

EARLY HISTORY OF BATHURST AND SURROUNDINGS.

By GRACE HENDY-POOLEY.

(Read before the Society, 28th November, 1905.)



ANY unsuccessful attempts were made to find a passage over the Blue Mountains previous to that made by Messrs Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth in 1813. On the report of their discovery, Governor Macquarie lost no time in sending George William Evans, Deputy Surveyor of Lands, on 20th November, 1813, to survey the track and proceed further. He was absent seven weeks and two days, penetrating ninety-eight miles beyond his predecessor's camp, which according to a Government and General Order, dated 10th June, 1815, lay three miles to the westward of the valley of Clwydd, when he named Mount Blaxland, Lawson's Sugarloaf, and Wentworth's Sugarloaf. The same order refers to Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth having descended Mount York. By the 30th November, 1813, Surveyor Evans reached the dividing range, and later on discovered the Bathurst Plains. The sequel to this survey was the order made by Governor Macquarie for a road to be made over the Blue Mountains, the supervision of which was given to Lieutenant William Cox, of the New South Wales Corps, on 14th May, 1814. He began operations on 17th July—all parties met on the banks of the Nepean River on that date—and, after experiencing many difficulties, he completed his task on 21st January, 1815. His party consisted of thirty members, as follows: a superintendent and guide (free men), a storekeeper, doctor, and constable, overseer of tools, carpenter, blacksmith, miner, and two bullock-drivers, twenty labourers, also a sergeant and six privates of the Royal Veteran Company as guards. This road was commenced on the left bank of the Nepean River, and made in eight stages, hereafter named by Governor Macquarie, Springwood, Jamieson Valley, Blackheath, Cox River, Fish River, Sidmouth Valley, Campbell River, and Bathurst, the last stage being 101½ miles from the starting point. A description is set forth in the Government and General Order issued 10th June, 1815, where due praise is given to Lieutenant Cox, who at that period was Chief Magistrate at Windsor, and who had carried out the making of the road without the loss of a single man or serious accident of any kind, and recognition of whose service is marked by the pass on the Mountains being called Cox's Pass, and a river Cox's River. At this period, it is stated, the rivers abounded in fish, some weighing from seventeen to twenty-five pounds, while the field game were kangaroos, emus, black swans, wild geese, wild turkeys, bustards, ducks of various kinds, quail, bronze and other pigeons, etc., etc., and the waterfowl, or platypus, abounded in the rivers and ponds.

The road over the Mountains was completed on 21st January, 1815, and on 25th April, 1815, Governor Macquarie, Mrs. Macquarie, and suite, consisting of Mr. Campbell, Secretary to the Governor, Captain Henry Colden Antill, 73rd Regiment, and Major of Brigade, Lieutenant Watts, 46th Regiment, Aide-de-camp, Mr. Redfern, Assistant Surgeon, Mr. John Oxley, Surveyor-General, Mr. Lewin, painter and naturalist, and Mr. G. W. Evans, Deputy-Surveyor of Lands—the latter having preceded the party for the purpose of further discoveries, and who rejoined the party on their arrival at Bathurst Plains—left Sydney to officially open up the Western Road. The Governor and suite arrived at Bathurst Plains on 4th May, 1815, named and fixed the site of the township of Bathurst on Sunday, 7th May, so called in honour of Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Governor left Bathurst for Sydney on 11th May, and arrived on 19th May.

A military guard was placed at Emu Ford to prevent persons crossing the Mountains without a pass. Governor Macquarie, on his return, stated that he did not intend to make any grants until he received the commands of His Majesty's Ministers on that subject, while passes were issued for such gentlemen and respectable free persons who wished to visit the country, and no persons, either military or civil, were permitted to cross the Mountains without such passes.

On the 23rd June, 1815, a Government and Public Notice was issued commanding those persons who had assisted in the construction of this mountain road to appear at 10 o'clock on the 15th July at Eastern Creek Stockyard, where a grant of horned cattle was given as a donation for their services. They were Thomas Hobby, Mr. Richard Lewis, John Tye, Thomas Gorman, William Dye, Samuel Freeman, Daniel Eyres, James Kelly, William Martin, Matthew Mucklow, and Mrs. Green, widow of the late Thomas Green. Each person was requested to bring their own branding-iron, as no cattle were to be delivered from the Government herd without branding. The order was issued, by command of the Governor, by the Superintendent of Government Stock, Parramatta.

John Oxley, in 1815, describes the site of the town of Bathurst as sufficiently elevated to be beyond the reach of floods which might occur; at the same time it was so near to the Macquarie River on its south bank as to derive all the advantages of its clear stream. According to Oxley's survey, the site of the town was 33 deg. 24 min. 30 sec. south, and its longitude 149 deg. 29 min. 30 sec. east Greenwich, the measured road distance being 140 English miles from Sydney. The present site of Bathurst lies 33 deg. 25 min. south latitude, and 149 deg. 42 min. east longitude, the distance by rail to Sydney 149 miles, and it is 2,155 feet above sea level.

In 1817, John Oxley, in visiting the settlement, stated that it had assumed a very different appearance than when he first visited it in the suite of Governor Macquarie in 1815. "A good substantial house had been erected for the Superintendent, the Government grounds were fenced in, and the stockyards showed abundant production of last harvest, while the flocks and herds had a fine appearance. The soil in the neighbourhood had a surface of six inches, light black vegetable mould lying on a stratum of sand about eighteen inches deep, of a good description, and mixed with small stones, under which was a strong clay." It was from Bathurst that John Oxley, on 24th March, 1817, set out to explore the Macquarie River, with George William Evans, Allan Cunningham, King's Botanist, Charles Fraser, Colonial Botanist, William Parr, mineralogist, George Hubbard, boatbuilder, James King, first, boatman and sailor, James King, second, horseshoer, William Meggs, butcher, George Simpson, for chaining with surveyors, and William Warner, servant to John Oxley.

In 1820 those who had crossed the ranges and settled in the district were: Mr. Lowe, of Sidmouth, on the left bank of the Fish River; Mr. Hassall, of O'Connell's Plains; Mr. Lawson and John Street, of Macquarie Plains; and the School and Church lands had a grant. Close to the township there were a few small farms, and then the large estate of Colonel Stewart, 3rd Regiment, or Buffs, known as Mount Pleasant. Colonel Stewart retired from the Army with the ranks of general and settled on this property at Mount Pleasant, Evans' Plains, which was a fine tract of land of many acres, thinly wooded and well watered; there he died on 8th April, 1854, at the age of eighty-five years. His widow survived him fifteen years, and died on 18th November, 1869. On the right bank of the river were the brothers West, Stuart Mackenzie Cox (Hereford Estate), Captain Hawkins, Captain Piper, the Rankin brothers, Kite of Kelso, Lee, and Smith; some of them had small farms. Queen Charlotte's Vale was cut up into small farms, and Mr. George Sutor had a grant at Wimburndale Creek; in 1822 he was made Superintendent of the settlement vice Mr. James Blackman, who had resigned

on 10th April. William Cox was in charge of the district in 1817, and in March of that year Governor Macquarie, in his instructions to John Oxley, writes: "On your arrival at Bathurst you will find William Cox, Esq., there, and to him I beg leave to refer you for every information relative to provisions, stores, horses for carriage, equipments ordered to be forwarded to the depôt on the Lachlan River for the use of the expedition, Mr. Cox having promised to accompany you as far as the depôt on the Lachlan River, etc." William Cox's grant, which he named "Hereford," was on the right bank of the Macquarie River. He afterwards established a station, which he called "Burrendong," now the property of the Hon. F. B. Suttor, near the junction of the Cudgong and Macquarie Rivers. On 1st June, 1815, Richard Lewis was appointed Superintendent in the newly discovered country over the Blue Mountains, under orders of William Cox, with a salary of £50 per annum, and the usual indulgences attached, to be paid out of the Police Fund.

On 23rd August, 1819, Lieut. William Lawson, Royal Veteran Company, was appointed Commandant and Justice of the Peace at Bathurst, in succession to William Cox. He was succeeded on 19th November, 1823, by Lieutenant-Colonel Morrisset, who resigned that position in January, 1825, to proceed to England. On Lieutenant-Colonel Morrisset's return to the colony in 1827, he was, on 19th October of that year, appointed Principal Superintendent of Police, and in 1835 he purchased the farm of Mr. George Palmer, on the Wimburn Rivulet, to which place he retired after the erection of new buildings on the estate. He died at Kelso on 17th August, 1852. On his resignation as Commandant of the settlement in 1825, Lieutenant-Colonel Morrisset was succeeded on 10th February by Captain Fennell, Aide-de-camp to Governor Brisbane, who was attached to the Governor's staff for a period of three years. He had been previously Commandant at Windsor, and was married at Government House, Windsor, to Mary Ann, fourth daughter of Archibald Bell, late of the New South Wales Corps, and of Belmont, Richmond, on 13th January, 1825. On 3rd July, 1826, he died at Bathurst, after an illness of three days, while acting as Commandant of the settlement, leaving a wife and infant son.

In the last week in January, 1825, a settlement was formed at Wellington Valley, and Lieutenant Percy Simpson was gazetted the first Commandant. Lieutenant Simpson and his party remained a week at Bathurst before proceeding to Wellington Valley. This settlement was abolished in January, 1831, "to be used in future as a stock station."

While at Bathurst, Lieutenant William Lawson made a journey north-west with Mr. Scott and a small party, taking with them a black guide named Aaron, and they reached a spot which they called Aaron's Pass, after the guide. Lieutenant Lawson crossed the head of the Goulburn River, one of the tributaries of the Hunter, and discovered a stream which he called Wymmis; he also came on the Talbragar, which he named the Erskine, and which two years later Allan Cunningham came across and called the Lawson. Another enterprising man of the period was Charles Throsby, who, with permission of the Governor, set out on 25th April, 1819, to explore the country from the Cowpastures to Bathurst; he was accompanied by Mr. John Rowley and two servants, with two natives as guides. On 9th May, 1819, they reached the hut of Lieutenant Lawson on the Campbell River, a short distance from Bathurst. As an acknowledgment of his services, he was given a grant of 1,000 acres in any part of the country he should select through which he had traversed. Two hundred acres were given to John Rowley in the same country, and John Wild and John Wait, servants, received one hundred acres each.

On the 21st August, 1819, the district of this newly-discovered country was named the County of Westmoreland, and its boundaries were gazetted. In 1827, near the head of Campbell's River, in the direction of the Lachlan, there was at the period a small tract of country known as the "Wild Horse."

When Commissioner Bigge travelled from Bathurst to Argyle in October, 1820, one of the baggage horses was so much hurt as to be rendered useless, and, after distributing his load amongst the other horses, he was let loose and abandoned, and the travelling party proceeded on its journey. The horse recovered, and, in 1827, was seen in the same place where he had been abandoned, fat and sleek, though "perfectly wild," with his tail sweeping the ground in a most majestic manner. He was never thought to leave his domain of about two miles diameter, which was considered to be the cause of his excellent condition, and was seen by several different parties always galloping off at the sight of man and horse.

About this period, there resided in the Campbell River district, a Mr. Bakewell, famous for his fat ewes and, to prevent their getting into the hands of breeders, so as to be used only for butchering purposes, he caused a disease named "rot" to affect them, by flooding his meadows in summer, and in autumn letting off the water, and turning in the sheep, where they partook of the premature and unsubstantial grasses—the rapid growth of moisture.

The first land grant given in the Bathurst district was that to Maurice Charles O'Connell, 73rd Regiment, of a thousand acres, on 22nd March, 1814, presumably the grant promised on his marriage with Governor Bligh's daughter, Mrs. Putland. On 10th June, 1815, William Henry Alcock received 400 acres, Joseph Bigg 200 acres, James Chisholme 150 acres, Robert Job 200 acres; on 31st October, 1815, J. Liddeard Nichols 700 acres; on 8th October, 1816, John Martin 530 acres, and Richard Rouse 450 acres; on 13th January, 1818, Richard Rouse also received another grant of 150 acres, Thomas Sterrop Amos 800 acres, John Palmer 1,550 acres, John Pye 300 acres; on 20th September, 1818, Mr. Walter Lang 700 acres; it is evident that no grants were given in 1817. In 1823, an application for a grant of land for the first male child born at the settlement at Bathurst, was made on behalf of Richard Mills by his father, Robert Mills. In October, 1823, William Johnston was appointed superintendent of agriculture at Bathurst. In 1831, there were situated on the banks of the Macquarie River, and within view of the settlement, the 100-acre grants for Australian-born youths, to whom Governor Darling was pleased to order. Most of them, at the above period, were well under cultivation in wheat and barley.

In March, 1824, James Smith and Thomas Fuller, of Parramatta, established a conveyance from Parramatta to Bathurst, engaging to reach the latter place in four days with passengers, and with baggage five days, passenger fares 20/-, letters 1/-, for every hundred-weight 20/-, parcels under 50lbs., 3d. per lb., money 10 per cent., for each gallon of spirits 2/-. "N.B.—A comfortable 'Tilt' for passengers."

Mr. Hawkins, the first Coroner for Bathurst, in May, 1823, erected a windmill upon quite a new principle, and the *Sydney Gazette* states: "To see a windmill on the plains of Bathurst will certainly be a novel as well as a cheering sight, and be extremely welcome to the population of some hundreds who have now to use the fatiguing common steel mill." This was evidently the first windmill erected west of the Blue Mountains. In 1840, the first steam mill of four-horse power was erected at Kelso, and did most of the grinding for the district. In January, 1857, a new steam mill was in course of erection at the west end of the town, near the Vale Road, and was owned by Mr. Alexander Crilley, the machinery being purchased from Messrs. Russell & Co. of Sydney. Mr. Hawkins' Mill was the first, then Mr. Rankin's, and Captain Piper's. Mr. Mockett succeeded, and established a good business. Syer Brothers were the next, and Mr. Francis followed; besides these, there were several outside mills.

In October, 1823, Mr. Hawkins reports that several inquests had been convened by him: one on a man named Peter Bray, servant to Mr. Lee of Bathurst, who was murdered by natives; also, another servant of the same

gentleman, found drowned in the Macquarie River, and a Government servant of Mr. Robert Marsden, also found drowned in the same river.

In 1824-25, the natives gave a great deal of trouble in the Bathurst district, and in the latter end of September the Commandant, Major Morrisset, four magistrates and about forty soldiers and six mounted settlers, left Bathurst for Mudgee, the overseer and several of the settlers knowing that part of the country well. Many of the natives were killed in an encounter with them, one being the well-known chief "Blucher"; this was in the early part of September, 1824. Another native chief of the Bathurst district was one named "Windrodine," better known to the colonists as "Saturday," who fell in a fight with a tribe from the south, and died on 21st March, 1829—death being caused through a wound in the knee which mortified. He died in the Bathurst Hospital and was buried near it, his body being wrapped in his mantle and his weapons deposited in the grave with him. For many years he was the terror of the surrounding country, his height was about six feet, and he was noted for his kindness to women and children. At one time, five hundred acres was offered for his head, but he surrendered to Governor Brisbane and was introduced to him at Parramatta. There he resided for a short time in the Domain and, from that period, looked upon the white man with greater easiness of spirit. Another noted Bathurst native was a guide named "Piper," who accompanied Major Mitchell on his expedition to the rivers Darling and Murray, in 1836, and on his return with the party to headquarters was rewarded by Major Mitchell with his own red coat, and a cocked hat and feather, which had once belonged to Governor Darling. His portrait, thus costumed, was drawn by Mr. Fernyhough, and soon appeared in print shops. Piper enjoyed all his newly acquired consequence with a high head, and those who knew him gave him small sums of money; with this, he purchased silk handkerchiefs and wore them on his breast, gowns for his gins (for he had two), and, to his credit, he abstained from intoxicating drink, looking down with contempt on those who so indulged, especially his own race. Before returning to Bathurst, he was decorated with a brass plate on which he was styled "Conqueror of the Interior," not, as usual, "King," for he said there were too many kings.

In 1826, Bathurst appeared to be in a flourishing condition, and the district had acquired a fame for its cheese. Amongst the makers were Captain Piper, Mr. Innes and Mrs. Rankin. The latter's cheese bore her name, and was sold wholesale at 9d. and 1/- per lb. Cheeses were sent to Sydney in many hundredweights at a time. Mr Hawkin's water-mill, and also that of Mr. Innis, afforded great assistance to the settlers; both were erected in 1824.

In 1825, the Bathurst Hunt had been established, for the purpose of coursing the native dog, which caused much destruction to the flocks. The uniform of the members was a green jacket, turned up with velvet, and ornamented with a native dog embroidered on the collar, gilt buttons with "Bathurst Hunt" stamped on them. Each member kept a certain number of dogs, and days were fixed for a general turn out. It was during the formation of the association that a solemn meeting was convened to decide upon the dress that would be most appropriate for the chase. The assemblage was a stormy one for some time, when at last one of the members arose and with some considerable gravity observed "that he would rather go to the devil in a frock coat than to heaven in a jacket." This settled the matter, and frock coats were carried, *nem. con.*, to the everlasting fame of the proposer.

In 1826, the *Sydney Gazette* advertises the Bathurst Classical and Mercantile School, where young gentlemen could be boarded and educated for thirty guineas per annum, Mr. Holloway being the proprietor. Even in those days Bathurst was not without its Literary Society, which was instituted in 1826, under the direction of a president, vice-president and committee of

five members, the entrance fee being three guineas and annual subscription two guineas. Bathurst of to-day possesses one of the finest School of Arts in New South Wales, which began its existence in 1855, the building being erected in 1860-61. Not only schools, but colleges grace the township.

In 1827, Bathurst is described as a town purely Governmental, every tenement being occupied by Government offices. A Government farm adjoined the settlement, and was estimated at a loss of £2000 per annum. The herd of cattle at this farm, and the one at Wellington Valley, was estimated at 5000 head. Previous to this date, a settler taking a grant of 2000 acres had a present made him by the Government of twenty cows to start with, to make up in some measure for the expense of victualling and clothing twenty Crown prisoners. This system was abolished by Governor Brisbane.

The estimated number of cattle at Bathurst at the close of 1826 was about 25,000 head, and there were about 70,000 sheep. Frequently men with £5,000 to £10,000 in land and stock, were still living in their original huts composed of rammed earth, but there was always plenty of good cheer within. At this period the pasturage was in a bad state owing to the long continued drought, and settlers were seeking new pasturage in the Mudgee district, then recently discovered.

In 1828, the officer in command of the district was Lieutenant James Brown, 57th Regiment; Superintendent of Government Stock, Mr. John Maxwell; Chief Constable, Mr. James Blackman; Clerk of the Bench, Mr. John Webb; Assistant Surgeon, Mr. Richardson; the Coroner was still Mr. F. F. Hawkins; the Church of England clergyman, the Rev. John Espy Keane. One sergeant and thirteen privates were stationed on the Bathurst Plains, besides mounted troopers.

In 1833, the Police Magistrate was Thomas Evernden Esq., late of the 3rd Regiment, or Buffs. It was Lieutenant Evernden who had been appointed to command the troop of cavalry that had been raised and equipped from the 3rd Regiment by Colonel Stewart, then Lieutenant-Governor. This troop consisted of picked men from the regiment, and were organised to put down the bushrangers, then so troublesome in the western districts. On the 4th November, 1825, the first detachment of this troop, consisting of one sergeant and seven privates, under Lieutenant Evernden, left Sydney for Bathurst. In March, 1826, a Government and General Order reported that the mounted police—identical with the troop of cavalry formed the previous year—had fallen with a party of bushrangers, amounting to seven in number, in the district of Bathurst, and Maurice Connell, who was reported to be one of the most notorious of the gang, was killed on the spot by Corporal Brown.

Until 1830, Mr. Kite, the wealthy landholder, monopolised the whole of the hotel trade, but in 1831 there were three inns, Thomas Kite's "Dun Cow," William Blizzard's "Golden Fleece," and Richard Mills' "King William." William Blizzard was formerly bandmaster in the 48th Regiment, and he died at Bathurst on 18th February, 1832.

On or about 19th July, 1831, Captain Payne, of Dunn's Plains, was murdered by bushrangers. He had only arrived in the colony eighteen months previously, and had purchased the farm from Captain Sealey. He was a seafaring man, having retired into Yorkshire many years previously to settle and farm. He had no family and left a great deal of property. "Since the location of lands by the Veteran Pensioners, and distribution of small grants to native lads, cultivation began in real earnest," states the *Sydney Gazette* of February, 1832.

The site of the Bathurst township, until 1832, at Kelso, about a mile from the present site. In May, 1832, it was urged that the laying out of the township on the opposite side of the river, should be carried out, and at the latter end of the year the new township was opened. In May, 1834, the *Sydney Gazette* states that, "after a tedious delay of about a year and a half

since the opening of the township, arising from forms of office, several allotments in the new township have been sold, while buildings were rapidly springing up around."

In 1832, there resided in the Bathurst district an old man named "Tommy Rowden," one of the First Fleet, of the corps of Royal Marines, who had served His Majesty for fifty-one years, for which he received a pension of 2/3 a day. He boasted that he had never experienced a day's illness in his life, and he was well known in the districts of Windsor and Cornwallis, as "old Tommy Rowden." He was one of those who had witnessed the early foundation of Australia. Another well-known character in the district was "David the Welshman" (David Arthur), who had squattered in the neighbourhood of Boree; he died at the beginning of 1835, and in his life allowed himself not even the necessities, yet, at his death, he left legacies to the amount of £600.

Previous to 1832, the mails were conveyed to and from Sydney by contractors, who transferred them to the mounted police at Penrith, and they brought them to and from Bathurst; this method was abolished in 1832, and Watsford, the Sydney and Parramatta coach proprietors, were under contract to carry them right through, the latter taking five hours longer in the conveyance.

(To be concluded.)

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