathurst—the first settlement in inland Australia.

Quite rightly, we now qualify that claim to say the first "European" or "colonial" settlement in inland Australia. And sometimes, if someone from Parramatta is listening, we might further qualify the claim by saying the first such settlement in inland Australia *beyond the Blue Mountains*. We do this because Bathurstians are a very polite people.

However, it is with some trepidation I have to tell you that two further qualifications may be required. Two co-joined qualifications.

The first is that there was no proclamation by Macquarie that day. The word "proclamation" did not pass his lips or flow from the nib of his pen. A proclamation is a particular form of official announcement, a decree of the highest order. We all recall the proclamation issued on the steps of Parliament on 11 November 1975. I can offer another example, from Bathurst's own history. When Governor Brisbane, in August

1824, declared martial law to be in effect in all the country westward of Mount York, he did this by proclamation.

In his journal, Macquarie refers only to "christening the new intended town."

Turning to the official record, I have looked both at Macquarie's despatch of 25 June 1815 to the Colonial Secretary [*HRA*, vol. VIII, p.574] and the official notice of the event, published on 10 June 1815 in the *Sydney Gazette*. Both documents say much the same thing. To quote the *Sydney Gazette*:

> "On Sunday, 7th of May, the Governor fixed on a site suitable for the erection of a town at some future period, to which he gave the name of Bathurst."

"Fixed on"; not "proclaimed." Yet somehow I feel any future campaign to have "Proclamation Day" changed to "Fixation Day" is doomed to failure.

When did this incorrect notion of referring to a proclamation first come to be?

The answer is from the very first Proclamation Day. We can trace the use of this word "proclamation" back to the late 1920s when Bathurstians took a renewed interest in the story of the establishment of their town and Macquarie's role. This led to the annual ceremony,

beginning in 1930 and held ever since, being called "Proclamation Day".

Then, ensuring "Proclamation" became sacred text, the Royal Australian Historical Society erected an impressive stone cairn at the bottom of William Street. According to the plaque, "On this spot Governor Lachlan Macquarie proclaimed the town of Bathurst". Not so ... (and it's in the wrong spot as well).

Which brings us to the second popular misconception: that Macquarie actually established the town of Bathurst on 7 May 1815. He did not. He only selected the site for a town to be erected at some future period, as stated both in his despatch and in the *Sydney Gazette*.

As might be expected of our hands-on governor, Macquarie walked the prospective town site with his surveyors and, at his request, they prepared a town plan. At least two copies of this plan are in NSW State Records [*maps 1293 and 1294*], long thought to have been lost. But these town plans were little more than the equivalent of the attachments one might find with a development application submitted to a local council or, in this case, the British government back in London.

Macquarie's development application was approved, in principle, by the Colonial Secretary in a despatch dated 18 April 1816—but the restrictions placed on what he might do in the way of agricultural settlement beyond the Mountains were such as to make it, if not impossible, certainly impractical to proceed with the establishment of the town of Bathurst [*HRA*, vol. IX, p.115]. Macquarie had no option but to roll up those town plans and file them away—to be discovered almost 200 years later by this speaker.

However, there was approval in that despatch for the building of a settlement of a more limited character, in essence an outpost for explorers and officials; this was "certainly most desirable," wrote the Colonial Secretary. That was what Macquarie had established on his visit in May 1815, having left a small party of convicts and soldiers to start building a small government settlement—but not the town proper.

Thus, there was no proclamation on 7 May 1815. And, no actual founding of a town called Bathurst on 7 May 1815. Do these misunderstandings in any way detract from Bathurst's claim as the oldest inland settlement?

No. Definitely, no.

The claim of being first rests very much on the small settlement, the government

depot, which Macquarie had ordered to be built on the river bank. This was not the town to be, only a place marker, if you like, until the paperwork arrived from London. By good fortune, this outpost was retrospectively approved.

It might be argued in a hair splitting way that this small government outpost was not Macquarie's proposed Bathurst. Perhaps. Deputy Surveyor General James Meehan would have disagreed. In his surveyor's field book, after a particularly challenging day in the bush, Meehan wrote (on 13 May 1815) "Return home to Bathurst". This was less than a week after the flag raising ceremony, and before long everyone— from official to convict—was calling the place Bathurst … and many were even calling it "home".

By my calculations, between 1815 and 1847—the year when the last of the British military garrisons stationed in the settlement was withdrawn—several thousand people had lived or spent some purposeful time residing, officially, in the government settlement. They included settlement officials, soldiers and mounted police, together with their families, convict workers, hospital patients, women in the female factory and prisoners in the gaol. The gaol, in use from 1825 to 1844, was meant to hold forty-five prisoners; it often held

over one hundred. Many Australian family trees will find they have roots in the settlement, possibly in the gaol. But I sincerely hope not in the hospital— having looked at a report on the diseases prevalent there.

Reflecting for a moment more on whether the government settlement can lay claim to be part of Macquarie's proposed Bathurst town, we ought to seek the view of the Governor himself. In his journal entries following 7 May he makes numerous references to Bathurst as a place that had now come into existence, for example, when he notes that he had left Mr Meehan, the surveyor, "at Bathurst" [Macquarie, p.105]. When Governor Macquarie paid his farewell visit in December 1821, he wrote in his journal of the "settlement of Bathurst" and how the "town" was illuminated with "bon-fires" in his honour [Macquarie, p.229]. In Macquarie's view there appears to be no question that the government settlement was part of the "intended" town he had "christened" as Bathurst and whose site he had "fixed upon" on 7 May 1815. But, we are still left with the conundrum of whether he actually "established" Bathurst town that day. What he *did* establish was the government settlement.

The government settlement of 1815 was located between Vale Creek and a little
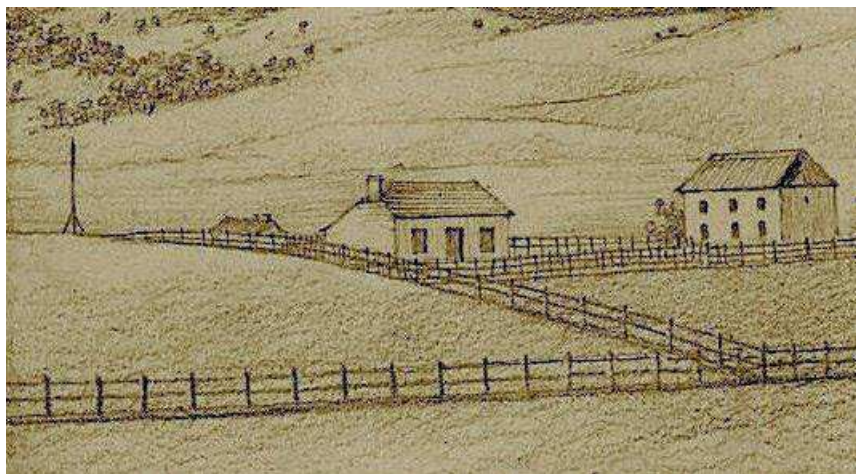
The Superintendent's House and Storehouse

beyond present-day George Street and, on the north and south, was bounded by the Macquarie River and present-day Durham Street. The core of the settlement was set out along present-day lower William Street. Government House and its outbuildings stood apart, over towards George Street. The Flag Staff also sat apart, on the riverbank in the grounds of Government House. There were as well, from about 1825, several important sites beyond Durham Street within Bathurst's CBD, notably the convict barracks and the convict hospital, the first hospital in inland Australia. Not a single building, or even remnant of a structure, remains to be seen today.

From documents and maps we have identified over a dozen significant clusters of buildings and structures which collectively held at least sixty individual buildings or sites of activity. All date from between 1815 and the late 1830s. There is some uncertainty in this, for the documents might tell us what was happening, but not where. The maps often fail, as well, to identify the purpose of buildings marked. Thus, for example, in an 1829 report, we are told that the "Soldiers Privy, stationed on an eminence, is exposed every way"; alas it is not exposed to us on the available maps.

For our tour I have selected two of the earliest buildings erected. One was the first house built in inland Australia. The other qualifies as the first two-storey building in inland Australia, but what makes it especially interesting is that it

was put to markedly different uses in its forty-year existence.

The house was also the first building in the settlement, built for the settlement's superintendent, Richard Lewis. Lewis had accompanied Evans on his 1813 explorations and worked on the road with Cox as one of his senior men. His reward was to be given the position of superintendent of the settlement. So, it is perhaps not surprising that his house and kitchen were chosen to be the first buildings. The house and kitchen (incorporating stables) were finished by June 1816 and it is around that time that Richard Lewis moved in with his wife and three small children.

We know something of the house from a report by George Evans dated April 1818. To quote Evans, it was "a good brick House, shingled, glazed windows, tile floors, and a boarded loft, the rooms whitewashed, also complete with Locks, Bolts and Ketches". Dimensions were approximately 9.1m by 7.3m, height to the roof ridge was 5m. Among those first buildings it was the only one with wooden shingles. All the others, including Government House, were thatched roofed.

My research found that between 1816 and 1828 at least five different families called this house home, the fathers being senior officers in the settlement. In all, twenty-one children lived in this house during those twelve years, five of whom were born in the house. The first was Louisa Lewis, born in 1817.

We have a first hand account of life in this house from Elizabeth Hawkins, the wife of Thomas Hawkins, the settlement's storekeeper. The Hawkins family—parents, eight children and mother-in-law—lived here from 1822 to 1823. The number of children would increase to nine with the birth of Allan in 1822. Here is Mrs Hawkins's account from her letter to her sister, dated 7 May 1822. Compare what she wrote with the floor plan prepared by Evans.

"The [house] we now occupy contains three rooms and a pantry, all brick floors. The front door opens into the sitting room, immediately opposite is the back door. Between the two is a ladder which leads into a loft, to which, as yet, there is no trap door. Our bedrooms, likewise, lead from the room, and where we all at present sleep is open to the roof, which is shingled with slips of wood, which at a little distance look like slates. Mr [William] Lawson, the commandant, who resides in the Government House, has ordered two additional rooms to be added and in another month I hope to be able to sleep in them. [Rooms were built by June 1822.] We shall then be
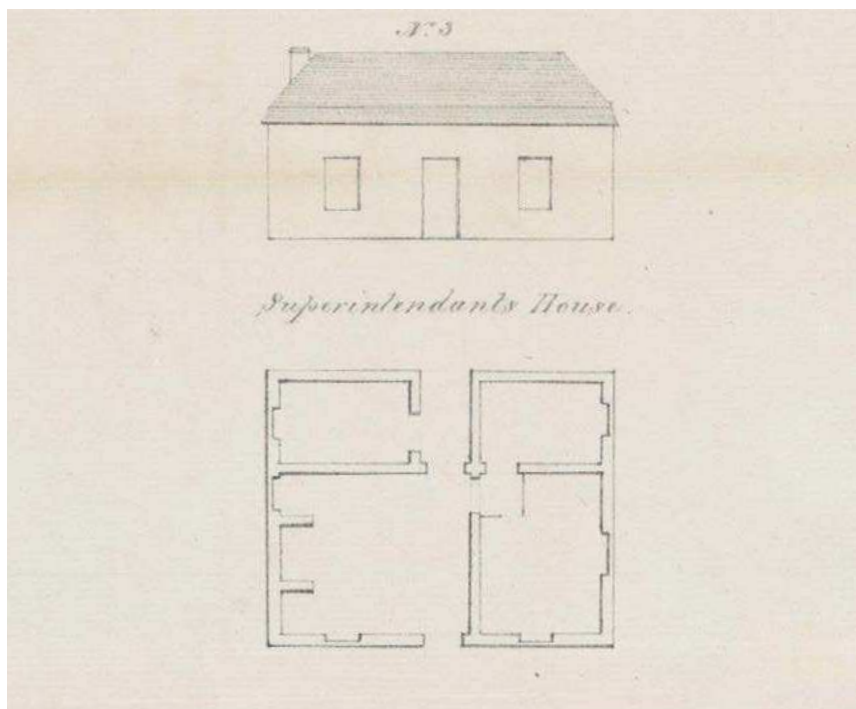
The Superintendent's House

much more comfortable, for though in England this would be considered a homely residence, here it is thought a very good one."

You can read the complete letter in George Mackaness's *Fourteen Journeys* (p.115) and I recommend it to you as the domestic life she describes is happening in this very house, including the problem of young Tom bringing home extremely venomous snakes.

The house was sold to a private purchaser in 1844 and by the 1870s, if not

earlier, it had been demolished to make way for Mr Rutherford's Cobb & Co coach Factory.

The second building we will visit is the Government Storehouse, or Commissariat. Again, this was one of the first buildings. It is also a good example of a settlement building that went through "adaptive reuse", to borrow a phrase from the heritage specialists.

It was built as a store house, initially to hold government supplies sent up
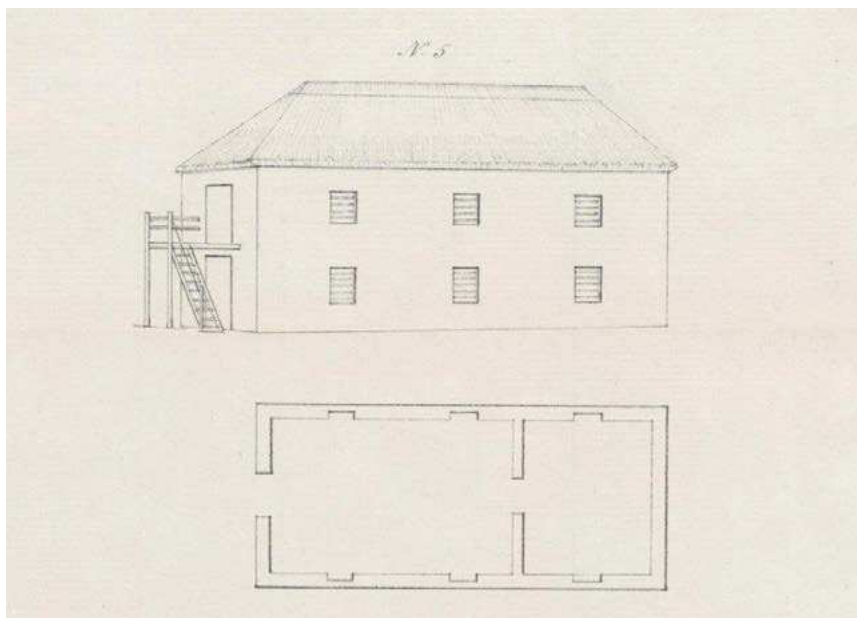
The Storehouse and Female Factory

from Sydney. When, under Governor Brisbane, the settlement became a Government Farm from about 1823-27, it also served as a granary for the farm's production. But I doubt it ever held much. The farm proved to be a total failure, not even producing enough to feed its own convict workforce.

By 1828 the farm had been wound up under Governor Darling and by then the settlement had become primarily a place for administering law and order in the district. It's the classic tale of inland Australia: assigned convicts absconding and taking to bushranging.

The original, one room, military barracks were simply too small to cope with increased troop numbers. Consequently, the redundant storehouse was adapted for use as barracks. By the early 1830s the troops had moved to new purpose built barracks across the street, so in 1832 the now empty building was adapted once again, this time for use as Bathurst's Female Factory—the only female factory in inland Australia. The earlier changes, made for the military barracks, suited the requirements of the new occupants, particularly the fireplace and the internal staircase to the upper floor, used as a sleeping loft.

The need for a special facility for holding female convicts arose with the increased demand for female assigned servants brought about by the growing number of free settlers in the district. Regulations governing female convicts were very particular on the need to gaol them apart from male convicts and under the supervision of a matron. Lacking any suitable local lockup for women meant that a female convict sentenced to even short terms of imprisonment by the Bathurst court had to be sent under escort to the Female Factory at Parramatta. This was a road trip of ten to twelve days, very often in the company of male convicts and certainly with male escorts, with the consequences (wrote the Bathurst Magistrates to Governor Bourke) that "every night the men and women mixed indiscriminately under the drays, …"

Similarly, an assigned female servant found to be unsuitable for employment or who had become pregnant would have to be sent away. Given the difficulty of acquiring female convicts, who were much in demand in the colony, the local magistrates were reluctant to lose them from the district, a likely result if they were sent to the Parramatta Female Factory. Arranging for suitable female assigned servants to be sent up from Parramatta was a complicated matter and too often unsatisfactory in outcome.

The solution to all of these problems was to establish a Bathurst Female Factory. Approval was granted for such an establishment, sufficient to house fifteen women. The opening of the Female Factory was well received, according to the *Sydney Monitor* (20 March 1833):

"We are extremely happy to learn that a Female Factory on a small scale has been established at Bathurst. A Mrs. Black is the Matron. This lady opened shop in the early part of the week with a stock of fifteen valuable females, who went off at a quick rate."

The first matron was Mrs Mary Black, a free settler aged about 27, with two small children. Her third child was born in November 1834, very likely in the Female Factory. Mary Black was quite possibly the first female public servant appointed in inland Australia. Widowed, she went on in 1838, with the unanimous support of the Bathurst's magistrates, to become one of Bathurst's innkeepers. Her last hotel, where she died in 1853, was the *Royal Hotel* on William Street, a heritage building today.

To return to the Factory, it did have something of a production line process in dealing with its female charges. When more women were needed, a request would be forwarded to the Colonial Secretary for "the usual number of

fifteen" to be sent up to the Bathurst Factory to be "readily disposed of." The preference was for women to be sent directly from a recently arrived convict transport rather than from among the women available at the Parramatta Female Factory. While in the Factory, the women earned their keep by sewing and, later, by taking in washing.

The correspondence of the Bathurst Police Magistrate shows the Factory was more than just an agency for the engagement of suitable female servants or a lock up for those who proved less than suitable. Orphaned or abandoned children were given sanctuary as well, pending approval for admission to the orphanages. Children at risk of sexual abuse found shelter. In a very practical sense, the Bathurst Female Factory was Bathurst's first social services institution.

The Factory was, though, a product of its age, and at times quite Dickensian. To offer just one story from the files: in August 1836 Police Magistrate Thomas Evernden requested shoes from the Colonial Secretary for the young children living with their mothers in the factory. The women were too poor, he wrote, to provide them. Evernden felt the supply of "shoes during the winter season especially would not be considered superfluous". Remember,

this is Bathurst. The Colonial Secretary, living in Sydney, disagreed, as he "doubted whether the shoes were actually necessary".

The Bathurst Female Factory closed in 1844 with the transfer of the inmates to their own section in the new Bathurst Gaol, located in what is now Machattie Park. For a brief time the old building was used by Dr George Busby as a ward for pauper women. Subsequently the building, by then abandoned, found itself inconveniently located relative to the surveyed roads and allotments of the new town. By the mid-1850s whatever remained had been demolished. If you want to locate the site on the ground today, it is where Charlotte Street enters William Street, extending into the park alongside.

It is time for me to end my rambles and ramblings through the early Bathurst settlement. I have told you that there is a widespread misunderstanding today as to what Macquarie actually did on 7 May 1815, but with a better understanding comes, I hope, a greater appreciation of the significance of the government settlement to Bathurst's claim of being the first inland settlement. I have told something of the history of just two of the dozens of buildings in that settlement, and introduced you to a handful of the hundreds, if not thousands, of

people who once called the place home, if unwillingly so. The settlement has a rich history and I have endeavoured to suggest by way of example that it is a history that encompasses a wide spectrum of people and experiences.

My hope is that you will leave today with an enthusiasm for the history of inland Australia's first colonial settlement. More importantly, I hope you will be charged with a passion that we do all that we can to preserve and promote the heritage that has been left to us. The Bathurst Government Settlement is without doubt one of the most significant colonial-era historic sites in all of Australia. There is much to be done.

That is the "And Beyond" in the title of my talk.

Selected sources

Mackaness, G: Fourteen Journeys over the Blue Mountains of New South Wales 1813-1841 [1965]

Macquarie, L : Journals of his Tours in N.S.W. and V.D.L. [1979]

Historical Records of Australia, vol. VIII [1916] and vol. IX [1917]

Images courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, and State Records of NSW.

On 15 March 2015, as part of the Bathurst Bi-centenary celebrations, the former mining town of Sofala, 46 kilometres north of Bathurst on the Turon River, relived events of 162 years ago in the

NEAR REBELLION ON THE TURON

The Post Office at Sofala

On the eve of the gold rushes, when the population of New South Wales was 190,000, about 180 million acres were held by just 1,800 people. The end of transportation meant labour shortages, while pastoralists feared the gold rushes would see homesteads ruined as flocks became deserted. The canvas and bark capital of the Turon goldfields was Sofala where, in February 1853, the miners were on the brink of armed insurrection.

From the discovery of gold in 1851, until February 1853, two obstacles were faced by miners: the first was natural: floods. The second was man-made: the miner's licence. Prospectors could do little about the former but they could, and did, do something about the latter.

THE LICENCE

From May 1851 licence regulations required all miners to take out a licence at 30 shillings a month. By October that year 8,637 licences had been issued on

Dodging the Commissioner

the Turon, notwithstanding that licence evasion was practised by an estimated 30% of diggers. Devices included warning of the approach of a commissioner by a call of "Joe, Joe" upon which diggers would cross to the opposite side of the river, go down one shaft and come up another, 100 yards away.

On 5 October 1851 Dr John Dunmore Lang held an open air service in Sofala, telling the assembled diggers that gold discoveries had been ordained by God and would lead to Australia's "political liberty and national existence." Against this background, the issue in November 1851 of a further 3,573 licences (payable in advance) catalysed a public meeting on 8 November, at which two resolutions were passed:

- that the system of licensing was unjust, being attacks on labour not upon produce, because it taxed both the successful and unsuccessful digger indiscriminately and therefore encouraged evasion; and

- that the tax was exorbitant and the mode of collecting it vexatious (there was anger at the fact that the miners had to go to the commissioners to pay, therefore incurring loss of
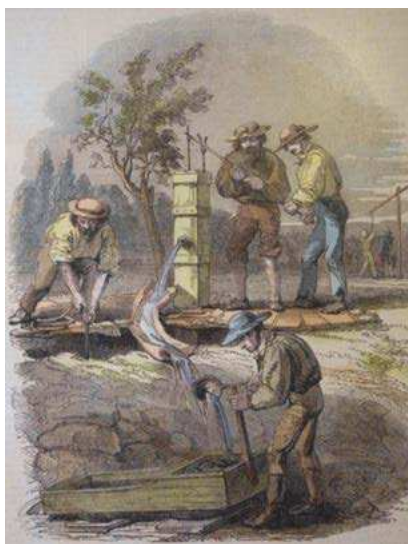
Riverbed Claim on the Turon

valuable mining time; it could take two days to make the round trip between the upper and lower Turon).

A petition was drawn up, but it was discourteously received by the Legislative Council. WC Wentworth ridiculed it, saying the diggers were a threat to property, while Deas Thompson, the Colonial Secretary, contended the licence was fair and, if anything, should be increased.

FLOODS

By February 1852 the Turon was in full flood. At the end of March the river rose with such force that it destroyed not only all the big claims but the Bathurst Point race system as well. Some relief was offered in the March regulations, which said the licence would not be collected during times of flood, but this had only a marginal effect because if a flood occurred late in the month, after the licence had already been collected, the diggers were in no better position. Diggers were leaving the Turon and many headed for the dry diggings at Dirt Holes Creek and Tambaroora to the West.

TAMBAROORA AND McEACHERN

The migration to Tambaroora had important political effects, for here the miners came into contact with James McEachern, editor of JD Lang's *Colonist* newspaper and a keen campaigner for democracy. On 3 August 1852 the Tambaroora Association of Alluvial Miners was formed, with McEachern as its secretary. He penned two memorials on behalf of the Association which

- argued that the goldfields must remain free and independent so colonists could achieve ownership of their own land rather than it be turned over to monopolists (merchants were seeking protection in the form of 14 year leases over both quartz and alluvial tracts);

Dry Digging on the Turon

- called for the extension of the (voting) franchise to miners and the abolition of property qualifications for Legislative Council membership; in McEachern's words, "the three great elements in the economy and society, [being] labour, capital and property, should be equally represented."

By November 1852 diggers were returning to the Turon from Tambaroora, but polarisation was now emerging between

- capitalists (the Turon Golden Ridge Quartz Crushing Company had been established on the lower Turon and the Australian Mutual Limited

Mining Association had exclusive rights to Erskine Island); and

- the diggers, for whom the paramount issue was still the licence; (when work was commenced to cut a tunnel to divert the river to make 300 claims workable, the government demanded the miners take out a second licence for the tunnel work).

There was now one opinion developing about the licence: it must be either significantly lowered or abolished and replaced by a royalty on gold actually produced.

The miners petitioned the government, but a Select Committee of the

Legislative Council on the Management of the Goldfields believed that the diggers were causing the ruination of the Establishment and must be stopped. When Chief Commissioner Hardy championed the diggers' cause by saying that digging was just as legitimate as pastoralism, the Committee recommended the abolition of his position.

By mid December 1852 the Goldfields Management Act had been passed. It extended the licence requirement from diggers to visitors on the goldfields;

- levied non-British diggers a double fee;
- introduced imprisonment, forfeiture of gold and tools and destruction of tents and huts as penalties for evasion; and
- made concessions to capital by granting 21 year leases and the auction of claims.

To the diggers the Act was class legislation, designed to close off the goldfields and turn them back into wage earners.

THE EVENTS OF 1853

SATURDAY 15 JANUARY

A large meeting of leaders passed resolutions that the indiscriminate 30 shillings licence was "excessive, oppressive and unjust," that it encouraged evasion and that massive inflation would result from the licence's now being payable by everybody (including storekeepers). The diggers declared "we will go to gaol to a man first! 1500 diggers lodged in Bathurst gaol!"

TUESDAY 1 FEBRUARY

A meeting chaired by William Maxwell called for a physical demonstration of resistance and it was decided to test the Act by the diggers' giving themselves over to the Commissioners *en masse.*

MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY

One thousand diggers, storekeepers and others gathered in the town and half the company of the 11th Regiment was on its way from Sydney to Sofala. As the crowd grew to from 1,000 to 2,000 Maxwell moved a deputation now go to the Commissioners. A protest document (written by Thomas Spong, an ex-barrister turned digger), was read and signed by 1,400 diggers. It criticised the Act in emotional and heroic, but realistic, terms, saying:

"we protest against the Act [which is] generally subservient to the views and purposes of the squatting interests and which gives a mean blow at men who are now increasing the Crown revenues

and who during the last 17 months of adverse weather have had to make good their very footstep as by assault against the elements."

It was declared the licence would not be paid and by that evening the Commissioners and troopers were entrenching themselves within the police barracks where loopholes for rifles were being cut in the slab walls.

In Sydney, the *Empire* newspaper asked, "are we to have an insurrection?"

TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY

Several hundred armed diggers, accompanied by fife and drum, marched into the town before breakfast and put up a notice saying "Australia expects that every man this day will do his duty" (no Nelsonian copyright in this formulation of words appears to have been acknowledged). There was then a call for the 1,800 present to turn themselves over to the Commissioners. However, when fear was expressed that the Commissioners might see such a large body of men approaching as an attack, it was resolved that a deputation of four be chosen to give themselves up for the rest and to tell the Commissioners the crowd was also waiting to be arrested.

The chosen four were civilly met and reluctantly arrested; but when the call

went up "they are taken" there was a response of "to the rescue" and armed diggers began to surge towards the river bank.

At this point the Wesleyan clergyman WJK Piddington intervened.[1] He exhorted the diggers to avoid violence and the diggers, respecting his faith, paused, allowing valuable time for tempers to cool. The miners realised they could not violently overthrow the Queen's goldfields servants and a second delegation found that the Commissioners, sensing the tense situation, had only fined the symbolic deputation one pound each. A subscription was immediately taken up amongst the crowd, the fines were paid and the four were reunited with their companions.

Bloodshed had been averted. Yet within days disillusioned diggers realised that they had ultimately acquiesced to the authorities and hundreds left in disappointment and disgust for the Victorian diggings. Many who remained believed

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1   William James Killick Pidington was born in London in 1830. He served in South Australia and Hobart before being sent to Bathurst where he was ordained in 1856. He retired from the Wesleyans in 1878, joined the Anglicans and became Anglican Dean of Tamworth. He died in 1897 [Australian Dictionary of Biography, volume 11 page 226]

that guerrilla warfare would break out on the Turon Hills if the Act were not quickly amended. A meeting of Sydney's merchants and citizens on 8 March expressed sympathy for the diggers (whose migration to Victoria was ruining the merchants' profits) and a deputation presented the Governor with a petition signed by 6,000 Sydney residents calling for repeal of the Act.

WEDNESDAY 11 MAY

Governor FitzRoy wrote to the Secretary of State in London, saying that the government's authority had been upheld but some clauses in the Act might be considered harsh if not oppressive. Another Select Committee was appointed. It chastised the diggers for adopting a "seditious" course but found that the licence fee was too high and that many of the diggers, rather than returning to follow the flocks, had instead followed the trail to the Ovens goldfields in Victoria.

SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER

An amended Goldfields Management Act came into force. It cut the licence to 10 shillings, payable only by persons actually digging, and the alien tax was dropped.

SOFALA AND EUREKA

The dominating shadow later cast by Eureka has buried the climax on the New South Wales goldfields. Yet although the Turon affair was not as significant as Eureka it was Eureka's precursor. Just as the Sofala diggers saw the amendments to the Goldfields Management Act as their own actions playing a major part in bringing about a fairer legislation for all New South Wales diggers, so in Victoria the immediate result was public reaction against Hotham followed by a goldfields Royal Commission. This led to reforms giving the miners almost everything they had asked for, in particular, replacement of the gold licence with a Miners Right, costing one pound a year, which gave the digger an entitlement to mine gold and vote in the elections for parliament; Eureka leaders Lalor and Humffrey were duly elected in 1855 to the Legislative Council. Juries convened to try 12 arrested miners acquitted all but one, the editor of the *Ballarat Times*, who was sentenced to six months imprisonment for seditious libel.

The role of the ex-Turon miners in the lead up to Eureka is largely unknown, but many disaffected Turon miners were arriving at the Ovens goldfields at the time anti-government agitation flared up.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TURON AND EUREKA

Although both battles were lost, the war for greater equality was won. The licence was the major cause of both events. The problems that Ballarat miners faced with deep shaft digging in 1854 were paralleled in the difficulties of riverbed working on the Turon in 1853.

On the other hand, while Turon miners were at pains to show their loyalty to the Queen (as against the squatter dominated Legislative Council) republicanism was a big force in the Eureka struggle. The Irish (38 in number) were far the majority of the stockade when it was attacked, ahead of 16 English, nine American, six Scottish, six Italian and four born in the colony, with remaining nationalities fewer than four in total.

Eureka was more sensational because:

- the Victorian goldfields were more heavily populated, and

- blood was shed at Eureka, but not Sofala.

However, had it not been for Piddington's intercession at Sofala blood probably *would* have been shed. The following exchange is recorded from the Select Committee:

> *Question*: Do you think there was any risk of blood being shed upon that occasion?
>
> *Answer:* I think there was. I believe everybody who was there would say the same. I think there was but one opinion about it.
>
> *Question*: You think these people were on the eve of rebellion?"
>
> *Answer*: No doubt. Many were armed, they bought up powder and cast bullets and took all sorts of measures to be well provided."

John Lanser,
whose great-great-grandparents,
George Amaziah Green and Elizabeth
Ashton Walker, were married at the
Turon Diggings in 1852. Their role, if
any, in these events is unrecorded.

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