

Thematic History of Oberon Shire

Philippa Gemmell-Smith

16 March 2004



With thanks to the many people who helped with this project, in particular

Alan Brown and

Alan Hoolihan

who were most generous with their time, knowledge and archival material collected over many years,

and to:

Bill Allen, Beryl Armstrong, Joan Arrow, Wilma Artery, Karen & Brett Bailey, Jennifer Balaam, Ross Beattie, Mary Behan, Lennie Birch, Claude Brien, Sheila Buckley, Wendy Casey, John & Jeannie Clague, Monty Cotton, Stella Cranfield, Ray Cunynghame, Dennis Danna, Lyn D'Arcy-Evans, Brenda Doney, Jean Dube, Carmel Duggan, Merv Dwyer & Pat Dwyer, Toni Dwyer, Bev Evans, Frank Fawcett, Marian Fawcett, Helen Freeth, Bill Hardie, Don Hogan, Pat Hogan, Domino Holbrook-Costa, Gail Gearon, Deborah Hoolihan, Arthur Lang, Brenda Lyon, Shane Moorhead, Hubert & Olga McKinnon, Judy & Ken Morrow, John Mrdjenovic, Brian Nunan, Bev O'Brien, Mick O'Connell, Warren Rawson, Barry Richard, Maria Ridge, Janelle Rodwell, Jim Smith, Roy Smith, Pat Tempest, Denise Toohill, Greg Toole, Chick Totic, Malcolm Watson, Kevin Webb and Lyn Woods, Rob Whyte,

with sincere apologies to anyone who has been overlooked.

Thanks also to the many family historians whose work is the basis for much of this.

Heritage items on the Oberon Local Environmental Plan are underlined

*Cover photo: Bullock team of Bill Cosgrove with son Bill, 1918, in Oberon Street about opposite what is now the Big Trout Motel. Young Bill was Oberon's last teamster.
from the collection of Warren Rawson*



Map of Oberon and District



Oberon Shire with Localities

Contents

Introduction	6
1. Aboriginal Contact	8
2. Explorers and Early Settlers	20
3. Roads and Transport	28
4. Agriculture and Pastoralism	37
5. Law and Order	48
6. Tourism	56
7. Industry	65
8. Mining	75
9. Institutions	80
10. Sport, Leisure, Entertainment and the Arts	88
Appendix 1 <i>Early Settlement of the Regions of the Oberon District</i>	93
Appendix 2 <i>Tourist Accommodation in the Oberon Shire, 2002</i>	109
Appendix 3 <i>Local Timber-related Businesses</i>	111
Appendix 4 <i>Mineral Resources and Mine Production Figures</i>	113
Bibliography	118

Introduction

Oberon Shire is defined by water. The Fish, Duckmaloi, Cox's, Kowmung, Abercrombie, Isabella and Campbell's Rivers, along with Sewell's and Lannigan's Creeks, almost completely encircle it. Much of this abundant water is diverted over a wide radius to the north, east and west: Lake Oberon, formed by the damming of the Fish River, waters not only Oberon town but also Lithgow, Glen Davis, and the upper Blue Mountains. So, much of Oberon's western flowing water is diverted away from the western river system to the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range. Chifley Dam, on the western border, supplies Bathurst. While countless springs and over seventy other named creeks and rivers water the shire, feeding from the abundant aquifers of the Great Dividing Range.

The Great Dividing Range runs through the shire east of the town, crossing the shire boundaries at Mt Werong in the south, and Mt Reeves at Duckmaloi in the north-east. To the east of the Divide is the rugged sandstone and granite country of the Kanangra-Boyd and Blue Mountains National Parks, which are now part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Most of the Kanangra-Boyd National Park has also been declared Wilderness. The rivers on the eastern watershed drain to Sydney's water supply, the Warragamba Dam, and from there into the Nepean River and to the Pacific Ocean. On the western side the Oberon streams ultimately feed the Murray River, reaching the sea in South Australia.

The Oberon plateau, a broad area of uplifted rock, makes up the bulk of the Shire and consists of sandstone, shale or slate, intruded with granite. Ancient basalt flows cap this rock in places, especially in the south of the shire. In places these flows have buried pre-existing streams containing gems and gold, for which fossickers and miners have hunted over the last 150 years or so. To the north the shire drops from the tableland to the lower country of the Fish River and the O'Connell Plains in the north-west. Casuarinas grow along the Fish River to Evans Crown Nature reserve and on the Cox's, Kanangra and Abercrombie Rivers but are not naturally found in the higher country. Eels are found in the eastern but not the western flowing rivers.

Deep stream erosion over some 300 million years has undermined areas of flat rock and caused the spectacular steep cliffs of Kanangra Walls. The view across the Walls and the plunging valleys of the Kanangra-Boyd National Park is both uplifting and humbling, reminding the onlooker of their own insignificance and the grandeur of nature. The subterranean wonderland of Jenolan Caves has been created by slightly acidic ground waters dissolving the limestone. This vast network of limestone caves in the eastern fall of the Dividing Range has been a pilgrimage for tourists almost since their first official exploration by Europeans about 1838. Further south are the lesser known caves at Tuglow. Tourism has continued to be an important industry in Oberon, particularly in the wild country in the shire's east.

Gundungurra and Wiradjuri people were living here when white people arrived. What happened to them is largely unrecorded, but apart from the Evans Crown area they apparently died or disappeared very quickly, and very few people of local Aboriginal descent live here now. The strong presence of Aboriginal people is evidenced by the numerous artefacts which have been, and still are found in the district.

Since the arrival of white people the landscape and environment have undergone numerous changes. Tree cover was apparently more open, but after ringbarking and burning the scrub grew densely. There were dingoes, curlews, kangaroo rats, bandicoots, tiger quolls and

koalas, which are now extinct or uncommon in the district. Much of the native vegetation has been cleared for exotic *Pinus radiata* forests. A small bush timber mill harvesting black butt grew into a vast pine-processing industry now owned by a multi-national company.

Despite its proximity to Sydney, Oberon was officially settled later than many areas further away. Its ferocious cold (most of the plateau is over 1000m above sea level), heavy timber cover, in places rugged or boggy terrain made the district less attractive to early settlers than the easier, warmer, more open country to the west and north. The shire has no major highways, and roads were generally unsealed and very poor until the late 1960s. Its mountain terrain and climate, with frequent snow and rain in winter, created an isolation so the shire retains a wildness that is part of its attraction. Much of the wildest country is now National Park.

The lushness of rich country combined with a high rainfall (880 mm) is tempered by the long harsh winters. There were few large landholders and many farms were barely economically viable until the wool boom of the 1950s, and the district was extremely poor. Most of the private land is now engaged in the production of prime lambs and beef cattle: wool is now a by-product. For much of last century peas and potatoes were widely grown, but these crops have almost disappeared. Brussel sprouts and broccoli are now grown commercially.

Over half of the shire is held by the state government in national parks and state forests, the latter under *Pinus radiata*. The Kanangra-Boyd National Park (68 000 hectares) to the east is entirely contained in the Oberon Shire, and a relatively small portion of the massive Blue Mountains National Park lies in the south east. Two of the three sections of Abercrombie River National Park are in the shire. The main section (15 000 hectares) occupies the south-west corner of the shire, and a 200 hectare block at Bummaroo Ford lies to the south on the Goulburn Road. Evans Crown Nature Reserve (425 hectares) with its dramatic granite formations lies just north of the shire on the Fish River.

The Oberon town area was originally known as Bullock Flat, after a flat on the Fish River Creek, now opposite the water treatment plant. The village, elevated to higher country adjacent, was proclaimed in 1863, and the name also elevated. Oberon is the king of the fairies in Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream'. According to Whalan family mythology the name was suggested by Charles Whalan's wife Elizabeth (Harper). The town centre moved westwards during the twentieth century. Many of the original business premises have been rebuilt since the 1950s.

Oberon is notable for its rammed earth or pise buildings, including some double storey houses. This material was used over a considerable period. While few wattle and daub or slab buildings have survived, a number of rammed earth buildings are still in use through the shire, some of the later ones built by James Inglis, who owned and built the guest house Dulce Domum.

Many of the early settlers were from Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, a fair number emancipated convicts. Others came from Cornwall, especially to the north of the shire around Tarana, England and a few, especially in the south, from Scotland. Oberon has had a remarkably stable population since, and many of the families that first settled it are still living here. Of the numerous villages once dotted across in the shire, the only ones with a school and any commercial premises now are Black Springs and O'Connell. Wiseman's Creek, Hazelgrove, Edith, Shooters Hill, Duckmaloi, Gingkin, Porters Retreat, Mt Werong, Mutton Falls and Isabella are now only localities.

1. Aboriginal Contact

Oberon shire encompasses part of the Gundungurra lands, and part of Wiradjuri country. The boundaries between these two peoples are not currently clearly established, but generally the north and north west of the shire was Wiradjuri country and the south and east was Gundungurra country. Within this area were smaller groups (bands or kinship groups) who had associations with particular areas. The territory of the Gundungurra people lay mainly in the catchment of the Wollondilly/Cox's River¹: boundaries between tribes and clans are often based on drainage basins². The Gundungurra people currently have a major land claim before the courts, which stretches as far west as Lake George near Canberra and almost to Bathurst. According to Wiradjuri elder, Bill Allen, "there was a fluid area so many kilometres either side of the Great Dividing Range"³.

It is commonly said that Aboriginal people were not around the Oberon district much, however the large number of Aboriginal artefacts that have been found, and are still being found, suggests that there was a strong Aboriginal presence here at least before white people moved in. Apparently the local Aboriginal people disappeared from the Oberon plateau quite early. An anonymous writer of letters in the *Town and Country Journal*, November 30, 1878, possibly John Hughes of Gingkin, arguing the merits of the Oberon district compared with the Burragorang Valley says:

We also have bacon and honey but none of the coloured tribe i.e. the blacks. We can manage very well without them.⁴

Another widespread belief is that Aboriginal people were only here in summer, however explorer Charles Throsby encountered a 'large tribe' in the south of the shire in May 1819, so it would appear that the Oberon district was inhabited for much, if not all of the year. According to Bill Allen Aboriginal people knew various plants which they could rub on their skin to protect them from the cold.

The ability of the local tribal people to cope with the rigours of the climate impressed a number of commentators. Dr Reid travelling in the southern tablelands with Governor Macquarie in 1820 observed of the Burra Burras:

Having previously made a large fire, they all went to sleep on the lee side of it without any article of covering. Nature appeared to compensate in some degree for this want with a covering of hair, which was particularly observable in the very old ones.. They appeared to suffer little or no inconvenience from change of weather, for they continued fast asleep during a violent shower of rain that lasted three hours, the thermometer standing at 39 [4 degrees centigrade]⁵.

Early interactions and the ultimate fate of the original inhabitants of the Oberon district are largely unrecorded and can only be conjectured.

¹ Jim Smith *Goulburn* p.3

² N. Peterson in Michael Pearson, *Bathurst Plains* p.68

³ pers. comm. 24.9.02

⁴ "Tickled With the Hoe it Will Smile With the Harvest" p.102

⁵ W. Wentworth *A Statistical Account of the British Settlements in Australasia*, G. Whittaker, 1824, in Jim Smith *Goulburn* p.5

Wiradjuri

The earliest relationships between Aboriginal and white people appear to be have been cordial, supported by Governor Macquarie's insistence "to treat them kindly, to put no restraint upon their movements, but to let them come and go when they thought proper"⁶. Some Wiradjuri warriors came to meet Macquarie when he visited what was to be Bathurst in 1815 and traded some clothing and a piece of yellow cloth for a possum skin cloak. Several early writers comment on these cloaks which had not been seen on the coast:

They possess the art of very neatly sewing together, with the sinews of the kangaroo and emu, cloaks of skins, the hide of which they also carve in the inside with a world of figures.⁷

Early travellers through Wiradjuri country, Evans, Cox and Antill, remark on how few aboriginal people they meet but are aware of their presence from fires and campsites. Local Aboriginals it seems avoided meeting the white visitors and when they did make unintentional contact the Aboriginal people appeared terrified. Evans, the first white man in Wiradjuri territory, wrote of his one encounter, on the Bathurst Plains

At sunset as we were fishing I saw some natives coming down the Plain: they did not see us until we surprised them: there was only two Women and four Children, the poor Creatures trembled and fell down with fright⁸

Aboriginal people, at least in this district, believed that their dead returned as white ghosts⁹. Charles Macalister, in his memoir of the early settlement in the Goulburn region *Pioneering Days in the Sunny South*, published in 1907 quotes the explanation, "Sit down, blackfellow, jump up white fellow"¹⁰ which may explain initial terror at meeting white beings. While there were relatively few white settlers relations seem to have been relatively amicable, and the two races coexisted. Macquarie had protected the country west of the mountains from close settlement: by 1820 there were only 114 white people in the Bathurst area. But in 1821 Macquarie's term as governor was ended, and settlers began to pour over the mountains. By 1824 the white population had increased there to 1267.¹¹ Once the stock and stockmen moved in large numbers up from the coast relationships quickly deteriorated. Aboriginal food sources were seriously affected and they started to attack and disperse mobs of sheep and cattle, and to attack and kill stockmen. Military forces were brought in to deal with the increasing violence and there were random killings of Aboriginals, often women. Under the leadership of the warrior Windradyne, Aboriginals responded with violence. The killings escalated.

On the O'Connell Plains a party of 50 or 60 warriors killed stock, then burnt stockmen's huts on a westward path and scattered 500 sheep at Rockley in 1824. They returned to O'Connell and attacked a stockman. A posse of six stockhands formed and came across a group of about 30 Aboriginal people near Raineville and three women were killed.¹² Five of the six men were tried for manslaughter but acquitted.

⁶ Major Henry Antill, accompanying Macquarie on his visit to Bathurst in 1815, in George Mackaness, p.83

⁷ Barron Field, in Mackaness, p.125

⁸ Evans in Mackaness p.28

⁹ Mary Coe, pp.14, 22

¹⁰ Charles Macalister, p.84

¹¹ Bruce Elder, p.53

¹² Elder p.57

Jim Smith in his *Aborigines of the Goulburn District* examines the history of the Burra Burra band. This was probably a Gundungurra group. Sources conflict about some details: Watson Steele of Rockley recorded that William Lawson's properties at O'Connell Plains were "attacked by natives of the Mountains Tribes" and seven of his workers and 500 sheep were killed in these attacks.¹³ At some point the Gundungurra people became involved in the conflict. One of their renowned warriors 'Old Bull' came from the south to support Windradyne.¹⁴ Jim Smith suggests that the Gundungurra may have been on the receiving end of reprisals for Windradyne.

Dumaresq on his trip to Bathurst and district in 1827 met only three Aboriginal men "stout athletic fellows . . . whose beards were eight or nine inches long" but he refers to a killing somewhere near the head of the Campbell's River in a place called "Dead Man's Valley," which obtained its horrid name from five of M. _____

men, several years ago, being attacked here by the black natives, and murdered, mangled and scalped.¹⁵

In August 1824 Governor Brisbane declared martial law west of Mt York, which sanctioned widespread massacres of Aboriginal people. After at least 100 warriors had been killed, Windradyne led his family to Parramatta to appeal to the governor for a truce in December 1824. With the destruction of their lifestyle the Wiradjuri dwindled in numbers. In 1836 Charles Darwin commented that the Aborigines around Bathurst were dying out and by 1850 the Wiradjuri around Bathurst were much less apparent.¹⁶

Although most of the recorded attacks were around Bathurst, this situation may well have had its echoes on the Oberon plateau where a number of absentee landlords already had stock. It is likely that killings like those referred to by Dumaresq (above) sparked off reprisals against local Aboriginals which have gone unrecorded. M_____'s men may well have been killed in revenge for abuse of Aboriginal Law, especially involving women or land. As well as massacres by whites and white diseases, Aboriginal lives were lost at the hands of other Aboriginals. Alexander Harris gives an account of a trip, published in 1847, through the New Country between Bathurst and Goulburn looking for grazing land. In the Oberon district, in the south east of the shire, he stayed the night "at a half-starved station; it was a cattle station, and the stockmen being out, only the hut-keeper was there...."

Our night's quarters were rendered still more memorable and comfortless by the blacks having had a battle here that afternoon. Three dead bodies were lying on the flat, with the ghastly grin of those who have died *the hater's death*. Two of them had been killed by body wounds with jagged spears, that had torn their way out frightfully; the other's was a head-wound with a tomahawk. The weapon had gone right through his mat of woolly black hair into the brain; very little blood had flowed, but the "gins" (black women) told us he died almost instantly. As I came from looking after my horse, I passed them as they lay cold and prone in the thin misty moonlight, each on the spot where he had fallen. The wife of one of them, a fine, but small Hercules-like figure, sat or rather reclined by him, sobbing as if her heart would break. Another was quite a lad, and the other an old grey-bearded man, who had been a great warrior in his day. Nobody was near either of them.¹⁷

¹³ Jim Smith, *Goulburn District*, p.6

¹⁴ Coe p.42

¹⁵ Mackaness p.192

¹⁶ Elder p.63

¹⁷ Alexander Harris pp.127-128

Some Aboriginals may have been working as servants as Rev. Joseph Orton, founder of Methodism in Bathurst, baptised an Aboriginal woman at Reverend Walker's farm Brisbane Grove (Bloom Hill) in October 1834.¹⁸

Mrs Hilary Rodwell, first woman councillor of Oberon, wrote an article about local Aboriginal people in a supplement in "The Western Times" in 1964 to mark the centenary of Oberon's proclamation as a village. Mrs Rodwell had a large collection of Aboriginal artefacts, and was in contact with amateur anthropologist Rex Gilroy who had a museum at Mt Victoria.¹⁹

It is regrettable that only fragmentary information has been obtained while still available of the aborigines who frequented the country around Oberon. What little is known shows that from an anthropologist's point of view, the area is a very interesting one, because it is the dividing line between the aborigines of the eastern and western areas.

That aborigines from the coast knew their way over the Great Divide is clearly revealed in the fragments of legends which have been kept. It appears that one of the routes lay along the Cox's River and its tributaries by way of Jenolan Caves. The aborigines who mostly frequented the Oberon district were the most eastern tribes of the Weradthuri group. All the aborigines of the Macquarie, Bogan, and Lachlan Rivers were of this group, which was a large one having similar customs. They were sub-divided into many tribes of different names, but all retained a four class system, and speaking the same language. The four classes were Ippi, Cumbo, Cubbi and Murri.....

As a rule the aborigines moved around over their respective hunting and food-gathering grounds in small groups of from ten to forty individuals. Game existed in abundance in the Oberon district.

The streams were well stocked with Bathurst Cod. This was the species of fish which caused Surveyor George Evans to so name the Fish River because of their great numbers.

At times a number of groups of aborigines would gather together for holding of ceremonies. These gatherings would invariably take place at recognised centres. In addition to being communal meetings places, these sites were apparently workshops. The amount of chips and flakes of imported stone, as well as the number of unfinished stone implements found on these sites is evidence.²⁰

She also gives a description of burial practices.

¹⁸ The Rev. Joseph Orton's Second and Third Visits to Bathurst, notes from Peg's Box, archives of Peggy Savage

¹⁹ pers. comm. with Janelle Rodwell, daughter of Hilary, Oberon 2.11.02

²⁰ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 29.4.1987

Gundungurra

From the south also relationships seem to have begun positively. Probably the first white man to travel through the shire was Charles Throsby whose 1819 expedition included three Gundungurra men from the Burra Burra band; Coocoogong as guide, and Duel and Bian as interpreters.²¹ Whereas most commentators of the route from Sydney to Bathurst saw no or few ‘natives’, Throsby and his party fell in with a large tribe of natives, who informed me that Bathurst was not far off, several of them have been at the Cow Pastures.

They also told him that the people of Bathurst were angry with the Aborigines, and that four of them had been killed and more wounded.²²

It was probably because Throsby had Aboriginal people in his party that they met such a large group. Other early writers saw smoke from campfires or tracks, or if Aboriginal people came to meet them no women were in their groups.

Jim Smith in his *Aborigines of the Goulburn District* examines the history of the Burra Burra band who ranged according to Macalister, “from the Abercrombie to Taralga and Carrabungla”²³. The Gundungurra Land Council refers to the area in the catchment of the Fish and Campbells Rivers as Burra Burra.²⁴

Throsby’s route has been interpreted by Cabbage as passing near Cookbundoon, crossing the Abercrombie, then the Little River at Porters Retreat, through forest to the east of Swatchfield, on to west of Oberon around Mayfield, and joining Cox’s Road two or three miles south east of O’Connell²⁵.

Jim Smith suggests this route taken by the guide, Coocoogong, is important in helping to define the boundary between the Gundungurra and Wiradjuri.²⁶

Two Burra Burra chiefs of whom we have records were Old Bull and Murrandah (Miranda). Old Bull, who was involved in the Bathurst wars was described by Colonel Mundy, visiting William Lawson at O’Connell Plains in 1846.

The chief of this tribe, and the only old man belonging to it, was of much superior stature to the others – full six feet two inches in height, and weighing fifteen stone. Although apparently approaching threescore years, and somewhat too far gone to flesh, the strength of “the Old Bull” – for that was his name – must still have been prodigious. His proportions were remarkably fine; the development of the pectoral muscles and the depth of chest were greater than I had ever seen in individuals of the many naked nations through which I have travelled. A spear laid across the top of his breast as he stood up, remained there as on a shelf.²⁷

²¹ R. Cabbage, p.239

²² Cabbage p.241

²³ Macalister p.82

²⁴ pers. comm. with Bill Hardie, 10.10.02

²⁵ Bill Hardie 10.10.02.

²⁶ Jim Smith *Goulburn* p. 4

²⁷ G. Mundy *Our Antipodes* (Richard Bentley, 1855) in Jim Smith *Goulburn* p. 9

Mundy witnessed a corroboree, then, two or three days after the Corobbery before described, I saw the tribe, with their lubras and children, taking their way to some distant camping-place. The old chief collected his people by a loud “cooee” – the well-known peculiar cry of the race and, tossing his huge arm to me by way of adieu, strode down the hill followed by the rest in Indian file, a “formation” well adapted for threading the bush. The men erect, bearing only their weapons, the women cowering under heavy loads, they entered the scrub and were soon out of sight. In less than a month later we heard with regret that the stout old leader and six of his band had been killed in a treacherous attack by a hostile tribe, the latter having the advantage of fire-arms, shamefully supplied to them, as was reported, by white people for the bloody and express purpose.²⁸

Miranda, who Charles Macalister in his memoir published in 1907 says was “one of the fierce aborigines who committed several murders and burnt out several settlers in the Bathurst district in 1831-2”,²⁹ was killed in a personal dispute on the route from Goulburn to Bathurst in 1849.³⁰ Macalister witnessed the funeral apparently contravening the wishes of Aboriginal people who had often told him they objected to strangers at their solemn rites. He describes his funeral in detail. It was about a mile and a half from Paling-Yards, Abercrombie. After the wake of a day and a night he was buried in a large ant heap which was fenced with forks and long sapling rails, and the big trees around were carved.

There were numerous carved and scared trees throughout the Oberon district, most now cut down or long dead. Scared trees were usually near ceremonial areas and formed when a section of bark was removed for use. Carved trees were found near burial sites, or ceremonial sites.³¹ A photograph of one, fallen, at Ballyroe, Arkstone in 1882 is in Kevin Toole’s book *The Annals of Burruga*. Another came from just south of Bosworth Falls (a ford on the Fish River west of O’Connell) and is now in the Bathurst Museum.³² Yet another, taken from Tom Richards’ property at Tarana in the 1950s or 1960s was donated to Rex Gilroy who had a museum at Mt Victoria, by Hilary Rodwell.³³

According to Bill Allen and Bill Hardie (Gundungurra elder) carved trees are unique to Wirdajuri, Gundungurra, Kamilaroi and Nunawal people.³⁴ A number have been recorded in the Oberon district, around Rockley and at O’Connell.

In the Census of 1826-7 the Burra-Burra were noted as ‘very numerous’, but by 1846 numbers were estimated as only 12 to 15.³⁵ White people’s diseases, as well as violence, doubtless claimed many lives. Dumaresq says:

For want of white female companions the distant stock-keepers are eaten up with disease, the results of their connexion with the black women. The contagion is going through the natives with the most fatal ravages, and will gradually put an end to them, more certainly than sword or musket. But it is astonishing how long they linger under it, the cause of which can only be discovered in that extreme rigour of life, of cold, hunger and nakedness, in which they pass many of the winter months³⁶

²⁸ Mundy in Smith, *Goulburn* p.9

²⁹ Charles Macalister p.84

³⁰ Smith *Goulburn* p.9

³¹ Bill Allen pers. comm. 24.9.02

³² Bill Allen 24.9.02

³³ pers. comm. with Grant Rodwell 2.11.02

³⁴ pers. comm. both 10.10.02

³⁵ Smith *Goulburn* . p.7

³⁶ Mackaness p.188

The spread of venereal disease is widely understood to have originated from the white settlers.

Children of black/white relationships were born. Some of the early Oberon families have Aboriginal forbears, though this was not generally made public. Some Aboriginal women were taken as wives, and some tribal children had white fathers. Thomas Mitchell recorded seeing in 1828 “one girl, about 7 years old nearly white, a half cast, she was quite naked”³⁷ among a Burra Burra group.

The Gundungurra and Wiradjuri as neighbouring tribes intermarried³⁸ and at times fought. Reverend Thomas Hassall, of O’Connell was involved in one clash:

Now this Mr Saturday [Windradyne] was not content with disturbing the white people, but must needs attack another tribe of blacks. These, when overcome, rushed for safety into our house, entered all the rooms, and flocked into the lofts, so that there was not a foot of space unoccupied, to the great dismay of my mother and the servants.

Presently, down came Saturday and his tribe, determined to kill them all. My father, however, took his gun and, standing at the entrance door, said he would shoot the first man that came another step. Saturday and his party stood still whilst he talked to them, and when he told them that if they would all make friends he would shoot a bullock for them, they agreed to do so. He went to the stockyard, the blacks all following him, and shot the bullock, it was quickly cut up, fires were kindled, and the cooking process on the coals was but of momentary duration.³⁹

A traditional fighting site was “Beung” at Gingkin. When James Whalan took up his station “Gingkin” in 1841 it was noted on the parish map as Gingkin and Beung. Jim Barrett in *Kanangra Walls* writes:

Kanangra was on the overland route for the Gundungurra Aboriginals from the valley of the Kowmung to the Oberon district. This thoroughfare led to Beung, the ‘fighting field’ or ‘field of blood’, where traditional scores were settled, for whatever reasons we will probably never understand...

as one goes from Maxwell’s Chair [at Kanangra] to the cliffs where the Aboriginal drawings take the tourist back to the ages when the black man trekked from east to west to corroboree on the Macquarie River near Bathurst, or fight their battles on Beung, the field of blood (R.T. Nelson, 1938)⁴⁰

...the field of blood eventually [1865] became the property of the pioneering Hughes family; in those early days dozens of native axes were found there⁴¹.

Bill Allen explains that the fighting was usually about land or women, and usually stopped when someone was injured, though at times people were killed.⁴²

The Oberon area has one of three major axe quarries in the Upper Macquarie Valley region. There is archaeological evidence of exchange of axes or axe blanks outside the Macquarie, although the particular quarry or quarries which the axes came from have not been identified.

³⁷ Fieldbook, 1828-30 MLC 42, in Jim Smith *Goulburn*. p. 13

³⁸ Bill Allen 24.9.02

³⁹ Smith *Goulburn* p.7

⁴⁰ (1993) pp.2-3

⁴¹ Jim Barrett *Kowmung River* p.81

⁴² pers. comm. 24.9.02

Aboriginal trade or exchange had a strong element of social obligation which was completely lacking in 19th century European trading: it was solely motivated by economic profit. This cultural gulf was often the cause of tragic misunderstanding.⁴³

There is so little early information about Aboriginal people in the Oberon area that the records of R.W. Webb, an early resident of the Tarana region, written in 1942 of his own and his father's life, are very precious:

Aborigines were there [Keirstone area] in numbers at that time [after 1840], and some were useful in the stock operations, especially breaking in of young horses which were then indispensable. Father told of one experience with one of these natives who tried to murder him, he was rescued by his father while struggling to get free. He was trying to open a pocket knife with his teeth while holding him with the other hand. They were sometimes a nuisance at the homesteads near which they camped begging food and tobacco. There is a story of how one was frightened so badly by a man anxious to make them move their camp, that he actually died of fright. The man, dressed in a white shirt, hid where the natives came to the river for water, then when the native approached sprang out at him. The blacks buried him and moved camp the next day. There is a grave at Keirstone where he is supposed to be buried.⁴⁴

A Webb family history written by Ken Mugglestone in 1990 provides interesting information that:

There was a group of aborigines who lived at the [Evans] Crown until the end of the century [1900]. . . . Some of the aborigines from the Crown were employed, helping to break in young horses and several of them became expert horsemen. . . . Thomas Webb related how as a boy he had heard the aborigines of the Crown, raiding the corn by night when it was ripe.⁴⁵

There are the remains of a bora ring where initiations would have been held near Evans Crown. According to Bill Allen this was an important site and at times three tribes would gather there and "went through the law together". Marriages were made between tribes as a way of keeping peace. Mrs Hilary Rodwell wrote in her 1964 article in "The Western Times";

When a number of groups or tribes congregated for initiation ceremonies and such, each group camped separate from although adjacent to each other. Also each group made their camps in the direction from which they came.⁴⁶

Frank Fawcett of Applegrove on Fish River Creek recalls being told as a child that the camping area for Aborigines was up and down Deep Creek (which the Duckmaloi Road crosses) especially on a flat area.⁴⁷ This accords with Mary Coe in *Windradyne: A Wiradjuri Koorie*:

This area of the Wiradjuri contry (the eastern area) can become extremely cold during the winter months, with very heavy fogs and frosts. The Koories did not camp right

⁴³ Michael Pearson *Seen Through Different Eyes*, pp.441-2

⁴⁴ unpublished manuscript, 1942 held by the Webb family. The Webbs came to the district in 1840

⁴⁵ Ken Mugglestone,

⁴⁶ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 29.4.1987

⁴⁷ pers. comm. 15.9.02

on the river, but some distance back, under the shelter of trees and close to firewood.⁴⁸

There were at least some Aboriginals in domestic service in Oberon. Marian Fawcett relates a story of a black boy who worked for her Cunynghame grandfather, who was a butcher, helping him with the horses. Her grandmother had some plum puddings hanging up in cloths, but when she took one down she discovered it contained only a large round stone! The black boy is attributed with this piece of larrikinism.⁴⁹

Mick O'Connell of Duckmaloi, whose family came to the district in the 1880s, recalls being told as a child that the waterhole on the Duckmaloi River at Dwyers' old place was called Jellendore. "Jellendore meant 'big water hole in Aborigine language'. They used to travel to the coast from the west when it was dry (drought) and they used to camp there on their way there and back."⁵⁰

Kanbara, a property owned from the late nineteenth century until 1966 by the Buckley family at Lowe's Mount, was also a traditional Aboriginal meeting place. "The blacks used to come over the mountains and stay there and hold corroborees," according to Sheila Buckley⁵¹. " 'Kanbara' means meeting place. There used to be plenty of axes on the place."

A number of Aboriginal names in the shire have survived, many still in use:

Duckmaloi (River)– in the Aboriginal legend *Gurangatch and Mirragan* told to anthropologist R.H. Mathews by Gundungurra people around 1900, "Wan-dak-ma-lai, corrupted by Europeans to Dukmulloy⁵². According to Val Lhuede of Yerranderrie it means "rocky bar across a river".⁵³

'Wan' may here mean west.⁵⁴

Joolundoo – mentioned in the same legend, survives as Jellendore, once used to refer to the area to the east of the Duckmaloi River, around the current Duckmaloi Road. The post office in this area, which opened on 1 August 1907 was called 'Jelleindore':

This name being the aboriginal one for the big hole on Duckmaloi River....

Mr E. Dwyer, who is a native of this spot [i.e. born here], relates how he remembers his parents telling him as a child, that blacks from west and from Hartley, camped at times, about 45 years ago [from 1907], close to the Duckmaloi bank, on the big flat and held a corroboree.

These tribes of blacks called this enormous sheet of water their 'Jelleindore'⁵⁵

Binoomea – Jenolan Caves, also mentioned in the same legend

Buckemall (Creek) - In a history of the Edith school the teacher, P Luney, wrote in 1913

"The locality in which the [Edith] school is situated was originally known by the native name of Buckemall; but at the time of the agitation for the establishment of a school [opened 1884] the Rev. Mr Paskin, Anglican minister of O'Connell, who had

⁴⁸ Coe p.4

⁴⁹ pers. comm. 15.9.02

⁵⁰ pers. comm. with Mick O'Connell 22.9.02. Mick was born at Duckmaloi and is 87

⁵¹ pers. comm. with Sheila Buckley 13.5.03

⁵² Jim Smith *Aboriginal Legends of the Blue Mountains* p.7

⁵³ pers. comm. Val Lhuede February 2003

⁵⁴ pers. comm. with Jim Smith see his paper *Wywandy and Therabulat*,

⁵⁵ *The Lithgow Mercury* 26 July, 1907, in Alan Brown's Historical Notes 26.7.1989

prominently identified himself with the movement, suggested the Christian name of the eldest girl (Edith Bailey) to be enrolled at the prospective school as a suitable title for the school. This was adopted, and the local institutions and the whole neighbourhood gradually assumed the same designation.⁵⁶

Bingbungel Creek – Captain King’s overseer, William Hayes, wrote to the Commandant of Bathurst, Captain Fennell on 29 March 1825 saying that His Excellency the Governor has ordered a reserve of Land laying S.S.E from Bathurst about 30 miles called Bingbungel Creek separated by a large ridge of mountains from Sydmouth Valley distant about 10 miles.⁵⁷

There is a small creek called Ben Bingle running into the Brisbane Valley Creek.

Binga River. William Hayes received a letter from the Colonial Secretary, Goulburn, written 13 June 1825 allowing “temporary occupation of three thousand acres of land ...bounded on the South by Binga River and sixty-three miles South South East of Bathurst”.⁵⁸ This could be the Little River, but is more likely the Abercrombie, as Captain King had a sheep station not far north of it, and William Hayes was King’s overseer. This conflicts with the next entry (Bummaroo) however it is possible that there were different Aboriginal names for different sections of the river or that one was a locality name.

Bummaroo is recorded as the Aboriginal name for the Abercrombie in J.B. Richards survey of 1829⁵⁹.

Charles Throsby recorded a number of aboriginal names in his journal of his 1819 expedition from the Southern Highlands to Bathurst. Historian, R Cambage, in 1921 attempted to trace the journey. They crossed a “considerable stream” (Abercrombie) and later halted “on top of a hill with very excellent grass and water,” the locality being known as **Geurung**’ [probably Gurnang, in the Shooters Hill district].

The next day, May 6, 1819, they crossed a small creek running westward, ‘probably the head of the Retreat or Little River’ and then climbed a stony range from which they had a view of very beautiful country from S. to W.N.W. called **Querungaa**.

The next day they halted at two o’clock at **Burnmaring**. Cambage believes this to be Swatchfield. Some early maps have the tag ‘Swatchfield or Beemarang’, for example J.B. Richards’ 1929 survey map of the Porters Retreat area.⁶⁰

On May 8th they stopped at **Merruewon** [maybe the same as Murruin], which Cambage believed was “four or five miles westerly or north of west from Oberon towards ‘Mayfield’”.⁶¹

Myangarlie was, according to Billy Russell, the Aboriginal name of a locality near a place now known as Connor’s Plain [O’Connell Plains]. Myangarlie was also the name of Billy Russell’s uncle. Billy explained that it was a custom among Gundungurra people to name people after the place where they were born.⁶²

⁵⁶ 29.10.1913, History of Edith School, NSW Department of Education archives

⁵⁷ Sir Thomas Brisbane’s Letterbook, vol.1 p.226,

⁵⁸ King family Papers, vol.1 1799-1829 p.331, Mitchell Library

⁵⁹ Brian Johnstone p.100

⁶⁰ in Brian Johnston p. 100

⁶¹ R.Cambage pp.238-242

⁶² William Russell, p.9

Black Bett Mountain, Flat, north of the Abercrombie River. This appears to have been named after some long-forgotten Aboriginal woman. 'Black Bet' was one of the most common white appellations for black women.

The following names and their meanings are taken from Jim Barrett's book *Place Names of The Blue Mountains and Burratorang Valley* (Glenbrook, 1994).

Gingkin In 1826, Archibald Hood, with an order for 150 acres, asked to be located 'at the head of the Fish River on a station that had been occupied by Major Druitt, and known by the native name of Ginggam' [probably the head of the Duckmaloi, also known as Fish River]

Beung – [marked on early parish maps] fighting field

Gingra Range and Creek. Almost certainly the name of the local Aboriginal local group name, as in 1875 an Aborigine John Jingery applied to take up a 40 acre block nearby on Scott's Main Range.

Kanangra Walls was originally named **Thurat** by W.R.Govett in 1833 and was probably an Aboriginal word. The stream draining its northern and western plateau he called Konangaroo Creek. Around the late 19th century the Walls were also known as the Kowmung Walls. Konangaroo was a corruption of Koo-nang-goor-wa which was the native name for the creek near the Cox junction.

Mount **Werong** - werong werong means 'bad camping ground'

Murruin Range – Murruin was a king of the Burratorang

Bindook (or Benduck) same pronunciation as benduk 'a plain'

Jaunter janta place of flowers (Abo.)

Tuglow – to fall heavily (Abo.)

A handful of people in the Oberon area are recorded as having a strong interest in Aboriginal people. **David Smith Todd** (1842 –1929), who lived at Wiseman's Creek from 1854, gave lectures on a variety of topics including Aborigines and 'Chinese Life in Australia'. In 1903 he gave a lecture on the 'Aborigines of Australia' at Wiseman's Creek consisting 'of lively reminiscences and amusing anecdotes in Mr Todd's early experiences among the blacks, and the lecturer illustrated with different implements of warfare the various ways these weapons were thrown'⁶³ On another occasion he 'gave an interesting lecture on the habits of aborigines and also demonstrated their corroborees'.

One of few people interested in Aboriginal artefacts and practices in the first half of the twentieth century was **James Whiteley**, stock and station agent at Oberon, and Oberon correspondent for *The Lithgow Mercury*. He was a member of the Anthropological Society and had a passion for the Kanangra-Kowmung area. He amassed a large collection of artefacts from the Oberon area and from much further afield, and in 1931 displayed some of them in Fox's Imperial Store, in Oberon. The display included womerahs, nullas (fighting sticks), fighting and returning boomerangs, and sacred totem boards (which no woman is allowed to see on pain of death or blinding).⁶⁴

His collection was sold towards the end of his life to Mel Ward who had an exhibition of Aboriginal artefacts at the Hydro Majestic⁶⁵. Mel Ward's collection was later acquired by the Australian Museum.

Hilary Rodwell (1920s-1970s) also was a keen collector of local (and other) Aboriginal artefacts. Among her collection was the trunk of a carved tree, or dendroglyph, which she

⁶³ Betty Somerville, pp.10-11

⁶⁴ *The Lithgow Mercury*, 19.6.1931

⁶⁵ pers. comm. with his grand-daughter, Helen Freeth 9.8.02

gave to Rex Gilroy for his museum at Mt Victoria. She donated some of her books to the Mitchell Library.⁶⁶

Ray McMahon who with his wife Laurie started the Oberon Museum, is a keen collector of Aboriginal artifacts and has a permanent display of them in the Museum. One of his finds is a glass spear tip near the top of the Bathurst Mount, a clear indication of post contact Aboriginal presence in the district.

⁶⁶ pers. comm. Janelle Rodwell 2.11.02

2. Explorers and Early Settlers

Explorers

The first white men to enter the Oberon shire were explorer Francis Barrallier and five men with two young Aboriginal men, Badbury and Le Tonsure in 1802. Barrallier came through Byrnes's Gap, believing he had crossed the Blue Mountains, until he came upon the Kowmung Valley. He followed the Kowmung west, then Christy's Creek and then Wheengee Whungee Creek but turned back at Johnston Falls. Either ridge, the one on the south side being the Boyd Range, would have led him to the Oberon Plateau⁶⁷.

Assistant-Surveyor George William Evans followed Blaxland Lawson and Wentworth and was the first recorded white man west of the Great Dividing Range, crossing the water shed on 30 November 1813. In his journal Evans is increasingly enthusiastic about the country he passes through from the River Lett. The O'Connell Plains were -

the handsomest country I ever saw...the Timber around is thinly scattered, I do not suppose there are more than ten Gum Trees on an Acre", and the Macquarie Plains still more pleasing and very Extensivethe soil is exceeding rich and produces the finest grass intermixed with variety of herbs; the hills have the look of a park and grounds laid out⁶⁸.

He named the Fish River, because it was teeming with fish! also O'Connell Plains (after the Lieutenant Governor), Macquarie Plains, Campbell River (Mrs Macquarie's maiden name) which he built a bridge over, Macquarie River, Mount Pleasant and Bathurst Plains. Evans was accompanied by free men Richard Lewis and James Burns; and convicts John Cooghan, John Grover and John Tygh.⁶⁹

Charles Throsby and his party are the first recorded white people through the Oberon plateau on an expedition to Bathurst in April/May 1819, leaving from the Moss Vale district, crossing the Wollondilly and Abercrombie Rivers guided by Coocoogong. The party also had two Aboriginal interpreters, Duel and Bian; two 'old servants' Joseph Wild and John Wait; and John Rowley, and horses. (see Aboriginal Contact)

John Oxley with a party of consisting of Commissioner Bigge, Thomas Hobbes Scott, William Cordeaux, Dr Hill, Charles Frazer (the Colonial Botanist), and probably John Rowley, and servants left Bathurst to inspect Throsby's route in 1820. They crossed the Campbells River at Mr Lawson's Hut (parish of Irene, on the south side of Charlton). Their course was up to Blossom Hill, south to the west of the dog Rocks, south easterly past Swallow's Nest towards Swatchfield where they camped at the head waters of the Campbell's River. No local names were recorded here. Unlike Throsby, Oxley did not record Aboriginal names.

The party headed south-east for ten miles crossing the Little or Retreat River which Bigge named the Colborne, and then the Abercrombie which Bigge also named.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Andy Macqueen pp.71 -86

⁶⁸ George Mackaness p.23

⁶⁹ Mackaness pp.21-32

⁷⁰ R. Cambage pp.269-270

James Meehan, who had accompanied Throsby to the Bungonia area in 1818, and with Hamilton Hume discovered Lake Bathurst and the Goulburn Plains, marked the track from Goulburn to Bathurst.

Early Settlers

Governor Macquarie had proclaimed all land west of the Macquarie River and south along the Campbell River to Rockley as a Government stock reserve, and granted the first land west of the Blue Mountains to Lieutenant William Lawson and William Cox. The earliest landholder in Oberon shire was Lawson, who brought his cattle over the mountains to the junction of the Fish and the Campbells Rivers in 1815, with permission from Macquarie. In the early days he grazed from White Rock along the east bank of the Campbell's River for 35 miles (56km), virtually to its source, the western side of the Campbells, as far as Peppers Creek, was the Government Stock Reserve.⁷¹

Lawson named his property Macquarie. The house and outbuildings, which were built about 1821, are still standing, currently owned by Watson McKibbin. James Meehan surveyed his 1000 acre grant in December 1821, and it was granted in June 1823⁷². There was "a fine brick barn" there in 1821, which suggests the house may have been built after the barn. Just before the survey Lawson was told that the land he held under a 'ticket of occupation' on the west side of the Campbell's River, near Dirty Swamp was required by settlers and he was to vacate it in six months. Lawson took up a lot of land north, especially in the Mudgee area which he had also explored, and in 1824 he employed between 60 and 70 convicts.⁷³

Macquarie was run by William junior who married Caroline Icely. Lawson was a hard man and was referred to as "Old Ironbark". One convict was flogged to death at Macquarie;⁷⁴ a number were killed by Aboriginals. The flogging block is still there.

Robert Lowe acquired 2000 acres on Cox's Road which he called Sidmouth Valley. He was never resident there but his son James later lived there with his assigned convicts, who built the present house on the dating from about 1826. Early travellers passed it, and it became a stop on the journey for many. It was a mud hut in 1819⁷⁵. In 1827 William Dumaresq wrote

The sight of a four-rail fence, in Sidmouth Valley, after this weary hill, was the first symptom of humanity, for nearly *ninety* miles, and gave me unfeigned pleasure....A crop of excellent wheat had not long been off the ground and it was pleasing to see this first settler...with a beautiful new cottage and substantial barns, outhouses, fencing, &c. The adjoining farm, of 4000 acres, is the property of a respectable merchant in Sydney, and has a very commodious cottage on it, with good out-buildings⁷⁶

This was Raineville, 2000 acres belonging to Captain Thomas Raine granted in 1823. It had 1000 sheep, some cattle, land prepared for sowing wheat, all carried out by 10 convicts directed by Mr Shennan who lived in a hut.⁷⁷ In 1828 Raine was among the largest breeders of horses in the Bathurst district.

⁷¹ Kevin Toole p.4

⁷² James Jervis p.81

⁷³ James Jervis pp.82-83

⁷⁴ Watson McKibbin, *History Notes from Watson McKibbin* from Peg's Box,

⁷⁵ Mackaness, op. cit. p.98

⁷⁶ Mackaness p.182

⁷⁷ Mackaness pp.158-9

Raine was a merchant in partnership with Dr Ramsay, who had Keirstone, another grant of land nearby on the Fish River, “where estates of that size had been portioned out for ‘families of respectability’, many of them ex-military officers”⁷⁸. In 1829 the business failed and Raine, bankrupt, had to sell up in Sydney and moved to Raineville. Here they erected a large cottage containing seven apartments with a sunken cellar and store, and a large garden, well stocked with fruit trees and vegetables. Governor Bourke stayed there in 1832. In 1838 Raine sold Raineville and St Boswells adjoining it, which he had also bought, and moved to Rainham nearer Bathurst.⁷⁹ Raineville was later owned by the Duracks who had it until 1956⁸⁰.

Another early neighbour of Sydmouth Valley was Parson William Tom at Blenheim.

At O’Connell the first grants were given in 1823 to the Reverend William Walker, and to the Reverend Thomas Hassall and his brothers James and Samuel Hassall⁸¹. Samuel had been made superintendent of Government Stock in 1816. Walker’s place, called Brisbane Grove was on the Lagoon Road at Bloom Hill, and was a two storey pise house, now demolished. It is said to have been a staging post for Cobb and Co. It is now owned by the Condon family.

Thomas called his place Lampeter Farm (also spelt Llambeda) after the college where he trained in Wales. He erected a three bedroom wattle and daub hut which subsequently became the first school, store and post office. He also built Salem Chapel in 1833. His barn, built in 1834 is still standing and is believed to be the oldest earth building in Australia.⁸² It is now on a property called Lindlegreen.

His house was built in the old Welsh style with blocks cut out of the swamp and laid upon one another with grass side downwards. The outside walls were smoothed with a lime mixture and the roof was grass thatch. It may have been built by Hassall’s manager John Morgan who came out about 1825. Thomas Hassall had married Samuel Marsden’s daughter Ann in 1822. She was not happy at O’Connell and spent little time there. They moved to Camden in 1827.⁸³

One of Thomas Hassall’s assigned convicts was Patrick Grady, who was sent to him in 1823 when he arrived from Ireland. Thomas and Samuel Hassall wrote to the Colonial Secretary in 1824 to request for Patrick’s wife Margaret and children to join him in the colony, which they did in 1827. He was given his Ticket of Leave in 1833 allowing him to acquire property and be paid for his work, with the condition that he remain in the Bathurst district. In 1844 he and Margaret applied for a licence to occupy 640 acres of land in the Brisbane Valley (Essington) area. They are believed to be the first settlers in the area along with their daughter Mary and her husband Samuel Rawson..⁸⁴

Another early O’Connell resident was William Arrow from Surrey in England, who was transported in 1821 for seven years. He was assigned to a Church of England minister in the Bathurst area in 1823, believed to have been Thomas Hassall, whose parish included Kelso⁸⁵. He worked with a shoemaker in Kelso, where he married Sarah Burton in 1829 and took up a

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Warburton

⁷⁹ Margaret de Salis, pp.66-79

⁸⁰ Ken Mugglestone

⁸¹ ed Brenda Doney, Jeannie Clague, John Clague

⁸² ed. Brenda Doney, Jeannie Clague, John Clague

⁸³ ‘Parish of Langdale County of Westmoreland’ in Peg’s Box.

⁸⁴ Lucy Price

⁸⁵ Catherine Arrow, pp 3-4

grant of 40 acres at O'Connell in 1836. His son John later more land further up Mick's Mount. William built a house and he and Sarah raised their 15 children there. Their neighbours were Sarah's parents James and Elizabeth Burton. James had been transported in 1816, and Elizabeth and daughter Sarah had followed in 1819.⁸⁶

Runs

The first white people to live in the Oberon district were the stockmen of Sydney run-holders. Captain Philip Parker King, son of Governor King had his stock running on Bingbungel Creek (west of Oberon town) in 1823. King was a sea captain and would seldom have been there. His rural affairs were in the charge of his overseer, William Hayes⁸⁷. Major Druitt apparently had a run at the head of the Duckmaloi River previously when Archibald Hood asked to be located there in 1826.

King's run was estimated in 1825 by Captain Fennell to be 7000 acres⁸⁸. After King formalised the purchase of 2000 acres in 1828, it was located in the Parish of Crete with Captain King's Creek crossing one end. According to Charles Whalan's daughter Sarah Hughes:

Captain King, son of Governor King ran stock all over what is now Oberon. He had his stockyards near where the bridge is on King's Stockyard Creek [near the abattoir on the north eastern side of the town] – hence the name. Legend has it a stockman's hut was near the spring near Mrs Whiteley's house. There is a good spring there [now a dam in the common]. –the town well is down near that old flooded gum tree near the caves turn-off.⁸⁹

“King's stock probably ranged over a far greater area, as when Charles Whalan jnr bought 988 acres in 1831 the land included Captain King's stockyard, hence the name of the creek⁹⁰. The Essington Park house was not on King's original Essington Park estate but on an adjoining property to the west of it. It was built by Henry Humphries in 1860.

Oberon was originally known as 'Bullock Flat', after a flat on the Fish River frequented by King's bullocks. The name was elevated to 'Oberon', from the King of the Fairies in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Nights Dream* in 1863 when it was proclaimed a village. This was already the name of the parish.

According to one source a grant of land was made in 1821 to Sergeant Charles Whalan at Tarana and was occupied by his son James in 1837.⁹¹

Generally speaking the absentee landlords and biggest landholders have not stayed in the district, but in many cases land is now held by the descendants of people who worked for early landholders: for example the Webbs, the Gradys, the Cosgroves, the Gibbons.

The population of the district had increased considerably when the grant system was replaced in 1831 by sales of land at public auction, and the Government's changed policy in regard to immigration had brought to the country a steady flow of free settlers.⁹²

⁸⁶ Catherine Arrow p.4

⁸⁷ A William Hayes took up 300 acres at Meadow Flat

⁸⁸ Sir Thomas Brisbane's Letterbook vol 1 pp225-6, Mitchell Library

⁸⁹ undated, unpublished document, copy held by Alan Brown

⁹⁰ Robert M. Rawlings) p.2

⁹¹ Joy Wheeler and Blue Garland p.4

Acquiring Land

The earliest ungranted land was occupied by as runs under tickets of occupation. *The Town and Country Journal* (9.6.1909) explained land acquisition in the 1840s.

At this time many were squatters in the original sense of that term. They settled down on unoccupied land, and no-one thought of paying rent; but of course, the tenure was insecure. Early in the fifties, however, the Government decided to rent the land. It was quite an event when it was put up for auction sale.

The Robertson Land Act of 1861 allowed people to settle on unreserved Crown land on blocks of 40 to 320 acres for one pound an acre on a deposit of 5 shillings an acre, with the balance paid within three years, on condition that a bona fide residence was established there. This had the effect of redistributing a lot of land previously held by squatters.⁹³

The Catholic Enclave

Two of the first land owners on the Oberon Plateau were emancipated Irish rebels William Davis and Edward (sometimes called Edmund) Redmond. Both received grants of 1000 acres in the west of the shire in May 1825. Davis called his Swatchfield, and Redmond called his Bingham – it is at Arkstone, west of Porters Retreat. (He did not secure legal possession of it until 1838). These two men were transported in 1800 for their parts in the Irish Rebellion against the abolition the Irish parliament and incorporation of Ireland into Great Britain, as well as the economic and religious oppression of the Irish by the English. Both of them were successful businessmen in Sydney, both original shareholders in the Bank of NSW, and never lived on their grants.⁹⁴

Another Irish Rebel connected with the district James Meehan, assistant surveyor general, who marked the track between Goulburn and Bathurst and was an associate of Charles Throsby.

Many of the rebels had been landed men in Ireland, unlike a lot of the other Irish convicts who had rented land and been driven off it if they could not pay the tithe. Most Irish convicts were not given large grants of land or in the position to buy large areas. They tended to live between Campbelltown and Windsor or along the Hawkesbury River.⁹⁵ Many of the ones who came to Oberon came from South Creek.

The Catholic Church did not have government recognition in Australia until 1820. William Davis had received 200 lashes for refusing to attend Anglican church services, and was one of the people on the committee for the building of St Mary's Chapel (Cathedral). Both ownership of land and religious freedom were of paramount importance to the Irish. The establishment of these relatively powerful Catholics in the area provided a stronghold for the ones with fewer prospects. Many of the descendants of those who followed Davis and Redmond are still in the Black Springs district.

In local tradition the Hogan family is said to have been the earliest settlers here, though there is no record of when they came to the Oberon district. In Mick Joffe's interviews with the elders of Oberon, *Living Treasures*, Bert Hogan says:

⁹² G.A. Templeton in Bernard Greaves, p 22

⁹³ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1851-1896, vol.6 pp.41-42

⁹⁴ G.M.Cashman, pp.3-9

⁹⁵ Cashman, p.8

They used to boast about giving Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson a cup of tea when they got 'ere⁹⁶

Philip Hogan (also known as John) was a United Irishman⁹⁷ and had come out on the *Friendship* in 1800 with William Davis. He and his wife Mary (McMahon, arrived 1803) were emancipated convicts with a grant of 120 acres at South Creek, where the last of their children was born in 1824. Philip and their sons proceeded to acquire land in the Southern Highlands, Taralga and Oberon districts.

Alan Hoolihan of Wren's Nest, who has done a lot of research on the Hogan family, believes that Philip Hogan's family came to the area because of his close association with Davis and Redmond. Mary Hogan used Edmund Redmond's property at the Rocks as her mailing address in 1810⁹⁸.

He and son Michael he acquired 120 acres of land each at Bong Bong in 1822 near Charles Throsby, who was sympathetic to the Irish. Throsby had been through the Oberon area in 1819 marking a track to Bathurst. They also had 90 acres near Berrima.

The Hogans did not take up land officially at Oberon until 1837, when John Hogan, another son, took up a block beside Edward Redmond at Bingham, called the Shaving Holes. In 1832 Govett's map marks Hogan's station south of the Abercrombie at Bubalahla (Taralga area)⁹⁹.

Philip died in 1829 and there is no record of him in the shire. Mary, the matriarch of Black Springs died at Tuglow in 1859, where her son Henry had bought land. She is buried at the old Black Springs cemetery and is related by birth or marriage to almost everyone in the cemetery.

A daughter of Philip and Mary Hogan, Margaret, married Peter Behan in Sydney in 1832 and lived at first at South Creek. They were living at Clare Mount (near Black Springs) in 1845 on land leased, and later bought, from the government,¹⁰⁰ and had nine children.

Patrick Hanrahan (senior) received his pardon for his work on Cox's Road over the Blue Mountains and granted 50 acres at Ropes Creek [Mt Druitt]. His second wife Catherine was another daughter of Philip and Mary Hogan. The Hanrahans came to Black Springs about 1838 and named their place near Swatchfield 'Hillsbury', and were the first white settlers known at Black Springs. One of their sons, Michael, became the first post master at Black Springs¹⁰¹ and extended the Hanrahan land holdings considerably. A Patrick Hanrahan also had a grant of 120 acres at Locksley.

In spite of his hard labour Patrick Hanrahan had a fine writing hand and his diary of Remarkable Events, 1848-1856 is one of the earliest documents from the shire.

Patrick's son, Patrick junior, from his first marriage to Euphemia Burke, married the youngest daughter of Philip and Mary Hogan, Bridget, so he and his father were brothers-in-law.

⁹⁶ p.19

⁹⁷ pers. comm. Dr Don Hogan, researcher of Hogan family history, 31.10.2

⁹⁸ Portia Robinson, 232

⁹⁹ Cashman p.8

¹⁰⁰ Paddy Grady Wozencraft *The Black Springs Story* p.62

¹⁰¹ Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.71

Many descendants of these early families are still living in the Black Springs district.

Among the earliest permanent settlers in the Oberon district were Daniel and Margaret Fitzpatrick, who settled at Slippery Creek, now called Hazelgrove, by 1835 at least, as their second child Catherine was born at there in that year. Daniel had been transported for 14 years from Ireland for sheep stealing in 1831, and his wife Margaret and son John followed two years later. Presumably he was assigned to her.

The district also became a predominantly Catholic area and settlement appears to have spread east and south to The Meadows and Duckmaloi. Duckmaloi was originally known as Irish Corner.

The Protestants

Charles Whalan, the father of Oberon town, was the son of two convicts, but had grown up in privileged circumstances as playmate to the governor's son. His father, Sergeant Charles Whalan was one of Lachlan Macquarie's body guards. Charles junior took up 988 acres of land at Fish River Creek, which he called Glyndwr, immediately to the east of the present town of Oberon in 1837. His wife Elizabeth is credited as the first white woman in the district.¹⁰²

Charles was noted for his generosity. Many of the early families, like the Armstrongs, Luxtons, and Maloneys, started working for him, and some were given land by him. The three Cunynghame boys, Charles, Thomas and Sydney, sons of his sister, Mary, who had died, came to live with him. Their descendants started numerous retail businesses in Oberon.

Charles had holdings to the west, north and north-east of the town. The old Methodist cemetery, donated by him, was part of this block and a church, built by him once stood there. He also established the first post office and was involved in starting the school.¹⁰³ He is credited with the discovery of Jenolan Caves, and established the beginning of tourism to the Caves.

His brothers James, John McLean and Campbell were early settlers in the Gingkin, Hollander's River and Edith areas.

A remarkable number of the Protestant families who settled in the shire, around Bullock Flat, Titania, Edith and Gingkin were related families who came as free settlers from northern Ireland, especially County Tyrone: Armstrongs, Beatties, Edgars, Eatons, Flemings and Wilsons.

William Fleming and his wife Lucinda Wilson arrived in Australia in 1836 and soon after came to Oberon. In March 1839 they were joined by John Fleming and his wife Susannah Brien; Mary Ann Wilson and William Armstrong and her sister, Elizabeth Wilson with husband, Alexander Graham; and Henry Brien, who all arrived on the *Argyle*.¹⁰⁴ They took up land east of Oberon on the Fish and Duckmaloi Rivers, in the Titania district.

On the same ship was Joseph Sloggett, with his niece and nephew Jane and William Sloggett, and Jane's husband John Westaway.¹⁰⁵ The Sloggetts came from Altarnun in Cornwall, as did William and Caroline Wilcox, who arrived a couple of months later on the

¹⁰² Wheeler and Garland p.5

¹⁰³ Ronald F. Whalan, pp.66-7

¹⁰⁴ R. N. Beattie, A Scots-Irish Knot, p.53

¹⁰⁵ unpublished manuscript from Pat Tempest

Roxburgh Castle and came straight to Oberon arriving in three feet of snow¹⁰⁶. The Sloggetts and Wilcoxes took up land south of the Bullock Flat, at Mulberry Hill, Sloggett's Lane, and Fish River Creek (Nestle Brae) respectively.

In 1841 George Bailey and his wife Jane Armstrong (no relation to William Armstrong) arrived from County Tyrone and in 1844 George was a farmer living at Charles Whalan's Glyndwr estate.¹⁰⁷

Ross Beattie, who has researched many of the early Protestant families in the shire, has found that a number of them were originally Borderers from the border district between England and Scotland.¹⁰⁸ (One area they came from was the county of Westmoreland - the same as the one they came to on the other side of the world!). They had been caught in the middle of the centuries of war between those two countries and had been harassed, oppressed, fought over and against for centuries by both the English and the Scots. The Borderers had responded with violence: looting and burning, cattle stealing and blackmailing, being hated and feared; not unlike the behaviour of some of the Irish secret rural societies, like the Whiteboys.

The English had harnessed their ferocity by using them as colonists in the estates of English Plantation holders, to subjugate and settle Northern Ireland. So they perpetuated the cycle of dispossession, on the Irish.

Among these families were Beatties and Armstrongs. They had emigrated from the Scottish border district to the Tyrone-Fermanagh district in Ireland in the seventeenth century. They left there, doubtless hoping for more stable, peaceful and affluent lives, and came to what became Oberon (and elsewhere on the Central Tablelands of NSW).

So the orange and the green ended up as neighbours on the other side of the world. Here, however, there was enough land for everybody – except the vanishing Aborigines.

See Appendix 1 for a history of early settlement of different localities in the shire.

¹⁰⁶ Catherine Arrow and Irene Birch, pp. 7,10

¹⁰⁷ R. N. Beattie, *George Bailey* p.2

¹⁰⁸ Ross Beattie, *A Scots-Irish Knot*

3. Roads and Transport

An Aboriginal route was the basis for at least one of the district's earliest roads. The "Burra Burra highway" which Throsby had been shown, linked the Goulburn district with Bathurst and became an important route for settlement.¹⁰⁹ The NSW Calendar and Directory 1832 noted:

...from the Burra Burra Lagoon [near Taralga] there is a track formerly marked by Mr James Meehan, which extends northerly across the Abercrombie and Colborne [Little] River: and so by the way of King's farm and Native Dog Creek, or by Dunn's Plains, to Bathurst, forming the interior communication between the southern and western parts of the Colony.¹¹⁰

This route is roughly followed by the Abercrombie Road and Beaconsfield Road but the original road was further to the west through Wren's Nest.

Aboriginal people accessed the coast via Duckmaloi¹¹¹ and Jenolan Caves; and a route from the Kowmung Valley over the Kanangra Walls to Gingkin was recorded in 1938:

the black man trekked from east to west to corroboree on the Macquarie River near Bathurst, or to fight their battles on Beung, the field of blood¹¹²

The first road west of the Blue Mountains runs through the north of Oberon shire. Cox's Road, from Emu Plains to Bathurst, was built by 30 convicts in an incredible six months in 1814-15. It enters the shire crossing the Fish River at Phill's Falls, climbs the Fish River Hill, the steepest climb along that road, and follows what is now the Carlwood Road to O'Connell and from there to The Lagoon, and across the Campbell's River to Bathurst. Cox's men spent Christmas day at the site of the bridge they were about to build at Phill's Falls and received a gill of spirits and a new shirt as a Christmas treat.¹¹³ Cox was pleased with the bridge when it was finished on January 5, 1815.

It is a strong and well-built one. On each end is a pier of 25 ft., which is well filled up with stone, and a very little earth over it. The span across is 25 ft. more, which is planked with split logs; and as floods will go over it, there is no earth put on top. It is altogether 75 ft. long and 16 ft. wide. There is also another small bridge 10ft. long across a creek leading to it, which is also completed this evening

By 1827 Cox's bridge was gone, the first of numerous floods to wash away bridges had come through. Another challenge for the road makers of Oberon was the steep inclines:

We crossed the rapid Fish River through the ford, the old bridge having been here also carried away, and become unserviceable some years, apparently. There is a road party stationed here; ... -The Fish River Hill is the worst hill from Sydney to Bathurst. We began to ascend immediately we left the ford; and never having been at Bathurst before, I could not help saying to myself, *'this Bathurst ought to be a fine place to come all this dreadful way to see it!'*¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Jim Smith, *Goulburn* pp. 5,9

¹¹⁰ from N.S.W. Calendar & Directory 1832 p.102, in Kevin Toole, p.7

¹¹¹ Pers. comm. with Mick O'Connell of Duckmaloi, who was told as a child that aborigines from the west camped at Jellendore, the waterhole on the Duckmaloi River on their way to and from the coast.

¹¹² R.T.Nelson in Jim Barrett *Kanangra Walls*,

¹¹³ed. Mackaness, p.58

¹¹⁴ Mackaness p.182, Mackaness believed it to be Captain William Dumaesque

Cox's Road was probably the easiest road in the shire to make as it goes mostly through well-drained granite country, but as early as 1815 the first of 150 years of complaints about a boggy road is made. William Lawson returning after leaving his herd in "one corner of the plains, close to Queen Charlotte's Vale said that snow lay two inches deep and that the road was so boggy as to be almost impassable.¹¹⁵

It was not long before deviations from Cox's Road were made. An alternative route to Bathurst from O'Connell is believed to have started as early as 1815¹¹⁶, crossing the Fish River at O'Connell instead of going through Bloom Hill and crossing the Campbells River.¹¹⁷ In 1830 Cox's Road was abandoned as the main route to Bathurst. The new Bathurst road diverted through Solitary Creek, now called Rydal.

The Fish River bridge at O'Connell was washed away in a flood of 1867¹¹⁸. An iron footbridge was installed about 1870, but removed again in 1881 and taken to Sofala. A petition in 1877 from the residents of O'Connell, Oberon, Bloom Hill, Wiseman's Creek, Raineville, Sidmouth Valley, Mutton Falls etc requesting a trafficable bridge over the river.

As the river here is liable to sudden floods, the traffic is often impeded for several days in the winter and loss of life has resulted in past times from attempts to cross it while in a state of flood¹¹⁹

Presumably the trafficable bridge was built before the foot bridge was removed. The present concrete bridge was built in 1986 after a flood washed away the wooden bridge.

One road was formed by mistake! The current road from Tarana to O'Connell through Mutton Falls was part of 40 miles cleared in 1829 by a road gang which misinterpreted that route as the new one suggested by Deputy Surveyor General Sir Thomas Mitchell in 1827.¹²⁰ A track at least approximating Lowes Mount Road and perhaps the Oberon to Black Springs Road was marked by 1832:

...Sidmouth Valley, where there is a path to the south, leading to Captain King's grant at Bumble Creek¹²¹ and onwards to Beemarang or Swashfield and other stations on the Campbell's River connecting with the track to Burra Burra [lake near Taralga]¹²²

Some early roads were opened up by people cutting wattlebark and the goldrushes created more. Faugha-Ballaugh Road, derives its name from Faugh-a-Ballah Reef mined for gold in 1875 by Davis and Lambert. The mine is in pine forest about one kilometre from Lowes Mount Road¹²³. The name is a Gaelic tag meaning 'Get out of my way or else be run over' which was in common parlance in that era. A steam locomotive at Ipswich in Queensland, where Irish were also settling in large numbers, was given the same name in 1865.¹²⁴

¹¹⁵ Bernard Greaves, p.22

¹¹⁶ Theo Barker, vol. 1, p.41

¹¹⁷ ed. Brenda Doney, Jeannie Clague, John Clague p.

¹¹⁸ Denis J. Chamberlain, p.17

¹¹⁹ *Town and Country Journal* 4.12.1877 p.990 in Peg's Box

¹²⁰ Barker pp. 99-100

¹²¹ The creek is referred to earlier (1825) as Bingbungel Creek by King's overseer, William Hayes, in Sir Thomas Brisbane's Letterbook, vol. 1, pp226-7,

¹²² Burra Burra is near Taralga

¹²³ pers. comm. with Roy Smith, 10.10.02

¹²⁴ Patrick O'Farrell p.107-8

Oberon has been notorious for its bad roads. Its high rainfall and many springs and rivers have often made the roads impassable or difficult to travel. The following petition of 1855 was written to the postal authority after the post master had moved residence and taken the post office with him:

The present Post Office is about a mile further from the centre, in a mountainous almost inaccessible locality, without road or pathway near it.... it is situated on the eastern side of the Fish River Creek, and during the wet season wholly unapproachable from the western side and at the present moment, its passage is impracticable even to a horseman.

We beg to call your attention to the fact that the majority of the inhabitants reside on the western side of the creek.¹²⁵

The post office did move to the western side but mail delivering was an enduring problem in times of flood Ab Whalan, born 1888, wrote about the period (maybe decades) 1890 and 1900 says there was a daily mail to Jenolan Caves:

There was no bridge over the Duckmaloi River [Edith] and if it was too high for the coach to cross the driver would ride through and then go the rest of the way on horse back.

If it was too high to ride through some of the men would go down and get a rope over somehow and get the bag across and take it on.

At first the roads were "only a track through the bush and if one part got too rough or boggy they went round it".¹²⁶ The following unsourced information comes from the archives of Peggy Savage of O'Connell:

Road constructions (when convicts were no longer used) meant employment to men, who after the initial construction was completed, were allotted sections of the road to maintain, and their dwelling places soon dotted the countryside with a few acres beside the house on which they grazed some stock and grew some vegetables. The remains of some of these houses can be seen today...in addition to the larger grants of land allocated to wealthy early settlers provision was made at village sites for smaller holdings and areas of 40 acres to 100 acres can be seen particularly near road locations.

Ab Whalan again:

I remember when I (was) first starting jobs on the Shire we would get about 7/- a day on pick and shovel and 10/- for a horse and dray.

On the Oberon plateau men with wheelbarrows, picks and shovels were employed to maintain sections of the roads,¹²⁷ but at times farmers had to help service roads themselves to keep them open. There was no grader til nearly the 1930s, according to Hubert McKinnon, and the first was a horse drawn one, "a bit pathetic".¹²⁸ In the 1930s the Council had a

¹²⁵ Brown, Alan L.. *Oberon in Retrospect* p.7

¹²⁶ Malcolm Watson,

¹²⁷ R.S. Cunynghame in Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 15.7.1987

¹²⁸ pers. comm. 10.9.02. Hubert was born in 191? and served on the Council from 1953 until 1983.

grader pulled behind a tractor with a man standing at the back working the grader blade, but this only came around about once a year.¹²⁹

The roads were sometimes impassable in wet times, and it in dry times choking with dust. Woolgrowers took their drays 100 kilometres to the railway at Tarana rather than 55 kilometres to Rossmore station to avoid the Abercrombie Gorge. The Bummaroo Ford over the Abercrombie river is still avoided by many truck drivers because of the spectacularly long, steep and winding approaches, particularly on the north side. A Lithgow Mercury correspondent commented in 1907:

The ford is named Bugaboonoo Bermooroo. And it's a shade awfuller than its name. It isn't the water. The water lies at the bottom of a deep gorge, and the point is to get down and up again.¹³⁰

The bridge over the Abercrombie was built in 1837 and is still a wooden bridge. The long steep climbs to the river were only sealed in the 1960s with a special grant for mountain passes.¹³¹ It forms an island of sealed road in 40 kilometres of gravel. The sealing of this road began in 1968¹³². Resident action led by local grazier John McKinnon in 2002 has resulted in the state government agreeing to seal the remaining 40 kilometres (27 of it in Oberon shire) in 2003. Another of the major roads in the shire, one from Oberon to Jenolan Caves is still not fully sealed.

The road to Kanangra Walls was built during the depression as relief work. Married men worked two weeks on and two weeks off; single men worked two weeks on and four weeks off. They were paid seven pounds for the fortnight's work¹³³. Tom O'Connell had the only truck, the rest of the material was carted with horses and drays.

Oberon was not an affluent community before the 1950s. Many people were still using horse transport even in the 1950s. When the timber industry started using trucks to cart hardwood logs in the 1940s the roads became a disaster. The only sealed road in the shire ran for two blocks down the middle of the main street. During the 1950s particularly boggy sections of the shire's roads were corduroyed with logs then a layer of gravel. Merv Dwyer recalls the road to Bathurst being closed in town in the early 1950s and the top of Carrington Avenue being corduroyed.¹³⁴ A swampy area at Norway was also corduroyed and a section north of Black Springs.

Lance Armstrong, Oberon Shire President for thirty years from 1958 told *Oberon Review* in 1993¹³⁵

The Forestry Commission used dozers to cart rocks to fill the bogs to enable the timber traffic to get through. The Oberon Council carted rock to put into the bad places but it just kept disappearing into a bottomless pit. On the northern side of Black Springs they carted loads continually over a three month period and by the time two log trucks had gone over it was washed out again...the rocks slip sideways

¹²⁹ pers. comm. with Malcolm Watson 27.8.02

¹³⁰ Cecil Poole in Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 1.3/1989

¹³¹ pers. comm. with Hubert McKinnon 10/9/02, who was born in 1915. His aunt, Mrs McColl cut the ribbon to open the bridge,

¹³² letter from Oberon Shire Council to Keith J. Williams, Taralga

¹³³ Mick Joffe, pp.15-17

¹³⁴ pers. comm. 26.8.02

¹³⁵ Timber Industries Ltd 50th Anniversary Supplement *Oberon Review* 29.9.1993

and it spreads out like a pyramid. It went on like this until we got a drought in 1957...

Not only the Council but many farmers worked on the roads. Malcolm Watson's family and Kevin McGrath who lived on the Shooters Hill Road carted rocks and gravel in their trucks with the help of about a dozen men from the Prison Farm in the 1950s.

Stella Cranfield, who married in 1939, and went to live at Gingkin tells of a time when Bill Dennis of Tuglow had pneumonia and the Gingkin road was impassable. Dr Perkins came to one side of the bog and the family met him from the other side and took delivery of the medicine.¹³⁶

After a visit to the Oberon district in 1956 the Secretary of the Vegetable Growers Association was moved to write to the Lithgow Mercury¹³⁷:

..having travelled over some really 'horror stretches' misnamed roads. Even in the main street people could not cross from one side to the other during the wet weather owing to deep bogholes while on the Meadows Road I slid rather than drove nearly three miles through mud and bogs...

Another glaring example of indifference is the Duckmaloi Bridge project which has been shelved for years, but to make matters worse, since the writer visited Oberon last year the Council Engineer has had a log placed across the river and concreted at each end with the result that even in normal weather the river is permanently impassable now

The Duckmaloi River ford and hill were notorious. This road, which had a 6 in 1 gradient, was not sealed until about 1967 when the crossing was moved and a bridge built. Pat Hogan tells how, if the river was up, she and her sister Norma driving her father's car in the 1940s had to take off the fan belt, put a potato bag over the engine and "wind it through on the starter motor" (jerk it across without actually starting the engine)¹³⁸. For really boggy sections like at Bindo they put chains on the wheels. Mick O'Connell who had the first tractor at Duckmaloi was often called upon to pull people out of the river or up the hill. The Brien brothers who carted Pyneboard products would often leave one of their father's tractors at the top of the hill in winter to help the trucks up¹³⁹.

Farmers became angry because the break up of the roads was affecting local traffic and the transport of produce to market. Lance Armstrong again:

I recall late in 1962 after a very bad winter a local farmer George Moran who owned land between Black Springs and Burruga and other land owners at Black Springs put trucks across the road as a barricade to prevent the log trucks using them because of the break up of the roads...

The local member of parliament Gus Kelly came and talked to the farmers and Tony Luchetti the Federal member asked them not to hold up the (timber) industry, and promised government money would be allocated to roads.

¹³⁶ pers. comm. 17.8.02

¹³⁷ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 19.3.1986

¹³⁸ pers. comm. 6.8.02

¹³⁹ The Timber Industry Around Bathurst, supplement in *Western Advocate*, 2.8.1973, p.8

The state of the roads had affected everybody. Trucks were getting bogged in the main street.

The Council was in bad odour at that time because it became known they had accumulated 60,000 pounds of Commonwealth Aid to Roads Funds (CAR) and had not used it...[Six new councillors were elected including Lance] [Senator]Bob Cotton approached the local member of State Parliament and the Minister for Public Works and they eventually provided large sums of money for roads.

Most of the sealing of the shire's roads happened in the 1960s with money from the Commonwealth Aid Roads Act, and bridges over the Duckmaloi, Little Rivers and Running Stream were built.¹⁴⁰

A whole network of new roads have been put in with the establishment of pine forests in the shire. In 1992 forest ranger, Ray Groves, named 150 new roads, trying to use local names as much as possible, and said there were as many yet to be named¹⁴¹. The timber industry has necessitated the building of two by-passes to keep the huge trucks out of the town centre.

Transport

From the early days many Oberon residents travelled on foot, sometimes remarkable distances. Jane Bailey, wife of George, who in 1844 was a farmer residing at Mr Charles Whalan's "Glyndwr", lives in Bailey folklore for one such walk:

A story is told that about six weeks after Charles (1844) was born, Janes' friend (or sister) Mrs Pierce became seriously ill in Redfern. George was away somewhere with the bullocks and bullockies so Jane carried infant Charles and luggage to Sydney, 130 miles east across the Blue Mountains, to see her friend. The child was then about 6 weeks old, and Jane stayed at gatehouses along the road, and with Mrs Pierce in Redfern when in Sydney. There is general support for this story, though Charles' birth and baptismal dates indicate that some details may be inaccurate.¹⁴²

George and Jane were the progenitors of the large Bailey clan around Oberon. Sister Dominica (Esma Stapleton), born in 1894 and lived at Isabella until she entered the Josephite Order in 1916, wrote her memories of life and family history at Isabella¹⁴³. Her grandparents, Daniel and Mary Stapleton came to Bathurst and on to Isabella by bullock cart (in 1851). If anyone were sick and had to see a doctor the same method of travelling was used....

Daniel walked to Hartley from Isabella to take up his block in the early 1850s.

Uncle Billy (Stapleton) had a bullock wagon and brought provisions (loading we said) from Tarana. It came from John Meagher's Bathurst...Uncle Billy took our wool away and his own and brought back the loading...

People travelled in drays after the bullock wagon, then came spring carts, buggies and finally sulkies"

¹⁴⁰ Hubert McKinnon 10.9.02

¹⁴¹ Timber Industries Ltd 50th Anniversary Supplement *Oberon Review* 29.9.1993

¹⁴² Ross Beattie, Bailey family history

¹⁴³ unpublished manuscript written in 1963,

From Mutton Falls, about the closest place to Sydney, a trip to Sydney and back took six weeks. Two weeks down, two weeks resting the bullocks and loading and two weeks for the return journey.¹⁴⁴

More recently (before Warragamba Dam was built) Bill Hughes of Gingkin would walk from Camden to Gingkin through the Burragorang Valley. When he needed money he would work up a horse and ride it down to Camden, sell it and walk back, according to his daughter Helen Freeth. "Walking was never a problem to the Hughes".¹⁴⁵

And of course many people rode in the first 100 years of settlement.¹⁴⁶ Sister Dominica's mother (Matilda Stapleton) rode side-saddle some 32 kilometres from Isabella to Shooters' Hill one Palm Sunday as that was the nearest mass. Kevin Webb's grandfather rode from Sidmouth Valley to Bathurst for a doctor for his neighbour's wife (26 miles) in an hour and a half. He maintained that if a horse would not do 100 miles a day he was not worth feeding. Few farmers could afford a sulky in the early days and women either rode to town on horseback or travelled in a dray. In town horses and sulkies were tied up on the vacant block of land beside Ramsgate, where the Rural Bank was built in 1965. The last Oberon resident to be relying on horse transport was Austie Cunynghame who was still using horses in the 1970s.

Another early form of transport was the bicycle. Voss Wiburd, caretaker of Jenolan Caves and committed Mason travelled to Lodge meetings in Lithgow with a fellow employee from the Caves. They had one bicycle between them: one would ride a section, then get off and walk, leaving the bicycle for the other to the next change point ahead him.¹⁴⁷

Malcolm Watson in his unpublished Watson family history writes extensively of the roads and bullock and horse transport. His grandparents operated a store at Shooters' Hill from the late 1880's or early 1890s until about 1910 and had a delivery run around Porters Retreat and Felled Timber Road, and later Mt Werong, once a fortnight with a three horse dray. They picked up provisions from Tarana Railway Station, and later from Edgeleys Store in Bathurst fortnightly. He tells of perilous crossings of swollen creeks, and the struggle of dragging the laden dray through deep snow.

When the Prison Farm opened at Shooters Hill in 1930 a lorry from there went into Oberon for provisions at least three times a week and would make deliveries or give lifts to town to people living along the way.

The Tarana Railway

The railway reached Tarana in 1879 on its way to Bathurst, replacing the Cobb and Co coaches and bullock teams crossing the Blue Mountains, and reducing the trip from Sydney to "over five hours"¹⁴⁸. Soon after Oberon was calling for a branch line, a plea not realised until forty years later.

Tarana came to prominence replacing Hartley as the staging point for Oberon traffic heading east.¹⁴⁹ A busy trade plied up and down the road to Tarana, (today called the Hazelgrove

¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Pearl Webb,

¹⁴⁵ pers. comm. with his daughter, Helen Freeth, 9.8.02

¹⁴⁶ Wheeler and Garland, p.12

¹⁴⁷ pers. comm. Barry Richard, March 2003

¹⁴⁸ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 13.7.1994

¹⁴⁹ Wheeler and Garland. p.12

Road). Previously Hartley had two lines of coaches running between Oberon and Tarana with four to six coaches running in the summer months¹⁵⁰. P.G. Green ran one for a “very moderate” fare.¹⁵¹ The Greens later had a carrying business

Most major families had a bullock team. Claude Brien’s father was a teamster to supplement his income from the farm “Ferndale”. In spring he would make two trips a week to Tarana with seed potatoes for the Northern Rivers district. He had an eight horse team that took five tons, often travelling with Dave Eaton who had a 12 horse team and carried eight tons because the smallest rail truck carried 10 tons, larger ones were 15 tons. If there was not enough to fill a truck, the potatoes were put onto a stage at Tarana station and covered with a tarpaulin while the teamster went back for another load. The trip took two days and they camped at the Fish River overnight.¹⁵²

Billy Cosgrove had the last bullock team in the 1940s.

Until 1923 Oberon was still dependent on bullock wagons for transporting produce.

The Oberon-Tarana Branch Line

The arrival of the railway in Oberon on October 3 1923 brought the whole community (about 2000 people) out to celebrate with a picnic at the showground and a free trip to Hazelgrove and back for all the school children. It was a reward for the efforts of the long-standing Oberon Railway League, formed in 1908 and supported between 1917 and 1922 by the Labor state member for Bathurst, Valentine Carlyle Ross Wood (Carl) Johnston. The small unmanned station, Carlwood at Keirstone was named in recognition of his work.

The line was originally intended to continue to Burruga to service the copper mine, but production had ceased before the line was built.

The first driver was Eric Hoy and the guard Tom Lee, both of whom worked on the train for many years.

The sudden accessibility brought a major change to the economy, in particular the pea industry, as it was now feasible to get peas to the markets in Sydney within a day. The pea train, leaving at 6 pm during the pea season, took hundreds of tons of peas to the Sydney market. The teamsters suddenly lost much of their trade. From 1946 thousands of tons of hardwood were carted from Timber Industries on the way to the Broken Hill mines.

The line suffered however from having been built at minimum cost. With a gradient of 1 in 25 and numerous sharp curves, the line had such demanding geometry, that only the small class 19 steam engines could run on it. The trip from Tarana, nearly 16 miles (24 kilometres), took 85 minutes, and the return trip even longer, 95 minutes as the steep grade restricted the speed to 15 mph.¹⁵³ The mixed goods and passenger train left Oberon at 11.25 am six days a week with a maximum load of 245 tons, the engine running backwards as there was no turntable! It stopped at the top of the steep grade just past Hazelgrove for the guard to wind on the hand brakes, and again at Carlwood at the bottom of the grade by which time the brakes were smoking. The line was unfenced so the driver had to look out for stock on

¹⁵⁰ Hilary Rodwell, ‘Railway is an Historic Link’, *Western Advocate*, 12 March, 1964

¹⁵¹ Poole, Cecil in *The Lithgow Mercury*, 17.5.1907, in Alan Brown’s Historical Notes, 8.2.1989

¹⁵² pers. comm. 17.8.02 (Claude Brien is 93 years old)

¹⁵³ Oberon’s Great Day *Lithgow Mercury*, 5 .10.1923

the line. The return train left Tarana at 3.40 pm, but could only pull 115 tons up the steep grade.¹⁵⁴

The steam trains continued until 1963. Heaps of ashes around the Oberon station were a feature of the landscape, as Lithgow coal was notable for its high ash content.¹⁵⁵ For the last 16 years of the railway's life branch line diesels were used.

By the 1950s trucks, leaving by midnight from Oberon could deliver peas to the markets by 6 am the following morning, and were competing strongly with the train.¹⁵⁶ Hardwood production had almost ceased and pine and Pyneboard were carted by road. There were no bulk loading facilities at the station and it finally closed in 1979.

In an attempt to remove heavy transports of pine products from the roads the state government and CSR negotiated reopening the line in the early 1990s.¹⁵⁷ CSR won the contract to log the forests around Oberon on the understanding it would use rail transport¹⁵⁸ but to the disappointment of the community, the Carr government decided the expense of reopening the line made it unviable.

The station now houses the Oberon Museum, and the Rails to Trails organisation is planning to use the track as a walking and riding track.

Kingsford Smith

Oberon does not have a commercial airport, though a number of properties have strips for crop dusting or private planes, however it was one of the first rural Australian towns to have an aeroplane land. This remarkable event happened on 6 March 1925. The 'Silver Streak' landed in Doust's paddock, now the industrial estate, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Gordon Doust, with Flt.Lt.Charles Kingsford Smith and Flt/Sgt Kerr. Due to the boggy ground the plane came to a rather undignified rest, tipping forward and breaking a propeller. It was repaired in Oberon and joy flights were given, the first passengers being the pilot's mother, Mrs James Doust and Charles Armstrong.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Ron Preston, *Byways of Steam*. (Eveleigh Press, 1990) pp.55-63

¹⁵⁵ Preston p.57

¹⁵⁶ pers. comm. with Merv Dwyer who drove pea trucks, 26.8.02

¹⁵⁷ *Oberon Review* 10.8.95

¹⁵⁸ *Western Advocate*, May 5, 1996 in ed. Barry Webb *Oberon-Tarana Railway*

¹⁵⁹ *Oberon Review* 23.1.1997 p.8

4. Agriculture and Pastoralism

Early Days

A remarkable record of very early farming days at Black Springs survives in Patrick Hanrahan's diary of 'Remarkable Events' from 5 May 1858. Brief entries record the cycle of the farming year at Hillsbury and notable events like a few trips to Bathurst. It reveals that he grew barley, potatoes and wheat. He bred horses, and sold some colts to Adelaide and he had sheep. A sample:

1849

Jan 17th. Sent 13 colts with Mr.. Balfe. Finished mowing and finished making the cocks.

Feb.2 Finished thatching the two Hay Stacks one of them at the Springs 16 feet wide 18 yards long and one on the Hill 10 yards long and 17 feet wide.

1851

April 29th. Michael [Hanrahan] and J. Behan with cattle to Sydney. Very heavy rain all this day after long drought.¹⁶⁰

A record of early times written much later is by Ab Whalan of Edith, born in 1888, grandson of Campbell Whalan and son of Albert Whalan and Ann Wilcox, who wrote his recollections in 1969.

About What My Father Has Told Me

They took up this place here [at Edith, probably about 1860], and when they moved out, there was no fences, so first they had to build a house, and get a paddock fenced to keep their horses, as they would stray anywhere, and the wild stallions used to take them at night. There was lots of wild horses and wild cattle then.

After getting a paddock fenced they had to clear some land to grow potatoes and oats to feed horses when they had to do ploughing. They would pick the places where the least timber was, and they would only have a mattock and shovel and axe and the timber was all green....

Money was very scarce and they had to live somehow. They could grow potatoes, and could go to the Upper Farm [on the later-built road to Kanangra Walls] and shoot a beast for meat and pack it home on horses. They always fattened a pig or two for winter bacon. I remember any house you went to there was always bacon hanging to the rafters in the kitchen....

When I first remember, there was about 50 or 60 acres cleared here and Dad would sow it with oats. It would take nearly all the winter to get it ploughed and sowed with an old double furrow or single furrow plough [the first ploughs were wooden, Ab remembered his grandfather, Campbell Whalan making one]. He would plough all day and then cut chaff enough at night after tea with a hand chaff cutter to feed the horses next day, which was hard work. There would be mostly 5 or 6 draught horses and 2 or 3 saddle horses and a cow, so it meant a fair amount of chaff....

¹⁶⁰ Paddy Grady Wozencraft, *Black Springs* p.13

Fences

The fences were all timber about here and of different kinds. I suppose the best was a split rail fence with mortice posts and split rails, three or four. The next, a stud fence consisting of two studs to each panel and rails between. Then a three rail fence or dog leg which consisted of a fork in the ground, then a rail, then a dog leg and then another rail, then a top fork with another rail. And last was the log fence, consisting of logs pulled together and topped with rails. Wire fences were not about here to my knowledge and did not come until a good few years later.¹⁶¹

Early days in the Tarana district were recorded by R.W.Webb in 1942 from memories of his father William Webb. William arrived at Keirstone in 1840 with his father who came to manage the property for Dr David Ramsay:

At this time the country was practically all open with only an occasional fenced paddock. Animals could roam at large over large areas. While it was possible to keep cattle within reasonable limits horses roamed far and wide often into the adjoining mountains. Here they increased greatly and became very wild until they reached the brumby standard.

Father often told of the delivery of 300 horses in one mob at Bathurst. After having been two weeks with seven others mustering in the open country and securing them at Sydmouth Valley, - a property then owned by James Lowe- Father and two others were chosen to ride in front of the mob and prevent them breaking away. They were to be delivered in Bathurst to a buyer from Forbes for station use.

They broke into a gallop, and the greatest thrill came when the men dashed through the river at Kinghorns Falls crossing abreast of the leaders and managed to control them on the rising ground on the other side¹⁶².

The wild horses soon became a problem. In 1878 a letter in the *Town and Country Journal* mentioned that Oberon is a country merely sprinkled with inhabitants for 40 miles....till lately almost exclusively in the possession of wild horses. The Green brothers alone destroyed about 6000 head and there are still hundreds to be killed."¹⁶³

Some settlers attempted to raise sheep and after some sensational disasters Oberon had a bad reputation as sheep country, though some continued to run them, generally away from swampy country. William Dumaresq remarked that in the unusually wet year 1826 12 or 15,000 sheep had died near Campbells River from liver fluke. John Hughes ran sheep at Gingkin for his first five years there, from 1865, and "was a ruined man through fluke and rot". He then moved into cattle and found his country admirably suited to it.¹⁶⁴

Cattle grazing was well established in the south of the shire by 1853 when 250 head of cattle were purchased from the northern side of the Abercrombie to be overlanded to Victoria; the following year 660 more went from the Abercrombie. The sellers were McColl, North, Stevenson, Hogan, Francis, Foran, Stillwell, Murray and Mahoney.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Unpublished document in the archives of Merv Whalan

¹⁶² related by R.W.Webb

¹⁶³ letter to the editor 9.11.1878 p.889

¹⁶⁴ *The Sunday Mail*, 14.12.1878

¹⁶⁵ Charles Macalister p.219 in Kevin Toole, p.12

After a serious drought in 1919-1920 the Hughes family was granted a 9000 acre lease on the western side of the Kowmung River, between Gingra Creek and Bulga Denis Canyon on the Kowmung¹⁶⁶. A number of other families had 40 acre freehold holding blocks for stock, mostly east of the Kowmung, and used that lower protected country for winter grazing. Huts and yards were built there for an annual, largely communal, muster in spring, evocatively described by Bernard O'Reilly in his memoir of life in the Megalong Valley, *Cullenbenbong*. It was wild country and attracted wild people, honest and criminal. Cattle duffing was rife there for many years, from the days of Edward Lannigan and Manus Coasgrove, who arrived at Mt Werong in 1838, until the practice of winter grazing in the Kowmung was terminated with the formation of the Kanangra-Boyd National Park in 1975. Another problem to contend with was the 'brumby' cattle who had been in the Burratorang since the early 1800s and moved west. With massive horns they were believed to have descended from the wild cattle of the Cowpastures, Cape cattle which had escaped from the settlement of the First Fleet¹⁶⁷.

The Upper Kowmung was controlled by the Venns of Abercrombie and Arnolds of Jaunter. The Arnold's cattle ran round Mt Werong, the Boyd Range and Box Creek. John Lakeman and Charles Dunn, who had properties in both Burratorang and Tuglow, and the Hughes family were the major cattle men in the Lower Kowmung between the wars.¹⁶⁸

Cattle were taken around Kanangra Walls soon after 1868, probably by Billy Maxwell, stock keeper for Lakeman and Dunn. Before 1942 they were driven on a difficult route via the Dance Floor Cave, under the southern and western cliffs and on to the Gingra Range. It took half a day to get to the beginning of the Range as the cattle could only be moved a few at a time in some places. One spot called the 'Jump-Up' was particularly dangerous. During World War 11 the importance of the Kowmung cattle and the fear of Japanese invasion prompted the army, on government instruction, to blast a ramp near the Dance Floor Cave, to take the cattle over the Kanangra Tops.¹⁶⁹

For farmers in the Tuglow, Gingkin, Shooters Hill, Jaunter areas the best access to stock markets was down the Colong stock route via Yerranderie and through the Burratorang Valley to Camden. Sheep were not viable in the Kowmung because of the dingoes. Cattle, horses and pigs were taken to market this way. The Arnolds from Jaunter once took a mob of 700 pigs down to the Burratorang Valley. They used to tie a stick to a back leg to stop them getting away.¹⁷⁰ This route was closed in 1959 with the building of the Warragamba Dam.

As time went by agricultural produce was more diversified. John Hughes writing in 1878, says that his wife sold cheese at the door to a dealer, and Mrs Harvey was selling butter. They were producing an abundance of grapes and other fruit. He is probably the writer of an anonymous letter to the *Town and Country Journal* the same year listing cherries, gooseberries, red currants, 'all fruits common to every land flourish...except apples', as well as prime beef, bacon, potatoes, oats, wheat and hay.¹⁷¹

Clearly by this stage an industrious farmer could subsist magnificently, but the only produce which was commercially viable was potatoes and butter (and sometimes cheese) and, to

¹⁶⁶ Jim Barrett *Kowmung River* p.29

¹⁶⁷ P. Gemmell-Smith *The Wild Cattle of the Kowmung*

¹⁶⁸ Jim Barrett *Kowmung River* p.30

¹⁶⁹ Jim Barrett *Kowmung River* p.36

¹⁷⁰ pers. comm. with Hubert McKinnon

¹⁷¹ 9.11.1878 p.889

some extent, beef. Oberon was too remote to transport quickly perishable produce to markets. The railway reached Tarana by 1879 but this was a long way from Oberon by bullock wagon, travelling at about two miles an hour.

Dairying, particularly butter making was a common source of income. Matilda Stapleton (nee Maloney) milked a small herd of cows and transported milk in syrup tins on horseback to Burruga around the end of the nineteenth century¹⁷². Some families, like the Wilcoxes at Nestlebrae had dairy herds of 30 or 40 cows.¹⁷³ Dairies (the buildings) still exist at some old properties like Bloomfield (Beattie's) and Applegrove (Eaton's) at Titania. A butter factory opened in 1892 on Butterfactory Lane near Edith, owned by Oberon Co-Operative Dairy Company and managed at first by John Edgar.¹⁷⁴ Claude Brien, who was born in 1909 and grew up at Ferndale (on the Duckmaloi Road) described how his mother packed butter in a 50 pound box about 18 inches square, lined with tissue paper. It was picked up by a horse van and taken to Sydney.¹⁷⁵ Dairy farmers named by the *Town and Country Journal* in 1909 were John Harvey, Beattie, C. Bailey, F. Harvey, John Lambert, J.E. Sloggett, D. Eaton, and Jas Lambert.¹⁷⁶

Keeping cows alive through the long harsh winter was no easy matter with native pasture and little cleared land. An 1876 petition for Mr Spencer to be appointed as teacher at Fish River Creek School (Titania) explained that he had been a dairy farmer whose cattle had died in the severe winter of 1876.¹⁷⁷

Other education records give an inkling of the destitution faced by some in the early days:
Cow Flat [Bloom Hill area] 6.12.[18]85

Dear Sir. I now take this opportunity of writing to you stating that I am unable to pay the school fees as I have no crop this year. I have five small children, the oldest is only 11 years of age and I have no way of maintaining them only with my daily labour the fee is now two pounds I would be kindly obliged to you if you would let me off this time and I will try to pay up regler from the beginning of the New Year. I remain your obedient William Sargent¹⁷⁸

There was a massive drought from 1838 to 1843, which ended with a flood.¹⁷⁹ According to Watson McKibbin "sheep died in the thousands in the dry river bed of the Fish River".¹⁸⁰

Wheat grew well at O'Connell but Oberon was not a noted wheat growing district, because of late frosts and cool, damp climate. It was generally only grown for home consumption. Oats and later lucerne were grown for hay and chaff. A large quantity of tobacco was grown at Isabella according to the Railway Guide of NSW of 1886.

The only really big properties in the Oberon district before the 1950s were Essington Park and Swatchfield, both owned by the Stevensons and later the Hackneys, and both reduced in size for soldier settlement blocks after World War 11. Most holdings were small and could

¹⁷² Paddy Wozencraft *Golden Gully*, p. 21

¹⁷³ pers. com. Merv Dwyer 3.9.02

¹⁷⁴ Alan Brown's Historical Note, 24.4.1985

¹⁷⁵ pers. comm. 17.8.02

¹⁷⁶ 23 June in ed. Alan Brown *Oberon in Retrospect* p.15

¹⁷⁷ historical account of Fish River Creek Public School, June 1961, Department of Education and Training archives

¹⁷⁸ from Peg's Box, the archives of Peggy Savage, held at O'Connell

¹⁷⁹ Kevin Toole p.10

¹⁸⁰ History Notes from Watson McKibbin, Peg's Box

not support the families as they expanded, so many people had other jobs: working on the roads or shearing were alternatives to farming or means of supplementing farm incomes.

Oberon produced its fair share of gun shearers and some shore as far away as central Queensland. One of the last of the blade shearers, Sylvia Maloney of Mt Defiance, died in March 2003, aged 75. Sylvia was shearing until her death and gave her last blade shearing demonstration at a local show in 2001.¹⁸¹

Oberon produced potatoes by the hundreds of tons. They grew well and because they kept over the winter they could be transported to market. They were stored over winter in pits: long pyramidal piles about a metre high and 20 to 30 metres long, thatched with river grass (*Poa tussock*) and then covered with a layer of earth.¹⁸² Duckmaloi and Titania were noted for their seed potatoes that went in spring to the Northern Rivers district. The *Lithgow Mercury* would record the tonnage of produce carted by rail from Tarana. In winter and early spring potatoes there was a steady flow of potatoes from Oberon: “forty tons of potatoes were sent from Oberon district last month” (6.7.1906). Popular potato varieties were Factor and Satisfaction.¹⁸³

A teacher, briefly at Gingkin school in the 1930s, Anne Turner, recalled the prominence of potatoes to the people of the district. Visiting a neighbour with the family she boarded with:

..very soon the conversation turned to growing potatoes. I was astonished! I didn't know potatoes could get so many things wrong with them or that there could be such a difference of opinion on how to deal with the problem

...my hosts grew potatoes and we ate potatoes and potatoes and potatoes¹⁸⁴

Prices of potatoes fluctuated and they did not always provide an income. A Gingkin correspondent to the *Lithgow Mercury*, arguing in 1909 for a railway line to come to Black Springs via Gingkin, explains the access problems of Tuglow:

Two years ago, I believe, when the price of potatoes fell to about 2 pounds per ton, and when the Oberon and neighbouring producers grumbled at only pocketing about 1 pound per ton on their crops, saw a patch of first class quality estimated at not less than sixty tons left in the ground to rot in this valley. The market price of 2 pounds would not have more than cleared freight to Sydney¹⁸⁵

And in 1911 Mr Hinton (probably John of Isabella) sent a load of about 8 tons of potatoes to Sydney and received 3/6 for the whole consignment.¹⁸⁶

Potatoes continued to be grown in large quantities until about the early 1970s. Other vegetables grown in the district were turnips, for human consumption and stock feed, cauliflowers, carrots and beans. During World War 11 farmers were told what to produce, and had a ready and stable market.

¹⁸¹ Oberon Review, Obituary, 15 May 2003

¹⁸² pers. comm with Claude Brien 17.8.02

¹⁸³ pers. comm. with Ray Cunynghame 6.9.02

¹⁸⁴ ed Alan Brown, *Schools* p.23

¹⁸⁵ Barry Webb *Railway* 6.8.1909

¹⁸⁶ Railway Report 1909 pp.14-5, in Kevin Toole p.73

In the twentieth century farming started to become more scientific, with lectures held at local branches of the Agriculture Bureau. One on sheep diseases in Tarana in 1922 recommended draining swamps, watering from troughs and gave a recipe for a drench for liver fluke of bluestone, fresh mustard and water.¹⁸⁷ Claude Brien says his father was the first one to successfully beat the fluke.¹⁸⁸

Carbon tetrachloride to control fluke came in around 1930 and revolutionised the running of sheep so sheep numbers started to increase in the district. When wool was fetching a pound a pound in the 1950s Oberon's economy saw an unprecedented boom.

In 1892 the first rabbits were seen and reported from Tarana in the Bathurst Post¹⁸⁹. Rabbits were to have a profound effect on the Oberon district environmentally and economically. Rabbits were particularly difficult to eradicate around Oberon because of the amount of timber on the ground. Many people still had log fences – logs piled up on big felled trees which provided a haven for rabbits. . “You’d crack a whip and the hill nearly moved,” Hubert McKinnon said. Douglas Stewart described them when he stayed at the Duckmaloi Guest House:

..in one season of searing drought ...the hills of the guest house were teeming with thousands of rabbits- quite appalling to see; the whole hillside eaten down to bare granite sand, would move in one verminous mass as you came over the skyline¹⁹⁰

Like the most of the rest of eastern Australia farmers tried shooting, digging, poisoning, trapping, ferreting. Some, like the Webb family and the Briens at Titania, were successful in clearing their farms by netting and then eradicating them from a netted paddock. The Webb brothers cleared their property and checked their fences daily, but when they came back from World War 1 they had to start from the beginning again.¹⁹¹

Rabbits are believed to be responsible for the demise of the death adder in the Kowmung. Cattle men came across numerous death adders choked to death while in the process of swallowing a full grown rabbit.¹⁹²

But the rabbits were a boon to many people in very hungry years. A huge industry developed around them. In winter they were sold as carcasses because they would keep in the cold weather. Many people supplemented their incomes by trapping or shooting rabbits and there were many full time trappers.

In 1899 a Tarana correspondent to the *Lithgow Mercury* reported from the railway:

A short time ago as much as 6½ tons (of rabbits and hares) left in a week. The despised pest has proved to be a benefit to many; excellent wages 3 pounds to one pound per week –having been made by trappers at a time of the year when work is almost impossible to obtain. (18.8.1899)

Week after winter week the rabbits in their tons went to Sydney. On June 6 1902 over eighteen tons went. At the end of winter the *Mercury* would predict that the

¹⁸⁷ Barry Webb *Railway* 16.8.1922

¹⁸⁸ pers. comm. 17.8.02

¹⁸⁹ Kevin Toole, p.31

¹⁹⁰ Alan Brown's Historical Note 1984?

¹⁹¹ pers. comm. with Kevin Webb 22.8.02

¹⁹² Jim Barrett *Kowmung River* p.36

rabbit was exterminated but the next year more tons of rabbits would be sold. Oberon later had its own freezing works, first in Ross Street and secondly in Dart Street and a boning works. A huge trade went on in skins which could be sold all year round.

At Burruga in the 1940s:

In the period of the war (WW11), because of the scarcity of men to do the work, the rabbit problem became immense; they had literally multiplied to millions.

The whole of the district was spotted with rabbit trappers, each with his own designated area and 'duffing' someone else's area was absolutely taboo, and led to many altercations. These rabbit trappers made excellent money, being paid by the pound weight for the skins ... The skin buyers would arrive in Burruga about lunch time Saturday. The trappers would bring in their skins to the buyers in huge ore-packed bundles to be weighed and assessed. After payment, which was always in cash, they would then get their week's supply of groceries etc. and it was literally impossible to get into the local shops during this period until someone stepped outside¹⁹³

Oberon too would have rabbit skins from one end to the other on Saturdays. Horace and Ray Cunynghame bought them. Ray remembers one weekend they had over 80 bales of skins. There were five or six skins to a pound, roughly 200 pounds in a bale....a lot of rabbits.

In 1950 myxomatosis was released in Victoria¹⁹⁴ and spread with great rapidity, putting an end to the rabbit industry in Oberon.

With the arrival of the railway in Oberon the pea industry flourished in Oberon. Hazelgrove is believed to be its birthplace. A teacher at the school had grown them as he found the conditions similar to his home in a pea farming area in England.¹⁹⁵ Sister Marie Therese's (Nina Slattery) family was involved from the beginning:

Hazelgrove and Duckmaloi were suitable areas for potatoes and Dad sowed a couple of acres each year but only for our own use and to give away. Pea Farming was our sole industry. Some say that Dad's brother John, was the first to grow peas for market, along with his potatoes, but the credit should go to Ben Evans, our next door neighbour for giving it the kick start. Ben planted his first crop in 1907, just half an acre next to his house. Next year, it was a two acre venture and soon other farmers were trying their luck, the industry growing every year.

All the farming at that stage was done with a horse drawn single furrow plough, the seed dropped into the furrow by hand. It was good healthy exercise and I for one enjoyed the soft bare earth under my bare feet and the responsibility of doing it right.

By the 1930s pea farming was a flourishing local industry, the main Hazelgrove producers Ben Evans and Mick Slattery, and at The Meadows Cyril Evans and Frank Jarrett. Picking was back-breaking but paid dividends and growers had no difficulty getting pickers. The peas, carefully checked by Dad, were bagged, taken to Hazelgrove Station and trucked to the markets at Circular Quay.

¹⁹³ Kevin Toole p.93

¹⁹⁴ eds G. Davison, J. Hirst, S. MacIntyre, p.501

¹⁹⁵ pers. comm. with Laurie Evans 1993

When I came home from College in 1930, Mick, now 23 and Norman, 17 were a power behind Dad and our farm had extended on either side of The Meadows Road. They were also renting a few acres near Tarana for the earlier crops, and had their own lorry for carting the peas. During the 1950s the pea growing industry was at its peak. All had their big trucks now and were carting their produce direct to the Sydney Markets to get the top prices. Edgells Cannery introduced mechanical stripping, but the Hazelgrove farmers on the whole continued to truck their peas to Sydney. Soon however, poor prices and more profitable ways of using the land reduced the pea crops to a minor role, cattle and sheep gradually taking their place.¹⁹⁶

Like the Slatterys many people would rent land at Tarana or O'Connell to grow early peas which generally attracted better prices. Much of the land in the Oberon district was cleared by pea growers who would grow peas for a couple of years and then sow improved pasture for the land owner. In places, like Sydmouth Valley, there were severe infestations of briar bushes which were cleared by pea growers.¹⁹⁷

Geoff Gough, whose family came to Oberon with the building of the Dam, was one of the biggest pea growers in the district and cleared a lot of country in the Essington area. Other big pea growers included Lance and Alan Armstrong, Jacky Fitzpatrick, Stan Kitt, Ken Rodwell, Bruce Ryan, Leo Grady, Joe Artery, Kevin and Ray Hill, and Bill Hawken.

'The making of Oberon was carbon tetrachloride, superphosphate and Horace Cunynghame', according to Jack Hoolihan.¹⁹⁸

Horace Cunynghame had a produce store and was extremely generous with credit. He would advance people pea seed (the most popular varieties being Greenfeast and Gem) and superphosphate, giving many people the chance to escape the poverty they had struggled with before the 1950s. His son Ray, who took over the business and only sold it and retired in 1998, was equally generous.

Peas came a bit later to Black Springs. The first big pea farmer in the district was Bruce Turner of Winton Park. Paddy Grady Wozencraft describes:

Men, women and children, land army girls and prisoners of war picked peas. Daybreak would see the people in the pea paddock, perhaps forty people, spread over forty rows. The hours for pea picking were daylight to dark; it was hard on the back but there was a certain amount of socialising and good humour in the paddock. Within a couple of years pea crops spread across every available acre in the district and the talk was all about pea crops and prices; we watched with dread if it looked like frost and we prayed for rain at the right time.¹⁹⁹

To protect the peas from frosts people would sometimes light fires around the crop at night.²⁰⁰

The pea industry was enormous. Some nights 200 tons of peas would leave Oberon. The train could not carry them all and lorries started to take the excess. They could leave at

¹⁹⁶ Nina Slattery..Sr Marie Therese pp.29-30

¹⁹⁷ pers. comm. with Kevin Webb 22.8.02

¹⁹⁸ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan

¹⁹⁹ *The Black Springs Story*. p.41

²⁰⁰ pers. comm. with Helen Freeth

midnight and be at the markets in Sydney by 6 am with the peas in better condition, so they became the transport of preference.

In summer the population swelled with pea pickers. They lived in tents, caravans, huts and boarding houses. School enrolments shot up and the pubs did a roaring trade. Some stayed on to dig potatoes.

John McCusker who had an engineering shop and the Shell Depot told Mick Joffe of the itinerant pickers:

They used to come to the service station, even Toki Tiki, King of the Gypsies with all his kids. I put the car up on the hoist to fix it, with all his kids inside it so they couldn't pinch anything. One bloke...didn't have enough money for petrol so he left twelve ferrets...One bloke left a bunch of rabbit traps for petrol but he returned.²⁰¹

Plenty of locals picked peas too. Thelma Young who had been in the WASPS (Women's Agricultural Security Production Service, similar to the Land Army) during World War 11, twice won a national pea-picking competition with the extravagant prize of 100 pounds. Her sister Ida was third.

Very few peas are grown in Oberon now: McGraths at Shooters Hill still have substantial crops and Rawsons and Watsons produce a few peas. Brussel sprouts were grown by Bruce and Trevor Armstrong, first at Beaconsfield (Black Springs) in the 1970s and then Springbank just west of the town. They became the largest growers of brussel sprouts in the Southern Hemisphere. Their pickers have always been women and they generally employed locals rather than itinerant pickers: their gun pickers were Lucy and Modesta Mazzotti and Luisa Canal, who migrated from Italy together (with their husbands) after the War.²⁰² These days some of their pickers are quite elderly Beatie Wilcox, who started picking peas when she was 65, in 1981; and Mavis Butcher. Other pickers include Joan Benson, Toni Swannell and Beryl Foley.²⁰³ As of 2003 the Armstrongs have discontinued the labour intensive crop of brussel sprouts and are growing broccoli.

World War 11 had a profound effect on farming in Oberon. As a major vegetable growing district Oberon's farms received some government compensation for the labour drain. One initiative was the Australian Women's Land Army. One group of eight Land Army women working in the Oberon district, including Joan Cunynghame, nee Player, lived in a tin shed, with a 'matron' who cooked for them. Joan worked at Yuruga, now Middle Creek, for a year in 1943: picking peas, planting and picking up potatoes, scarifying peas with a draft horse, and helping with lamb marking.²⁰⁴

Another augmentation to the workforce on farms were the Italian prisoners of war, who were sent in groups of three from the Cowra detention centre to a number of Oberon farms including Clear Hills at Duckmaloi and at Dixon's farm Yuruga.. The prisoners wore distinctive maroon wool uniforms, and were locked in at night by the farmers²⁰⁵. They were repatriated at the end of the War.

²⁰¹ Joffe op. cit. p.23

²⁰² pers. comm. Toni Dwyer (daughter of Bruce), 9.5.2003

²⁰³ pers. comm. with Ray Cunynghame 6.9.02

²⁰⁴ *Oberon Review* 24.4.2003, p4

²⁰⁵ pers. comm. Pat Hogan

Before the War mechanisation was in its infancy. Horses were still widely used during the War for ploughing and transport but machinery pools were set up to lease out farm machinery imported from the United States. Farmers could lease or borrow money to buy tractors, side delivery rakes, Harvey pea cutters and other equipment from the Bathurst Agricultural Machinery Pool.²⁰⁶

Superphosphate came into general use in the 1950s coinciding with the eradication of rabbits by myxomatosis. It was applied in heavy concentrations, often aerially by Hazelton's Air Service. These factors, combined with introduced pasture, made an incredible difference to the carrying capacity of the district. One of the more productive places, Essington Park, a property of 7-8000 acres, averaged 1 sheep per acre 1913²⁰⁷. In the 1950s Oberon was suddenly able to carry three or more sheep to the acre.²⁰⁸ At the same time the price of wool shot up to a pound a pound, a price which has only recently been equalled. Oberon began its big pastoral expansion and became renowned for its fat (now called prime) lambs. Successful stud sheep breeders include Arthur Lang, with Polwarth sheep, the Gilmore family with Dorset Horn and Poll Dorset sheep; and Paul and Virginia Kurtz, and Barry Lang with White Suffolk. Sheep studs reeled with the spread of Ovine Johnes disease in the early 1990s as it was widespread in the district.

The repeated heavy applications of superphosphate have acidified the soil, and more recently lime has been commonly spread to correct the pH.

Ralph Hammond has written this summary of agriculture in the Oberon area from 1947, when he came to Penarth in the Oberon district, until 1997 :

....In 1947 the roads of Oberon Shire were quite appalling....

There was no electricity available beyond the town which had a small diesel driven power plant.

There were few phones in the rural areas – our nearest was three miles from the house.

Most properties were only partly developed, many having large areas of uncleared land. The natural grasses were eaten out by rabbits which were in plague numbers, wire netting and other fencing materials were almost unprocurable, labour was scarce, so that pasture improvement and other development was slow to start and well behind other areas.

Local timber was of little commercial value and being difficult to burn, clearing was costly. At that time there were about five privately owned bulldozers in the district and the waiting time to get one was often six months.

Small area farming of peas and potatoes was extensively practised and as this was quite profitable, it led to the clearing of new country each year...

In my experience it was possible to pay for the clearing of dead [ring barked] timber with the proceeds of the first crop of peas, and the second crop paid for fencing and

²⁰⁶ pers. comm. with Merv Dwyer 3.9.02

²⁰⁷ *Lithgow Mercury* 2.6.1913 in Barry Webb *Railway*

²⁰⁸ Ralph Hammond agricultural in Oberon, in Louisa Roberts,

sowing down to improved pasture; so this was the practice I adopted till all the areas of dead timber were cleared.

Clearing green timber was much more expensive and improved pasture was slow and difficult to establish...

Initially I grew peas for Edgells which were harvested in the vine and carted to Oberon for vining, then the shelled peas to Bathurst for canning. Peas hand picked by itinerant pickers for the Sydney fresh vegetable market became more profitable so I changed to that.

In 1947 there were special trains running from Oberon each night to take the peas to markets but gradually motor transport took over. I heard it said that up to two thousand bags of peas left for Sydney each night during the season....

Labour was cheap, though somewhat hard to get due to over employment in the town, and returns from farming were good so that farm development took place rapidly from about 1950 to 1960. Wool prices reached unprecedented levels and both sheep and cattle prices were good.

During those years rainfall was well above average and droughts simply did not occur....

I remember one old lady ...saying 'Oberon is confested with Jags' meaning that Jaguar cars were relatively common in Oberon, a sure sign of the prosperity at that time.

Sadly all this was not to last. It became cheaper to grow potatoes in other areas where mechanical harvesting could be practised. Edgells found they could grow peas more cheaply during the cooler months at such places as Narromine, and eventually Tasmania. Quick frozen peas... became more popular so the fresh pea market declined in Sydney and fewer and fewer peas were grown until now they are a rarity.

All costs, in particular labour, increased enormously; the wool market went from boom to bust and that repeated itself from time to time. With the cessation of profitable crops such as peas and potatoes there are now few alternatives to livestock production that are suitable to the climate of Oberon.

The key to survival was to increase livestock production and reduce costs, particularly that of outside labour. Consequently livestock numbers grew rapidly from the mid sixties onwards. The outcome has been possible over-production, reduced expenditure, harder work by the owner operator and some unemployment in the bush.....

Due to its proximity to Sydney... land values around Oberon...have risen to values which are totally non viable for farming.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Louisa Roberts Senior Geography Project for HSC 1997,

5. Law and Order

Bushrangers and Cattle Rustlers

The wild, heavily timbered and, in places, rugged terrain of the Oberon district and its situation on the geographic and cultural fringe of the colonial establishment made it an attractive location for those who wished to remain outside the law. As well as providing a safe haven for bushrangers from other districts, some of Oberon's sons added to the ranks of the bushrangers. The Burraborang Valley to the east and the Abercrombie region in the south were both renowned hideouts, offering the natural protection of difficult terrain. Some of the names in the district evoke those wild days. Bushrangers Hill, near Native Dog Creek (north-west of Black Springs) was perhaps used as a lookout by bushrangers.

Considerable bushranging activity occurred just to the southwest of the shire. Ben Hall, for example, with Dunn, O'Meally, Vane and Burke, held up Assistant Gold Commissioner Keightly at Dunn's Plains near Rockley, keeping him hostage over night while his wife rode the 40 kilometres into Bathurst to raise 500 pounds ransom money from her father. Ben Hall is rumoured to have also been in the Oberon district. The general store at Wiseman's Creek (now the shearing shed at Mountain View) "boasts of a visit from the famous Ben Hall and was held up several times by the bush rangers".²¹⁰ The Maloney family of Porters Retreat have a story that the Maloney patriarch Danny had made boots for Ben Hall and his gang.²¹¹

Early Bushrangers

Robert Dumaresq, in the account of his visit to Bathurst in 1827, writes sarcastically about the area round the head of the Campbell's River:

It is here in this bleak and distant country that cattle stealing has flourished, undetected, and unknown, and where it has become a sudden source of wealth to the most undeserving and obscure persons. Thinly scattered over a wide and difficult country, the entire population has hitherto only consisted of men in charge of great herds of cattle, seldom visited by their ownerssome have evinced a love of *letters* quite remarkable.....The *learned* leisure and studies of these Bathurst stockmen....is confined to the alphabet, and all their research and ingenuity is how to alter the brand marks on their neighbours' property.²¹²

That is they duff cattle and alter the brands on them.

As early as 1825 Captain Fennell who was Commandant at Bathurst "passed over the greater part of (Captain King's run of 7000 acres, from what was later Essington to Oberon) when in pursuit of Bushrangers".

These would doubtless have been escaped convicts. In August 1825 a "confederation among runaway convicts, called Bushrangers, for the purpose of robbery and murder" was reported.²¹³

A mounted corps, called Stewart's Police was dispatched to Bathurst in December 1825, and things were quieter until the rampage of the Ribbon Gang in 1830. Ralph Entwistle, leader of

²¹⁰ Betty Somerville) p.7

²¹¹ Lorraine Maloney, p.3

²¹² A Ride to Bathurst, 1827 – Six Letters, in G. Mackaness p.193

²¹³ by Major Morisset, the Bathurst commandant, in Bernard Greaves,.26

the Ribbon Gang, was due for his ticket of leave but for the trifling matter of swimming naked in the Macquarie River when Governor Darling happened to be passing with some ladies, he lost his ticket of leave and was flogged. The rampage included several premises at Dunn's Plains, and 'Charlton' on the Campbell's River. Entwistle and nine others were finally arrested probably in the Abercrombie area after several battles with police, and hanged for murder and robbery in November 1830.²¹⁴

Sources on the arrest of the Ribbon Gang are confusing as to details. Charles Macalister nephew of Captain Lachlan Macalister who was Chief Officer of the Southern District, based at Goulburn, wrote:

A party of soldiers and police were sent out from the old Goulburn Station, in 1831, under the command of Captain L. Macalister....to co-operate with the Bathurst forces. The outlaws had now broken up into small gangs of three or four each, the better to elude capture. The Goulburn party came up with one of those gangs at Shooter's Hill, near Oberon, and in the fight that followed, a shot from one of the bushrangers wounded Captain Macalister in the thigh, and on hearing the officer groan, the outlaw sang out "Ah! I believe I got you that time, Officer," unguardedly putting his head out of the cover ... to note the effect of the shot. The Captain immediately fired at the exposed "mark," shooting the convict through the head. Then going up to the slain man, he said, "Yes, you hit me, old man, but not half as hard as I've hit you." The other two men of the gang surrendered.²¹⁵

This may be the conflation of two incidents, as Captain Macalister was wounded arresting the Ribbon Gang in rough country near the Abercrombie River, but there were apparently several skirmishes. Perhaps this was a splinter group, the numbers of the group being given as anything from 20 to 134, however it is a possible explanation for the name Shooters' Hill. In keeping with that struggle of the two poles of the law, a gaol, Oberon Afforestation Camp, was set up there in the 1931.

Macalister goes on to recount a story of another shoot-out between the same Goulburn police and "a gang of desperadoes near the Fish River (Jenolan) Caves." After two hours of shooting, and one bushranger being badly wounded, the ringleader called to police to ask that the fight be put off until the next morning. As police ammunition was running short, Captain Macalister agreed and sent for more. When it arrived he resisted suggestions of ambushing the bushrangers as he had given his word. The next day two more were shot down and the last man captured, and begged to be shot. This was refused. "I suppose the weight of my hindquarters will break my neck," the bushranger said.

Some of the Irish convict families in the Oberon shire continued in crime for two or three generations.

Among these were the Cosgrove family. Three Cosgroves, brothers Thomas and David, and Manus, Thomas' son, arrived as convicts between 1819 and 1823, and David's wife, Cecily, followed.

A feature of the Cosgroves' lives was numerous charges, mostly for horse and cattle stealing, and few convictions. Like many oppressed people they were in an antisocial cycle of crime and informing. For many convicts, coming to Australia finally brought the opportunity to own land, but this was thwarted several times in the case of the Cosgroves, largely by the

²¹⁴ Theo Barker, p.80

²¹⁵ Barker p.75

influence of major Taralga landholders like William Macarthur and William Pitt Faithfull.²¹⁶ The first land they were able to buy successfully was 30 acres near the head of the Little River in 1853.

In 1838 William Macarthur wrote to the Colonial Secretary to complain about the “dishonest and disorderly” people living in the Taralga district, and requesting that the Commissioner for the District Crown Lands “proceed against them”. As a result William Pitt Faithfull, who held that position in the Goulburn district made a list of “dishonest and abandoned” squatters and asked that they be removed from Crown lands. He named Thomas Dawson, Henry Hogan, Michael Hogan, Patrick Conlan, Burrell (Berrell), Croker the son-in-law of Burrell, Daniel McQuirk, Manus, Thomas and David Cosgrove, though conceded that David was supposed to be an honest man, James and Dennis McNamara. Consequently most of these people found it almost impossible to take up land in the county of Argyle (Taralga district) and many of them ended up settling north of the Abercrombie in Oberon shire.²¹⁷

In 1838 Manus and his wife Margaret were squatting at Mt Werong for which Manus was later fined.²¹⁸ Also residing in that extremely remote place was Edward Lannigan, fellow convict with Manus’ on the Recovery in 1823. Gundungurra leader, Billy Russell described Lannigan as follows:

A strange kind of man named Lannigan lived out towards Mt Werong, at a place called the Hole [probably Burnt Hole], and was I consider a very wild fellow, and much worse than a black fellow. He took a great interest in other peoples’ cattle, and always did his stock work on foot, often with only a shirt on.²¹⁹

Lannigan was probably the first white man to reach the Boyd Range about 1840, and was reputed to rob teams and have a holding yard on Box Creek on the way to the Kowmung River.²²⁰

The 1860s were the climax of the bushranging era. Cattle duffing and horse stealing were common place. In *A Brief History of the Exploits Early Berrell Families of the County of Georgiana* Yvonne Berrell writes

Some country lads were led into bushranging under the influence of small time offenders, others largely for profit, others drifted into lawless ways simply because they knew no better, having followed their parents' example. They became cattle duffers or horse thieves, receivers of stolen property, harbourers or bush telegraphs and finally, after repeated brushes with the law, found themselves involved in major robberies²²¹.

The bushrangers were acquainted with the cross-coves, cattle duffers and horse thieves, especially those from the Abercrombie area, a safe place, which provided cover while “lying low”²²²

²¹⁶ Brian Johnston pp.44-5

²¹⁷ pers. comm. Alan Hoolihan, 12.9.02

²¹⁸ Brian Johnston., p. 46

²¹⁹ in *My Recollections* from Jim Barrett, *Kowmung River*, p.32

²²⁰ Jim Barrett, *Kowmung River* p.32

²²¹ p.9

²²² Yvonne Berrell. p.14

The Captain King's Inn at Wiseman's Creek was operating from 1858, and survives as a house. Part of its mythology is that the owners used to hang out red checked tablecloths on the clothesline as an all clear signal to the bushrangers waiting in the hills.²²³

The first generation of bushrangers were escaped convicts or ex-convicts, and generally operated without confrontation and were often little more than cattle duffers. The next generation was native born, rode fast, often stolen horses, were armed and bailed up travellers and stores²²⁴, and landholders, especially during the goldrushes. A Mr Clayton of the Abercrombie, for example, was robbed of 21 ounces of gold (over half a kilogram) and a gold watch while on a dray with three other men about two miles from O'Connell in 1861. One of the two thieves was armed with a double-barrelled gun.²²⁵

A Mr Maclean of the Surveyor General's Department reported in 1863 that

Lawlessness is right through the (Bullock Flats) district and numerous consignments of gold have been held back under guard because of the danger of bushrangers. Many of the public houses have suffered from the bushrangers...Bushranging in the district is at present almost impossible to stop without a strong force of armed men.²²⁶

Some time after about 1863 David Smith Todd apprehended a Chinese man who had stolen money from his parents store at Wiseman's Creek. After quite a struggle

We secured him, I saw a young man going by the place and told him I had apprehended a chinaman for robbing the store, and asked him would he be so kind as to come and help me mind the prisoner until the police arrived, not knowing that he was a bushranger himself, but he told me to go to a very hot place, and passed on.²²⁷

Although transportation of convicts to NSW ended in 1840, some of the Irish were still dispossessed. The resentment of British law was still passionate, and antisocial behaviour widespread. Connections by marriage wove a strong network between the families of the Abercrombie and Oberon area. Big time and minor bushrangers formed gangs that constantly re-arranged themselves and at times turned on each other.

Larry Cummins, who held up the Mudgee Mail and attempted to hold up the Webb's store at Mutton Falls, came from south of the Abercrombie and was married to Bridget Francis. Bridget's father had a grog shanty on the Abercrombie River at Tamborambora Ford²²⁸, where the Bathurst –Goulburn road crossed the river, and his sister Honora was married to Daniel McGuirk, who was convicted with his son Thomas and son-in-law Patrick Grady of armed robbery.²²⁹

The Foran brothers, bushrangers Patrick and John, were first cousins of Thomas and James Kessey. Thomas Kessey, with two others held up the Bathurst to Orange mail coach in June 1864. The Kesseys and Forans were cousins of the same Patrick Grady jnr, (son-in-law of Daniel McGuirk).²³⁰ The family came from Brisbane Valley (Foley's Creek area).

²²³ Betty Somerville, p.21

²²⁴ Boxall, p.86

²²⁵ *The Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, May 11, 1861

²²⁶ Alan Brown's Historical Notes 12.8.1987

²²⁷ Betty Somerville, p.9

²²⁸ Kevin Toole, p.9

²²⁹ Edgar Penzig *The Sandy Creek Bushranger*, p.12

²³⁰ Lucy Price

One local bushranging drama involved Fred Lowry who was attending a race meeting at Brisbane Valley on the property of Daniel McGuirk, with local lad, John Foley. Lowry was drunk and bailed up a number of people. During an altercation he shot Patrick Foran in the chest. In spite of his injury he held Lowry until others took over²³¹.

Larry Cummins, who had been involved in the Mudgee Mail hold-up in July 1863 with Fred Lowry and John Foley, was arrested in August 1863 and gaoled for 15 years. He escaped from Berrima Gaol and committed more robberies including the attempt at Mutton Falls, before being arrested at the hut of his brother-in-law Josiah Cramp at Porters Retreat in 1867. The scars from where Robert Webb had shot him on his right cheek and neck at the Mutton Falls hold-up, were noted at his arrest. He had joined up with John Foran after his escape. John Foran was also arrested in 1867 at Larry Cummins' mother's house.

According to Frank Clune while preparing to rob the Mudgee Mail

Fred Lowry, with his mates, Larry Cummins and Jack Foley, had their plant in the Fish River neighbourhood, about thirty miles from Bathurst and not far from Hartley Vale at the headwaters of the Macquarie River²³²

There are two Fish Rivers (not including which makes bushranging stories confusing. The other is at the head of the Lachlan, but this is clearly the Oberon one²³³.

A passenger on the Mudgee Mail was Mr Kater, an accountant at a bank in Mudgee, carrying 5,700 pounds. That Mr Kater is a relation of the Kater family who have owned Swatchfield, one of the Oberon district's major properties, for the last 70 or so years.

John Foley's brother Francis was convicted of holding up a Chinese camp on Campbell's River in 1863.

Another bushranger with a Porters Retreat connection was John Peisley, an accomplice of Frank Gardiner. He was hanged for the murder of Bill Benyon of Bigga in 1861²³⁴. Charles Macalister wrote that he'

met Peisley on an occasion when we were buying some cattle from Abercrombie settlers. Peisley was one of the men who helped us with the cattle out of "Paling Yards", but it was years before he started as "under-study" to Frank Gardiner, and as a matter of fact, Peisley had in him the material of better things...²³⁵

Many of the old Oberon families have their bushranger stories, some as victims, some as perpetrators. Generally speaking the bushrangers were of Irish Catholic descent, and usually, did not steal from their own kind. At the height of their activity bushrangers caused great fear in the rural NSW, and undoubtedly confrontation with bushrangers would have been traumatic. Their behaviour was often heartless, but some of the Oberon stories suggest that they had not entirely lost their humanity, and some are positively comical.

Sister Dominica recounts the experience of her Stapleton grandmother at Isabella:

²³¹ Narelle Kissell

²³² Frank Clune *Wild Colonial Boys* (Angus and Robertson, 1948) p.459 cited in Maurice Cummins, p 48

²³³ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan, 19.9.02

²³⁴ *Theo Barker* p.218

²³⁵ Macalister, p.288

There was a race course at the top of the hill from Granny's house. The bushrangers visited it on at least one occasion. They came down to Granny's house and were going through a big cabin trunk Granny had containing clothes. There were sovereigns and other money in a roll of material and Granny snatched it and said, "Give here that. I have nothing else to cover my little boys' nakedness." They let her have the roll of "drill" containing the money.²³⁶

Ab Whalan in "My Memories of Uncle Cam, C.J. Whalan, Cam11" wrote:

He and Johnny Whalan, his cousin, were bailed up on the Mount, coming home from Bathurst by Lowry and Cummins' gang, but when they found out who they were they give them back what they had taken. They did not have very much on them"

George Beattie, who arrived in Oberon in the 1840s, built a two storey wood and pise house (still standing) near the Duckmaloi River. One day in the 1850s or 1860s his children were swimming in the creek when bushrangers rode up. One of the children ran to the house unseen and warned George who was sick upstairs in bed. The bushrangers brought the children up to the house and called for George to come down, but when he did not they fired a shot into the balustrade and rode away.²³⁷

Fawcett's store on the Sydney road, a few hundred metres east of the Fish River Creek bridge, also had a visitation from bushrangers who stole Dr Eaton's horse.

The McKinnons arrived at Porters Retreat in 1868, and when James and his son ? were away with sheep at Silent Creek some men rode up to the house, took what food they had and rode away eating it. ? who was a child at the time and was sure they were bushrangers.²³⁸

Ann Webb's store at Mutton Falls was a frequent target for bushrangers. Ann's formidable daughter Hannah foiled two attempts. In May 1864 two bushrangers bailed up the family, but Hannah broke away and ran to her brother next door for help. Henry Stratton and Richard Norris were later arrested and charged with the offence.²³⁹

In April 1867 Larry Cummins' and John Foran's attempt to hold up the store failed because of Hannah, who warned her brother Robert. Robert fired at Cummins' face and the bushrangers exchanged shots and escaped leaving a trail of blood, their hats, a bottle of whisky and a purse containing 25/- in silver, the last two from their spoils from a holdup of a hotel near Bathurst earlier.

Family legend has it that in one hold-up Hannah threw the gold sovereigns into a vat of fat that was rendering on the stove. Another time she threatened a bushranger with a hot iron poker. He said, "I've heard of you before."

William Webb was responsible for the arrest of Alexander and Charles Ross and William O'Connor who had held up a store at Caloola, near Bathurst and shot the storekeeper in the throat.²⁴⁰

A relation of Ann Webb's, Mary Mutton, had an encounter with Ben Hall and Johnny Vane near Bathurst in 1863. They demanded a key to her store but instead received a lecture on

²³⁶ Esma Stapleton, Sister Dominica

²³⁷ pers. comm. with Ross Beattie, 14.9.02

²³⁸ pers. comm. with Hubert McKinnon, 10.9.02

²³⁹ Edgar Penzig, *Rogues, Vagabonds and Bloody Thieves*, pp.42-3

²⁴⁰ Ken Muggleston, pp.9-10

their evil ways. Vane accidentally set fire to her curtains and the two tore them down and stamped out the blaze, burning their hands in the process. Mrs Mutton dressed their hands, and according to family legend Hall promised to leave her family's property alone.

Hall honoured his promise. ...Proof of this was contained in the loss and recovery of a valuable thoroughbred stallion, owned by Thomas Sidmouth Mutton, of Wattle Grove Station, near Oberon. One night, the entire [stallion], Kingston, was stolen and taken away through the Abercrombie Ranges. In such cases the horse thieves invariable procedure was to shoot and burn the body of a stolen blood stallion after it had served mares owned by their friends. Knowing this Mr Mutton was greatly surprised –and highly delighted - when, 18 months later, he was informed that Kingston had been found contentedly grazing in the horse paddock of the police station at Rockley.²⁴¹

Many bushrangers, like Fred Lowry, ended their lives violently, however a number of local lads served their time and lived to raise successful families, among them the Forans and Foleys. John Foran served a reduced sentence for good conduct and no prior convictions.²⁴² John Foley was charged for his part in the Mudgee Mail Robbery. During his sentence he confessed to a priest where he had hidden his share of the money, which was recovered. He was released after serving ten years of a fifteen year sentence and after his release became a highly respected citizen and churchman at Black Springs.²⁴³

Police

In 1834 a bush or district constable was appointed at the outstation of O'Connell, as it was 'a somewhat populous spot'. Constable Samuel Taylor was the first policeman appointed to O'Connell and within weeks he had apprehended 'two desperate runaway convicts who had decamped from the service of William Lawson, junior, of Macquarie Plains (Brewongle).²⁴⁴

On 3rd August, 1863, 17 residents of the Fish River district signed a letter addressed to W. Cummings Esq. M.L.C., Sydney:

From Hartley to Goulburn (a good road), not one single policeman is stationed, and extent of country not similarly treated in the whole Colony..

I may remark that the two last robberies upon the Mudgee Mail and the Bathurst down Sydney mail, the perpetrators in each instance took this road and at the present moment it is reported that a most notorious nest of Highway Robbers are living publicly on this road having recently built stabling house etc. upon Government Ground. I allude to John Foley and Frank Lowry, in fact this seems to be a kind of back door for the escape of any scoundrel that thinks proper to turn Highwayman.

A report on this petition from the Police Department on 10 September stated that:

Though police have not been regularly located on this spot, I may state that for the last six weeks two parties of police have been constantly patrolling that part of the country in search of offenders.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Vera Joan Lynch & Kenneth Roughley p.39

²⁴² Roy Mendham

²⁴³ G.M. Cashman, p.34

²⁴⁴ Denis J. Chamberlain, p.8

²⁴⁵ Narelle Kissell

This was the year Oberon was proclaimed. Apparently the complaint was heeded. The earliest record of the Oberon police station in NSW State Archives is a diary of duty dated from 1864.

A police station, originally called Glencoe, also briefly existed at Porters Retreat on the Shooters Hill Road about a kilometre from the Abercrombie Road. It was established in 1903 and had a strength of two mounted constables, but by 1908 it was one mounted constable and a tracker. The building was originally a slab selector's hut with an iron roof, taken over by the Police department. A tracker's hut and stable were added, the latter built of slabs and bark. The station was closed in 1914, the last police man was Senior Constable J.W.Dohman.²⁴⁶

Gaol

Oberon Prison Camp was established at Shooters Hill in 1931 to clear and plant the Gurnang State Forest (pine forest). Initially the men lived in tents until the buildings were built, and cleared the country with axes²⁴⁷. The Prison Camp played an important role in the community, providing transport and delivery of stores to the people of Shooters Hill, help to maintain the roads. Film night on Saturday nights was attended by people in the local community, and the Oberon Garden Club would visit to see the beautiful gardens established there²⁴⁸. The first governor was Jack Hagan

By the early 1960s it was one of the state's largest Prison Afforestation Camps with up to 70 inmates and nine officers²⁴⁹.

In 1993 the prison camp changed to Oberon Young Offenders Correctional Centre. The young offender program that had begun the previous year at Newnes Afforestation Camp, moved to Oberon when Newnes closed (1993), and a four month course including adventure based education was designed by Dennis Carey and Jane Watson. The program, which involves three camps in the Kanangra-Boyd National Parks, is still running. The gaol is to be expanded from 100 beds to 130.

²⁴⁶ unsourced photocopy in Oberon Museum

²⁴⁷ pers. comm. with Hubert McKinnon 10.9.02

²⁴⁸ pers. comm. with Marion Fawcett 15.9.02

²⁴⁹ Alan Brown's Historical Notes,

6. Tourism

Jenolan Caves

The Aboriginal name for the Caves is Binoomea, meaning dark places. Binoomea figures in an important Gundungurra story of ‘Gurangatch and Mirragan’. The story tells of the creation of the Wombeyan Caves, but in it Binoomea already existed. Jeremiah Wilson (the first warden) maintained that Aboriginal people never went into the Caves, and no evidence of Aboriginal art, occupation or voluntary visitation of the dark show caves has been established²⁵⁰

Information in an article in the Sydney Mail in 1896²⁵¹ reporting Billy Lynch, a Gundungurra leader, speaking about his people’s customs, needs to be reconciled with this unequivocal statement:

Lynch says Mr Jerry Wilson is wrong in thinking the natives did not know or enter the Jenolan Caves. The old natives knew the caves. They penetrated them as far as the subterranean water, carrying in sick people to be bathed in this water, which they believed to have great curative powers. Sick people were carried there from considerable distance.

Billy Lynch may have been referring to caves which have some daylight. The fear of the dark caves is borne out in some Gundungurra legends recently published by Jim Smith. In them Migge, the Great Spirit does battle with the Dark Ones, the enemies of people, “who dwelt in the dark places of the world...rivers, caves, and deep in the bowels of the earth” and hate light.²⁵²

Although the significance the Caves had in Gundungurra culture is not clear it is apparent, at least from the creation story, that it is an important site.

In 1987 the NSW Aboriginal Land Council complained of the insensitivity of making a tourist feature of the skeleton of an Aboriginal who died some 19 000 years ago.²⁵³ Whether the body was washed by a flood into the cave or died there is unknown. As a result the name ‘Skeleton Cave’ has been changed and visitors are no longer shown the remains.

The European discovery of Jenolan Caves is shrouded in romance and mystery. Escaped convicts were doubtless its first white discoverers, using the rugged terrain of the area as a safe haven, but it was apparently first officially seen by James Whalan, owner of Gingkin Station about 12 kilometres to the west. Legend has it that he was apprehending the petty thief James McKeown with a policeman from Hartley. James’ brother, Charles Whalan, first explored the Caves with Nicholas Irwin, probably in 1838, although accounts of their exploration were written many years later, and no evidence of James McKeown’s trial or incarceration have been found.

McKeown was said in a newspaper article to have resided at ‘McKeown’s Hole’, which probably refers to the whole valley rather than a cave.

²⁵⁰ pers. comm. Domino Holbrook Cove, Senior Guide, Jenolan Caves Trust, 8.8.2002

²⁵¹ Reprinted from “Round About the Mountains” *Sydney Mail*, 12 Dec 1896, contributed by Jim Smith to *Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society Newsletter*, October 1987

²⁵² Jim Smith *Legends of the Blue Mountains Valleys* pp. 2-3

²⁵³ Glascott, Joseph *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17.2.1987

One of the romantic tales surrounding the Caves was told in a tourist guide about 1888.²⁵⁴ Cattle rustler, Luke White, who was convicted of stealing cattle at Bendo (Bindo, nearby) in August 1839, was camped in one of the caves when he had a horrifying nocturnal encounter with Satan, cracking his whip and driving his coach and four through the cave. Hence the name of the cave, the “Devil’s Coach House”.

In those days when there were no fences stockmen must have covered some of the Jenolan and Kanangra areas in search of straying cattle. Such characters as Luke White, James Fariney and the Cheetham brothers were reputed to know the existence of the Caves, but it was destined to be through McEwan...a convict, (who) had been assigned to a settler on the Fish River²⁵⁵

Jenolan Caves is regarded as Australia’s first tourist attraction outside Sydney. Charles Whalan acted at first as honorary guide and later his sons took over. Visitors for many years stayed at his farm house at “Glyndwr”, Oberon,²⁵⁶ sometimes parties of up to 25 arriving without notice,

“as hospitality was unbounded, friends and strangers were all treated alike.. Many a matrimonial match was made during these excursions”,

wrote one of Charles Whalan’s daughters²⁵⁷. The women would be accommodated in the house, three to a bed, and the men would camp, often in Whalan’s flour mill²⁵⁸. Compared to most early settlers houses around Oberon “Glyndwr” was luxurious: constructed of milled weatherboard with a shingled roof, wooden floors, plastered interior walls, large rooms, brick chimneys and “the many windows contained glass”.²⁵⁹

Access to the Caves was part of the adventure. The earliest visitors rode to the Caves with pack horses, dismounting to walk up and down the mountain as it was too steep to ride, and camping in the Grand Arch, often staying for several days²⁶⁰. This informal tourism continued until the government appointed a guide and caretaker, Jeremiah Wilson, of Lucindale, Fish River Creek, in 1867. The Caves Reserve was declared in 1866. At this time the Caves were generally known as the Fish River Caves, as that was the direction early visitors arrived from, or Bindo Caves or McKeown’s Caves. After some debate the name of the Caves was changed to Jenolan in 1884, after the name of the parish.

Fortunately for the Caves only the Nettle, Arch, Elder, and Lucas caves had been discovered by 1867, as the tourists caused terrible vandalism, souveniring great quantities of the delicate formations. Of those Caves only the Lucas is still a show cave. In 1872 the breaking of stalactites became a punishable offence.

Damage still occurred for some time after. Jeremiah ensured people did not break the formations deliberately but if they were broken accidentally people were allowed to keep the pieces.

²⁵⁴ Woolcott’s *Tourists’ Pocket Guide* in Ward L. Havard p.7

²⁵⁵ unsourced from the archives of Alan Brown

²⁵⁶ Ronald F. Whalan p.59

²⁵⁷ probably Sarah, in Alan Brown’s *Historical Notes*, *Oberon Review* 21.10.1987, from the 1949 booklet *Pioneers Hughes and Whalan* p.29

²⁵⁸ Ronald F. Whalan p. 56

²⁵⁹ Whalan p.67

²⁶⁰ *Pioneers Hughes and Whalan*,

Gradually access to the Caves became easier and tourist facilities were built there. A dancing platform was set up in the Grand Arch in 1869. Revellers danced to the fiddle or accordion by bramble flare and lantern light until midnight when Jerry Wilson cracked his stockwhip, and the cave became a dormitory²⁶¹. Part of the appeal of visiting the Caves was the adventure. Some commentators lament the improvements as diminishing the experience. At a ceremony in 1919

How different – steps and stairs made paths and electric light all along during the inspection. One lady could remember when visitors tied one end of a ball of string or reel of strong cotton, and fastened it to a sapling outside the entrance. They then proceeded carrying lighted candles and unwinding the cord as they went forward – sometimes walking at times crawling and even wriggling along on their stomachs, climbing hazardous places and being dragged through holes. What fun they had in those good old days.²⁶²

Routes to the Caves

Although access to the Caves was extremely difficult, by 1884 there were three routes: the choice had ramifications on towns miles away. Oberon initially had the monopoly on tourist traffic, but when the Railway reached Mt Victoria in 1868 it had to compete with the shorter eastern route. Access to the Caves from the east actually started for a few tourists in the 1850s, following an old cart track over Mt Bindo to Hartley with accommodation available at Binda Cattle Station, about 13 kilometres from the Caves.²⁶³ The last two kilometres had to be made on foot or horse because of the steepness. A third access was introduced in 1884 with the formation of the Six Foot Track from Katoomba, a riding or walking track for the adventurous. So called because it is six feet wide, it passed down the Blue Mountains cliffs at Nellie's Glen and through the wild country of the Megalong Valley and Cox's River, climbed the formidable Black Range and dropped down into the Jenolan Caves Valley. The Governor and his wife, Lord and Lady Carrington, made the first recorded trip on horseback in 1887. After staying at the Caves they went on to Oberon in a blinding snowstorm, and were entertained the next day with a ploughing match. Oberon hoteliers were unimpressed at this rival route.²⁶⁴

The coming of the railway to Tarana in 1879, and the Oberon zig-zag road which would “try the nerves of timid people”²⁶⁵ down the “Two Mile” secured Oberon's advantage. Jeremiah Wilson could now drive his coach with its four grey horses right to the Caves from the Tarana station. However in 1885 when the “Five Mile” was completed almost to the Grand Arch, Mt Victoria gained much of the tourist trade. The Limestone Bridge was the final part of the road to the Grand Arch. Finally that road was brought through the Grand Arch to link with the Oberon road in 1896.²⁶⁶ By this time there were nearly 2000 visitors a year and the numbers growing vigorously. In 1926, 84 000 went through the Caves.²⁶⁷

The issue of Oberon's tourist link with Jenolan Caves continues. Resident action has pushed for an upgrade to the route from Oberon since the early 1980s, and a small additional section has been sealed. Because of traffic congestion and concern that cars driving through the Grand Arch create ecological problems in the Caves, alternative routes were considered in a

²⁶¹ Havard p.23

²⁶² *Pioneers – Hughes and Whalans*

²⁶³ *Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society Newsletter*, September 1984

²⁶⁴ Jim Smith *From Katoomba to Jenolan Caves* p. 10-11

²⁶⁵ Youdale, J.B. the Fish River Caves, in *Bathurst Times*, 16.4.1881

²⁶⁶ Havard, pp.33-4

²⁶⁷ Grace Karskens, p.32

study undertaken by the Jenolan Caves Trust in 1993-4. These include aerial cable cars either from the east or west.²⁶⁸ As yet a decision has not been made.

Rowe's Cottage was the home of Joseph Rowe. It is located up the McKeown's Valley not far from the point where the river disappears into its bed prior to its journey underground through the caves. All that remains of it is the chimney and the foundations. Joseph occasionally guided although he is better known for his work as a photographer at the Caves in the late 1800's.

Jenolan Caves Accommodation

In 1880 Jeremiah Wilson had a wood and corrugated iron building put up with five bedrooms, which was almost immediately regarded as inadequate. This was supplemented in 1887 by a large two-story wooden building accommodating about 30 visitors, with "every convenience that visitors can want", except a licence for alcohol, but the old building with dining rooms and now 12 bedrooms disappeared in a conflagration in 1895.

Wilson's lease of two acres was terminated, and the government seized control, putting in the road from the east the same year. The character of the Caves as a tourist resort transformed from a bush adventure to a luxurious colonial adventure. The Department of Railways promoted Caves and tourism soared. (Contrary to popular belief, Caves House was not run by the railways.)

Jenolan Caves House as we know it began. A limestone house, designed by the government architect W L Vernon took the place of the first one in 1897. This building with billiard and smoking room was in line with a tourist development in the Upper Blue Mountains of grand hotels and guest houses providing rural retreats for the wealthy.²⁶⁹ This style of development continued with Wilson's two-storey building being replaced by a two storey stone one in 1909, but even the 100 beds were inadequate for the demand, so in 1916 the palatial Tudor-style three-storey building was built, containing the current dining room.²⁷⁰ The buildings provide tourists with a sense of being transported into another world, romantic English colonial solidity in the midst of the wilds of Australia.²⁷¹ Simultaneously it is comforting and alienating from the landscape.

Jenolan Caves had electricity very early, well before Oberon, produced first by a steam driven dynamo in the Grand Arch from 1887, and then in 1889 by the water-driven Leffel wheel, Australia's first employment of hydro-electric power²⁷².

In 1989 the NSW government leased out Jenolan Caves House and other buildings to Peppers Hotel Group.²⁷³ The lease is now held by Archer Field.

Cave Exploration

Cave exploration has continued until the present day. Most of the major caves were discovered by the caretakers: Jeremiah Wilson, followed in 1896 by his brother F J Wilson in 1896, and J C (Voss) Wiburd from 1903 –1932. Oliver Trickett made extremely accurate surveys of the Caves in 1897-98 and 1903-4.

²⁶⁸ Oberon Review, 8.6.1994 pp.9,10,15.

²⁶⁹ Karskens p. 7

²⁷⁰ Havard. Pp. 38-46

²⁷¹ Steve Opper *Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society Newsletter*, October 1988, p. 5

²⁷² Karskens p. 4

²⁷³ Oberon Review 5.7.1989

Today there are nine show caves equipped with lighting and pathways, the Lucas, Imperial, Jubilee, Chifley, River, Pool of Cerberus, Orient, Temple of Baal and Ribbon Caves. In all 328 caves have been discovered though there may be many more. Speleological clubs are still exploring, the most recent major find being The World of Mud, a major extension in the Mammoth Cave, by the Sydney Speleological Society in 1999.

Today nearly 250,000 people visit the Caves each year.

Tuglow Caves

Henry and Cornelius Wilson of Tuglow reported their discovery of Tuglow Caves to the Department of Mines in 1884, but are recorded as having found them in 1879²⁷⁴. These are undeveloped wild caves with a difficult access requiring ladders and ropes and are beloved of speleological societies.

Among early visitors were members of the Bouchier and McKinnon families who carved their names on cave walls especially in Trickett's Tunnel. Government geologist Oliver Trickett visited the caves in 1897, assisted by Messrs Brennan, J.P., Luther and Bouchier. Earlier that year the Reverend W J Harrison of Oberon had requested that steps be taken to preserve the caves. The early local families explored the bottom reaches of the stream way without any of the caving paraphernalia, such as a winch used by a 1934 expedition reported by O C Glanville. The first Glanville expedition did not reach the streamway.

Access was originally with packhorse from Tuglow, but in 1965 a firetrail was blazed right to the main cave entrance from the other side. With such easy access terrible cave vandalism was happening, which largely ceased when the National parks and Wildlife Service closed the last kilometre of road. Two members of the Newcastle Speleological Association, Mike and Mal Leyland made a television documentary of Tuglow Caves for their series *The Leyland Brothers* with Mike abseiling into the cave.²⁷⁵

Tourist Accommodation in Oberon Shire

Hotels and Guest Houses

The earliest known inn in the shire was at O'Connell, the Plough Inn opened by Daniel Roberts in 1833 and apparently closing in 1863. The Willow Glen Hotel was opened by Patrick Dwyer on the northern bank of the Fish River in 1859 but was condemned in 1885. The present O'Connell Hotel is said to have been built as an inn in 1865, on land bought by Donald Campbell from Reverend Thomas Hassall. In 1870 Patrick Dwyer took out its first liquor licence²⁷⁶. (Thomas Condon became licensee in 1895, and bought the land in 1920. In 1930 the hotel was extended to include accommodation and the building was re-roofed in iron; the original shingle roof on the wattle and daub section is still visible underneath.²⁷⁷)

The lure of the Caves has always had a major impact on the economy and development of Oberon. In 1857 James Doust opened the Wheat Sheaf Inn "near the Bullock Flat" (between the primary and high schools)²⁷⁸ to attract "the inhabitants generally of the Fish River, and parties visiting Fish River Caves". He also operated a general store. The inn was burnt down two years later, but may have been rebuilt as Bailliere's Gazetteer refers to it as the one hotel

²⁷⁴ archives of Merv Dwyer

²⁷⁵ Martin Scott, Keir Vaughan-Taylor

²⁷⁶ Doney, Clague & Clague. pp.12-13

²⁷⁷ Doney, Clague & Clague

²⁷⁸ Personal communication from Alan Brown, 2.8.2002

in 1866. The Oberon Inn was operating at least in 1867-8 when Mrs Spencer was the licensee²⁷⁹.

In 1886 visitors to the Caves could stay in Oberon with Mr Wilson (the warden), or at the Royal Hotel, or the Welcome Inn.²⁸⁰ In 1906 at Donnelly's and McKeown's Royal or Mrs Kisbee's Crown were "well worthy of public patronage"²⁸¹. Guest houses opened around the turn of that century providing city dwellers with generous country hospitality, home-grown food, healthy living and adventure, and the owners of some with a supplement to meagre farm incomes.

Capitalising on the attraction of Jenolan Caves were two guesthouses at Gingkin, Westbrook and Frankfort both on the Gingkin Road. Frankfort, with a fine garden and orchard was owned by Frank and Clara Bate, who were married in 1884. Westbrook was owned by the Brennans. In 1906 both were 'well patronised' according to the *Lithgow Mercury*²⁸². Cecil Poole, its correspondent stayed at Westbrook in 1907 and noted "from 15 to 20 can be put up and ...the class of accommodation appears to be excellent"²⁸³. Later (1925) it was run by Mrs L Butchart, and offered shooting, riding and tennis on 400 acres.

Sunnyclime, at Essington, now part of Arthur Lang's property Sweet Wattle, was opened by Sabina Rogers after her husband Thomas died. Mrs Rogers had 13 children, 11 surviving at the time. The older boys built extra rooms on to the house. Guests were met at Wambool Railway Station and transported to Sunnyclime by horse and sulky. Entertainment consisted of tennis, shooting or fishing, or relaxing in the extensive garden with topiaries of privet clipped into armchairs, and an ivy house. Arthur Lang recalls going there for Anglican church services, held on the full moon so neighbours could see their way home. The service was followed by dinner and a dance to violin or accordion. The guest house closed about 1926.²⁸⁴

Another widow, Catherine Fitzpatrick, opened her house *Hazelgrove* on the Hazelgrove Road to provide meals for travellers after her husband died in 1896.

Ralph and Emma Wilson opened the Dartford Guesthouse at Black Springs early in the century. It was still running about 1929.²⁸⁵ Weona Farm at Edith was also run as a guest house for a while.

In 1925 The Brighton Hotel (in the main street on the site where the BP service station was)²⁸⁶ was operating. It later became a boarding house and was used by pea pickers, and finally burnt down. The Tourist Hotel was built nearby.

Mrs Hanrahan, whose husband Jack was a blacksmith, operated a tea room and guest house in the main street of Oberon, where the laundry is today. The tea room was on the premises of the current Oberon Stamps and Coins²⁸⁷.

²⁷⁹ Denis J. Chamberlain p.13

²⁸⁰ from *The Railway Guide of NSW* 1886, in Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 23.10.1985.

²⁸¹ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 8.2.89

²⁸² from the *Lithgow Mercury* 22.11.1906, in Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 6.9.1989

²⁸³ Alan Brown's Historical Notes 19.4.1989

²⁸⁴ unpublished manuscript by Arthur Lang for the Rogers Family Reunion, 7.11.1993, and pers. comm. 11.10.02

²⁸⁵ Paddy Grady Wozencraft *The Black Springs Story* p.85

²⁸⁶ personal communication from Alan Brown, 2.8.2002

²⁸⁷ pers. comm. with Arthur Lang 11.10.02

A renowned institution in Oberon was the guest house Dulce Domum, or Inglis's farm, which operated for about 50 years in a pise and wood building beside the current site of the Titania Motel. It was built before 1908 by Mr James Inglis who ran it with his wife Laura²⁸⁸. She continued alone for some years after his death in 1933. Dulce Domum. advertised

“..surrounded by Orchards. Own Golf Course, Tennis Court, and Horses. Own Dairy; abundance of Milk, Cream, Eggs etc. Excellent Fishing, Plenty of Rabbits, Foxes, Kangaroos, Duck and Quail”²⁸⁹.

Guests were taken on shooting trips which included ‘Redbank’, the Bailey’s property and out to Kanangra Walls²⁹⁰.

Continuing in that tradition was the Duckmaloi Guest House a Ready-Cut Hudson timber house built by Mrs Newson in 1927 on an acre in Jack O’Connell’s property, “Twin Rivers”, at the junction of the Fish and Duckmaloi Rivers²⁹¹. Mr O’Connell bought the house and Mona and Tom Richards took it over in 1935. Mona had experience in hospitality as the daughter of William Rutter who had owned the Royal Hotel between 1913 the early 1920’s and built it up to a previously unknown state of elegance in Oberon hotels, with acetylene lighting and cedar furniture.

In 1948 the Richards moved the guest house to a neighbouring property which they had bought and continued to entertain some of Sydney’s wealthier families. A number, including Doug Freeman (Kadeema), Dr Watts (Ben Mhor), Ross Brown (Trout Park) and Dr Seymour (The Pines, Isabella) became property owners in the district as a result of their stays. The guest book, illustrated with sketches and poems, reveals days of fun, practical jokes, shooting, fishing, riding and marvellous food. Like Dulce Domum the Richards milked their own cows and killed their own ducks, turkey and fowls, and Mr Richards, was a convivial host.

Poet Douglas Stewart immortalised his visits to Richards’ guesthouse with a chapter on the Duckmaloi River in his book, *Seven Rivers*, his poem ‘Brown Snake’ and a lesser known one, ‘The Bat’.

During World War 11 a number of women and children stayed in the Oberon district with friends and relatives for extended periods to escape the dangers of a possible Japanese invasion of Sydney, and a few stayed at the Duckmaloi Guest House for an extended stay.

Other guest houses at Duckmaloi were Trout Park, run by Frank Porter. In the 1920’s it was in a pise house on the eastern side of the Duckmaloi River. When the lease was terminated he moved to the Fish River near the ford on Nunan’s Hill Road and extended a small mud house there. He and the Richards both had 9 hole golf courses. The Gearons also operated a guest house for a while called Tourist Farm on Junction Road.

Yarrabin Farmstay, opened in 1963, modelled on American dude ranches²⁹². It re-opened in 1999, having been sold by the Christie family and later bought back by their daughter Annie Phillips and husband, Graeme.

²⁸⁸ Alan .L. Brown *How I Saw Oberon* , Oberon Heritage Series, (Bathurst)

²⁸⁹ Brown, *How I Saw Oberon* p.33

²⁹⁰ Alan Brown, *How I Saw Oberon*,

²⁹¹ interview with Patricia Hogan, grand daughter of Willian Rutter, 6.8.2002

²⁹² *Outback* magazine, June-July 2002

The motel age began in Oberon with the Titania Motel, built by Coles in the late 1960's, was followed by the Highlands Motel built by Neville and Josie Booth and Pat and Dawn Boyle in 1984. The Big Trout, was built by the McGrath family in 1989.

The recent turn of the century has seen a resurgence of guest house accommodation in the Oberon district (Appendix 1). It is now boutique accommodation, usually self-catering, or providing only breakfast. A number have won tourism awards. Around the year 2000 an explosion of guest accommodation happened in Duckmaloi, soaring from 15 tourist beds at Duckmaloi Park Lodge (now owned by Mona Richards' grandson, Gerard Hogan,) to over 100 beds²⁹³.

Fishing

From the time George Evans first encountered the Fish River teeming with cod in 1813, fishing has been popular in the area. Trout were introduced around 1900 and there were hatcheries at Boggy Creek, near Duckmaloi and below the dam wall. The Oberon Dam and some parts of the rivers are stocked with Brown and Rainbow trout.

Fossicking

Because of Oberon's rich geological environment, fossicking for gold and gemstones, especially sapphires and zircons, is another popular activity. There are a number of designated fossicking areas available to the public.

The Bicentennial National Trail, a multi-purpose horse riding, cycling and walking trail, runs through the eastern part of the shire as part of its 5330 kilometre route from Cooktown in North Queensland to Melbourne. Since 1999 the headquarters has been in Oberon at the house of the voluntary secretaries, Lyn D'Arcy-Evans and John Hopwood.

National Parks

Until 1912 only Aboriginal people and local cattlemen could navigate the rugged area in the east of the shire that now forms Kanangra-Boyd National Park. The area was used for winter grazing of cattle and much of it held in leases by neighbouring landowners.

In 1912 renowned walker and conservationist Myles Dunphy and Bert Gallop walked from Jenolan Caves down Kanangra Walls in an attempt to reach the Burragorang Valley. The attempt failed but Dunphy returned for many years mapping the terrain and naming its features.

In 1914 Gallop and Dunphy formed the Mountain Trails Club, and over the next decade other bushwalking groups such as Sydney Bushwalkers, Coast and Mountain Walkers and Bush Tracks Club were formed²⁹⁴ and bushwalking in the Blue Mountains became a popular pastime. With the formation of the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs in 1932 numerous other clubs arose and many new walkers appeared on the scene.²⁹⁵

In 1931 Myles and his wife Margaret walked from Oberon to Kanangra Walls pushing their infant son Milo Kanangra Dunphy in a pram.²⁹⁶ The road to Kanangra Walls was completed

²⁹³ Melaleuca Cottages, Stone Hedge, Duckmaloi Farm, River Bend and Bindo Cabins (the last three on the eastern side of the river and in Greater Lithgow Shire

²⁹⁴ *Mountain Journeys*, (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Caves Reserve Trust, 2003)

²⁹⁵ Barrett, *Kanangra Walls*,

²⁹⁶ Visitors Guide Kanangra-Boyd National Park, March 2002, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

as Depression relief work in 1940 replacing the buggy track, to the outrage of bushwalkers who feared it would “desecrate that noble solitude”²⁹⁷.

In 1933 the walking clubs set up an independent body called the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council to lobby for better protection of native bushland. They championed Myles Dunphy’s proposal to establish a Greater Blue Mountains Reserve protecting the swathe of bushland running along the mountains overlooking the Sydney basin. An early success was the 1937 creation of a Flora and Fauna Reserve 67062, running from the Cox’s to the Kowmung River over the Boyd Plateau. It dramatically enlarged the numerous small reserves in the region that had been created since the Kanangra Tourist Resort in 1891 to 38 850 hectares.

Kanangra-Boyd National Park was created in 1969 but omitted Colong Caves reserve in the south to allow limestone quarrying of Mt Armour. On the Boyd Plateau a large section of the 1937 reserve had been excised and added to the adjacent state forest to be used for pine forest. With the energetic lobbying of the Colong Committee both of these areas were included into Kanangra-Boyd by 1977.

When the Nattai National Park was formed in 1991 Myles Dunphy’s vision of a series of conservation reserves across the Greater Blue Mountains was realised. The World Heritage Committee of UNESCO included the Greater Blue Mountains on the World Heritage List on 29 November 2000.²⁹⁸

See Appendix 3 for a list of tourist accommodation in Oberon shire in 2002

²⁹⁷ Barrett, Jim, *Kanangra Walls*, p.17

²⁹⁸ *Mountain Journeys*

7. Industry

Wattlebark

One of the earliest industries in the Oberon area was the harvesting of the bark of black wattles for the tanning industry. Some of the earliest roads were formed by the bark strippers for their wagons which carted it to the tannery in Bathurst.

In an account of a trip to the Fish River Cave (Jenolan Caves) from Oberon in 1870, the writer tells of the difficulties of the trip

Some bark strippers had been at work chopping down the young wattles, and these had fallen in all directions across the path²⁹⁹

Sydney Cunynghame came to Oberon in 1841 at the age of 11 to live with his uncle Charles Whalan. He was engaged in his early years carting wattle bark for the Whalans from the slopes round the Jenolan Caves to Bathurst.³⁰⁰ Charles' nephews Campbell and Albert did the same. The following extract is from the recollections of Albert's son Ab.

They had to have money. There was no work, so him and Uncle Cam used to get out in the caves hill and strip black wattle bark. They got 2 pounds 10 a ton. They stripped it from the Caves Hill, Gingkin Point, Oakey Camp, Sweet Ridge and as far as Kanangra.

There was only certain times of the year when the sap was up, that they could strip. He said a big wattle would strip a lot of bark if they loosened it around the butt, they could pull it right to the branches. They cut it in lengths then about 3 feet long and tied it in bundles with string bark about 3 feet long. A bundle would weigh about 50 lbs.

Then to get it out to where they could get a dray to it, they had to pack it out on horses. They made pack saddles... They would put three bundles on a horse.... They might have 6 or 8 horses..

They took the bark to Bathurst I think to the tannery, this was all in the 2 pounds 10. A double shaft dray and about 6 or 8 horses. I think about two or 2½ tons would be a good load on the tracks out here. I can still remember a few of the last loads going. Hogans used to call it "Whalan Wool" but they had to come to it in later life.³⁰¹

In 1900 Mr Wells of Kelso 'enlivened' Tarana by erecting a portable engine which cut wattle bark for market. The Lithgow Mercury commented 'our bark strippers will appreciate a buyer on the spot'.³⁰² The same paper noted that a (train) truck of wattle bark was dispatched for Kingswood in 1907.³⁰³

River Grass

Another industry that Ab Whalan recorded was cutting river grass:

²⁹⁹ *Town and Country Journal*, 12.3.1870

³⁰⁰ Ross Beattie, *George Bailey* p.62

³⁰¹ Ab Whalan,

³⁰² Barry Webb, *Tarana* Lithgow Mercury 13.3.1900

³⁰³ Barry Webb, *Tarana* 16.4.1907

They also cut tons of river grass on the Duckmaloi and Fish rivers and took it to the brickworks [in Bathurst]. A bundle of grass had to be a foot through and if you were good on grass, and worked hard, they might get 100 bundles a day. I just don't remember how much they got for it but I think about 3 pounds a ton.

Dad said if they started and cut the grass in a face there wasn't much danger of snakes, but if they cut about anywhere, they might get a snake. By cutting in a face the snakes kept moving away.³⁰⁴

Timber

Cedar

From the 1880s cedar was being harvested in large quantities from the Lower Kowmung and floated down river ultimately to Penrith. George Kill was employed as a contractor by the Bank of New Zealand to supervise the transport of the fitches down the rivers. This method of transport ended in 1908 with a massive flood which distributed the timber far and wide, but construction of the Cedar Road along Scott's Main Range had already begun the previous year.

The road crossed the Kowmung River and criss-crossed Gingra Creek for six miles. Its embankments and bridge footings can still be seen. The cedar-getters main camp was on Gingra Creek near the junction with the Kowmung. The cedar grew mostly in deep ravines, and was run from them to depots where it was loaded onto horse trolleys with wheels cut from apple gum logs. At Bran Jan on the top of Scott's Main Range they were transferred to tabletop wagons for the trip to the railhead at Camden. Tiwilla Creek (now Wong Wonga Creek) was also logged. After World War 11 an access road was put in by Dan Cleary to Waterfall Creek in the Upper Kowmung for the last cedar extraction of the Kowmung Valley.³⁰⁵

Early Hardwood Mills

Oberon had two mills processing native hardwoods, especially blackbutt, for local building. One in Oberon below the showground owned by Arthur Cunynghame, and one at Beaconsfield (Black Springs). Brothers Arthur and David Watson started work about 1915 at the mill at Beaconsfield, David learning tailing out and Arthur felling trees in the bush nearby with an axe. Their brother-in-law, Bert Cunynghame, also worked there and learnt the art of the sawyer, and his father Abe Cunynghame dragged the logs to the mill with his bullock team.

About 1917 David Watson and Bert Cunynghame bought the Oberon mill and transferred it to the top of the Jenolan Caves Hill (Two Mile Hill). In 1939 David had to sell because of illness and another brother-in-law, Arthur Star, bought him out.

David's son Malcolm has written a detailed account of the running of the mill. They used a 'bobtail' (two wheels with a pole) and hooked the log (or logs, up to three) onto the bobtail so it was easier for the bullocks to pull. They worked there five and a half days a week, spending two or three days felling trees and snigging them to the mill. They would de-bark the trees first, except in winter when the bark was hard to take off, as the bark collected grit when the tree was dragged and damaged the saws.

³⁰⁴ Barry Webb, *Tarana* 16.4.1907

³⁰⁵ Jim Barrett Kowmung River pp.39-42

Both already had bullock teams. David would drive his unyoked from Shooters Hill, and Bert would bring his wagon out from Oberon. When they had the bullocks with them Dave would camp on Black Heath Road (Bastard Point Road) and Bert on the Caves road to block them from going home. Otherwise they camped in the bark roofed huts at the mill. When the logs were snigged to the mill David would unyoke his bullocks, put their bells on and let them go. As they were tired and sore-footed it would take them two or three days to get back to Shooters Hill, and if the gate was not open they would jump the wooden fence into their paddock and stay there until they were wanted again.

It took them two to three weeks to saw the logs they had cut, firing the boiler for the steam with the waste wood. They had a good name for timber and always cut good timber: true to size and solid.

After it ceased operation the sawmill was once in the park near the town swimming pool.³⁰⁶

Timber Industries

The Forestry Commission of NSW recognised the suitability of the Oberon district for the growing of softwoods, and the first pines were planted in the Vulcan and Jenolan State Forests in 1929. In 1930 the Oberon Prison Afforestation Camp was established and began annual plantings in the Gurnang State Forest in 1931. Pine planting was done as Depression relief work.

After trials of *Pinus radiata*, Monterey Pine, was recognised as the most successful pine species. During the 1930s large areas of Crown land were reserved for forestry purposes. During World War 11 the Cotton family of Broken Hill contracted to supply sawn timber for the Broken Hill North Mine, it being a wartime measure to replace the timber imported from America. The Cottons chose Oberon as a suitable source, and sent Robert Cotton and his wife, Eve, who moved there in 1941 to build a sawmill for cutting mine timbers. They lived first at Dulce Domum. They bought Cunynghame and Star's sawmill and transferred its milling and the log licenses to Oberon and started to build the factory. It began supplying at the end of 1942 under the name Timber Industries Pty Ltd. In 1946 Monty Cotton, returned from war service and joined the team. The following year they bought Beresford Brown's sawmill at Beaconsfield (Black Springs). This gave the Cottons the sawmilling licenses over the whole Oberon shire. Oberon hardwood is basically a medium grade and thus suitable for safety in the mines. Monty spent nine months surveying Oberon's forestry resources and estimated that there was a 30 year supply; an accurate measurement because they ran out after 32 years. Much of Oberon's better hardwood reserves were used in the local building markets³⁰⁷.

Monty Cotton recalled

I had never seen a circular saw working or even a large log felled but Dad and Bob said I would make an ideal logging manager so off I went to a camp in the woods for six months and learned how to swing an axe and push-pull a 6 foot long 'peg and raker' saw. It was the best thing I could have done to recover from the stress of four years on Fighter Squadrons in the Royal Air Force in England and the Burma/ India areas.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Malcolm Watson

³⁰⁷ letter from Monty Cotton, 15.11.02

³⁰⁸ letter from Monty Cotton, 15.11.02

Pine plantings by the Forestry Commission continued after the war with the intention of supplying Australia's requirements for imported softwood timber and wood fibre. Timber Industries were allocated the first license to log the pine in the mid fifties, milling them into fruit cases³⁰⁹.

In 1954 a sub-district office of the Forestry Commission was opened in Ross Street, Oberon and the area of annual plantings soon doubled, natural forest being cleared to establish pine plantations.

Timber Industries began to mechanise the industry.

The early methods of tree felling and limb trimming were all carried out by hand with 'bow' saws and axes. The finished logs were then snigged by Clydesdale horses to roadsides where they were rolled by hand onto body trucks.

Greg Toole, who worked for Timber Industries in the bush for about seven years, describes the early days as a timber cutter:

We mostly cut in pairs pulling six foot crosscut saws. It took a lot of strength and timing or you wouldn't last long.....Many came and tried but not many stayed. We camped out in tents on the job, a galley out front where all the cooking was done over an open fire....Breakfast in the frost and a lot of times in a couple of feet of snow. Tea time was always after dark by the light of the camp fire and a hurricane lantern.

I can remember being snowed in for a week. We ran out of tucker. We couldn't be reached from Oberon. There was only one thing for us to do: walk out.

We walked from the Upper Farm to Oberon. It took us about nine hours. We were a tired and hungry lot, sixteen in all. It was a bonanza for the Tourist Hotel.³¹⁰

During the 1950s and 1960s many of the pine cutters were post War migrants.

The Forestry Commission had a Clydesdale stud at Gurnang for a short period in the late 1950s and early 1960s. District forester Jack Carroll was the studmaster and their prize stallion was the Cumnock Kid.³¹¹

Bruce Boyd recalls his early days logging with his father in the 1950s.

We used to have to clear a track to each log, and go to the stump where it was cut and clear a track in, and line the truck up along side of the tree, and put skids down and winch them up on to the truck. It was mainly black butt and gum from Shooters Hill Road area right out to Chatham Valley³¹²

Timber Industries imported the first mechanical logging device, a Timberjack, which snigged multiple full length trees to the roadside where they were cut into lengths and loaded by crane onto both body trucks and semi-trailers.

³⁰⁹ *Oberon Review* 24.6.1999

³¹⁰ letter from Greg Toole 4

³¹¹ Pyneboard 25th Anniversary Supplement, p.12

³¹² T.I. 50th Anniversary Supplement, p.41

The first particle board factory in Australia, Pyneboard, was in Oberon. When the Forestry Commission advertised the rights to purchase the thinnings from pine plantations in the Oberon area, a joint venture between CSR, Timber Industries and Fletchers (a New Zealand company that was already producing particle board) was formed, and established the factory in 1961. Pyneboard created jobs for nearly 200 people. In 1964 CSR and APM took over Pyneboard as equal shareholders.

Thinnings are done at about 13 years and again at 20 years. The mature logs are harvested at about 33 years.

From 1966 the momentum of planting in the Oberon district increased rapidly. In 1963 little over 1000 acres were planted and by 1972 over 4000 were planted. Initially the land came from Timber Reserves and vacant Crown land, but after 1970 the pine forests started to take over freehold agricultural land, including some prime country. About a quarter of Oberon's pine plantations are on former improved pasture, and State Forests now has over 30,000 hectares of previously freehold land. Some of this land had problems with serrated tussock (a noxious weed) infestation.³¹³

In 1987³¹⁴ parts of Gurnang, Banshee and Mt Werong State Forests were revoked for National Parks.

Using agricultural land which had higher nutrient levels from fertilizer use caused very quick branchy growth so genetically 'improved' seeds which would grow straight were imported from New Zealand.

At that time (1970s) the softwood industry around Oberon was projected to employ 3000 men by 2002, and to boost the town's population to 12000³¹⁵. In fact with the increase in mechanisation the timber industry employs about 650 people.³¹⁶ The town's population is about 2700.

The 1970s were a period of rapid mechanisation. In 1975 the trees were mostly felled by hand with chainsaws. Chainsaws had also replaced axes for pruning, however fully automated technology was on its way. Forwarders were introduced to lift and stack logs; feller-bunchers to fell trees and place them in a bunch ready for processing; processors which cut the branches from the fallen tree and could cut the stem into lengths; and ultimately harvesters which combine all three functions. In 1986 Gibbs Logging bought a fully computerised harvester-processor.

In 1978 CSR purchased Pyneboard outright and installed a new press to produce thin particle board.

Based on the research work of Dietmar Torner and his team, Pyneboard was developed into Structaflor, the particle board flooring plant in 1979.³¹⁷

In the 1980s the timber industry ceased to be a locally owned industry. It started on the path of rapid expansion to compete on the global market. In 1978 the Cottons sold Timber Industries sawmill to Blue Metal Industries, and who sold to Boral in 1982.

³¹³ Louisa Roberts

³¹⁴ *Western Advocate* 2.11.1987

³¹⁵ *Forest and Timber*, March, April, May 1970

³¹⁶ *Oberon Review* 9.2002

³¹⁷ *Oberon Review* 22.6.2000 p.24

Timber Industries had a family feel to it. Many local people spent their whole working lives there. Eula Minarovic, whose grandfather owned the land Timber Industries is built on, started working for Timber Industries in 1961. Her father Sam Weeks also worked there, and her son Lenore Zamparini was Operations Manager of Boral Truss and Frame Division. She was interviewed for the 50th anniversary of Timber Industries in 1993,

Times have changed a lot. It used to be very personal but now it has grown so big it is obviously impersonal, but Boral is a good company to work for.³¹⁸

Trevor (Cooby) Evans worked for the company for 37 years, 22 of them without a sick day, however he did lose a finger,

Not many sawmillers in those days (1950s and 1960s) got out with all their fingers but things are very different today (1993) with a high emphasis on safety measures

However he said it was a great place to work.

A massive expansion of the industry followed with the building of another fibreboard processing plant by AMCOR/Elders Resources NZ Forest Products Limited. With the decision to build the plant Oberon reaped the benefit of access to natural gas in 1987, before other towns in the Central West.

Fibron, the world's first fully computerised medium density fibreboard plant opened in 1988, and in 1989 was sold to CSR. In 1994 CSR won a tender issued by State Forests of NSW for the right to purchase an additional 380,000 tonnes of sawlogs and small pulpwood logs per year³¹⁹. Another massive expansion began, this one costing \$350 million, doubling the size of the MDF (medium density fibreboard) factory, with a new sawmill and a tannin extraction plant. The building process was a huge boon to the town, especially the accommodation sector. CSR Timber Products sawmill opened in November 1996. Woodchem, the resin plant, was built by London based company ACM Wood Chemicals and opened in 2000.

Also in 2000 the major part of the timber factories ceased to be Australian. The expansion had overstretched CSR. In 1999 it was making a loss in its Oberon operations, and in May 2000 sold most of its nationwide timber interests to Carter Holt Harvey, a New Zealand forestry company 50% owned by the U.S. giant International Paper. Its remaining plant in Oberon, FeaturPanels was sold to JELD-WEN, an American multi-national but privately held corporation³²⁰.

CSR's share in the 50/50 proposed joint sawmilling venture with Boral was also taken over by Carter Holt Harvey. Called Highland Pine Products their partnership gave them the volume of logs to get the base cost down and to compete on the world market.³²¹ In preparation for this move Boral rationalised its operations closing its Bathurst section. Only months after the joint venture, Highland Pine announced 59 permanent jobs would be lost³²². At the same time the company announced a \$26 million expansion to amalgamate the two sawmills (CSR's and Boral's) into one on the Carter Holt Harvey site.

³¹⁸ *Oberon Review* supplement 29.9.1993 p.37

³¹⁹ *Western Advocate* The CSR Story, 18.1.1997

³²⁰ *Oberon Review*, 14.9.2000

³²¹ *Oberon Review* 3.8.2000

³²² *Oberon Review* 14.12.2000

In May 2001 Carter Holt Harvey launched Customwood, the internationally known brand name of Oberon's sister plant in New Zealand, in Oberon. The move was designed to increase the export market, particularly to China and the United States. In 2002 the company announced marketing alliances with Sierra Pine to extend its marketing to North America, and with IPPM in China³²³. Carter Holt Harvey's Oberon operations are now profitable and continuing to expand.

NSW State Forests has recently deviated from its current policy in an attempt to retain a greater share of the profits from its product. It announced a new release of about a third as much timber as was already being harvested in the Bathurst region in August 2002, on a new 'mill door delivery' basis³²⁴. This means State Forests would control the timber until it reached the mill, so it would employ the contractors.

Private pine plantations were planted as long term investments with tax incentives in the 1960s and 1970s and about 15 % of the forests are privately owned. Now with the massive supply of forestry timber, some private forests have trouble finding a market for their products. According to local real estate agent Col Brett, private pine forests in difficulty are those that have not been well managed (thinned) or are a long way from the mill.

So from a little local mill harvesting local timber for local use, Oberon's timber industry is now competing on the world map as a producer of pine products, owned by a multi national company. About 60,000 hectares of the shire is devoted exclusively to *Pinus radiata* production, at the expense of some fine farmland.

The timber industry has brought a lot of prosperity to Oberon and has been largely responsible for Oberon's low unemployment rate, a great rarity in rural towns. With continuing technological advancements, however, huge production can be achieved with remarkably few people, and working in 'the mill' may not be the ready employment option that it has been. Oberon is in the global market and the timber industry is subject to the fierce competition that brings. In October 2002 a total of about 550 were employed on the adjoining sites of the four plants.

The industry has had an enormous impact on Oberon Council, putting greater demand on infrastructure, especially roads, garbage and sewerage systems and water. Neither National Parks nor State Forests pay rates, so ratable land available to the council for its income is only about half the shire area.

The softwood industry has radically altered the landscape and environment of Oberon. Bert Hogan, says in *Living Treasures of Oberon*:

Pine trees are the backbone of Oberon now. It would still be a little one-horse town only for the pine trees. It's created a lot of employment....I hate the pine trees personally, we're surrounded by 'em³²⁵

Ray Bartlett, who worked for Timber Industries for 37 years, had similar sentiments:

The only mistake made by the Forestry was when the hardwood Blackbutt areas were cut. They should have replanted with Blackbutt, we would have been the only country to have it.³²⁶

³²³ *Oberon Review* 1.8.2002

³²⁴ *Oberon Review* 29.8.2002

³²⁵ Mick Joffe, p.21

³²⁶ *Oberon Review* 29.9.1993

The Oberon community has an ambivalent attitude to the timber industry. Hank Melchers, who was an engineer at Timber Industries, expresses it in two comments: In 1993, the 50th anniversary of Timber Industries he said:

Who would have thought that out of this ugly baby bush mill would grow such a beautiful Timber Industry.³²⁷

and in *Living Treasures of Oberon*, published 2002:

I always loved the bush. At the mill, I found myself a bit of a hypocrite. I sharpened the knives to cut up the [native] trees. On the other hand, I hated to see them go but they had to for the livelihood of my wife and kids.³²⁸

Christmas Trees

A small related timber industry is the growing of Christmas trees. Pine trees are planted specially, trimmed very carefully and harvested at about two and a half years. The Forestry Commission sold about 15000 in 1985, compared with about 5000 in 1975.³²⁹ Private growers, like Peter Perrott, also produce them.

Eucalyptus Oil

For a short time after World War 1 the eucalyptus industry was operating in the Oberon district. It was hard work but good money could be made. Chick Totic came to Oberon to work in this industry.

In 1951, a friend invited me to come to Oberon. The eucalyptus industry had been established and there was good money to be made. We worked hard but nevertheless we didn't mind because we came from hard backgrounds in Europe.... We set up camps in the bush and cut down the trees. We then stripped the leaves off the branches, put them in tanks, boiled them and condensed the steam. We put the oil into a receiving tank and once we had a full drum of oil we took it to town to the agent, Basil Propert.

The eucalyptus workers were mainly Czecks and Slovaks. I was the only Yugoslav and there was one Lithuanian working with me. They lived in the bush in pretty rough conditions, went to town, got drunk and then the trouble starts.³³⁰

Ernest Nightingale of Foleys Creek supplemented his income with eucalyptus oil

He boiled the leaves in square tanks with lids. There was fire underneath, water was trickled in, and the extracted oil flowed out through a pipe into a 44 gallon drum. The eucalyptus oil was then sold for the wonderful price of 140 pounds per 44 gallon drum.³³¹

³²⁷ *Oberon Review*, 29.9.1993 p.39

³²⁸ Mick Joffe, p.111

³²⁹ *The Sydney Morning Herald* 17.12.1985

³³⁰ Mick Joffe, pp.35-36

³³¹ Marie P. Nightingale, p.474

Engineering

Oberon Engineering

Chic Totic came out from Yugoslavia after World War 11. He was a fitter and machiner by trade and was asked by Basil Propert to help establish an engineering shop. (Propert's business was bought by John McCusker and later became a tyre business.) From there Chic started his own business, Oberon Engineering, in 1953, and at 84 still works there full-time, but has handed over the management to his son Gary. Gary did his apprenticeship with CSR, then came to work with his father. Now they are mostly an engineering supply business doing profile cutting. Nine people work there.

Moorhead Engineering

This business was started in 1988 by Shane Moorhead who had done his training at Oberon Engineering. Eight people work there (October 2002) doing machining, fabrication, structural steelwork, hydraulics, pneumatics and manufacturing machinery, some of which they export. The Oberon factories provide part of their work but they have many small clients. One of their products is a machine which produces round wooden poles.

MRD Engineering

John Mrdjenovic was also apprenticed to Oberon Engineering but just after he started Gary sold the workshop and fabrication to Hartland Engineering. The employees moved with the business and John bought it in 2000 and now (October 2002) employs nine people. His main work is the servicing and maintenance of the factories in Oberon and the Cadia goldmines and they also make and design steel components.

Building of Oberon Dam

The Fish River Dam was built to supply water needs of the shale oil industry at Glen Davis, 100 kilometres away, as well as the communities of Wallerawang, Lithgow, Lidsdale and Portland, and also Oberon. The Glen Davis oil was regarded as essential to Australia's defence strategy. Ironically the viability of this major rationale for the dam was being seriously questioned in 1945 and was completely closed in 1952.³³²

Work on the dam began officially on 23 October 1943 by the Civil Construction Corps, men who had volunteered or were conscripted into the labour force during World War 11. Initially the engineering concept of Gerald Haskins in 1939 (who retired to Clear Hills at Duckmaloi in 1942) and developed by Stephen Jones of the Public Works Department, it was the first slab and buttress concrete dam built in NSW.³³³ In 1944 -45 about 150 men were working on the Oberon Dam and 250 on the pipeline to Glen Davis. The majority of them were over 40. At Oberon the men were housed in a camp about 500 metres below the dam wall. Smaller camps at Duckmaloi, Tarana, Wallerawang and Coco Creek and a hostel at Glen Davis housed the men working along the pipeline.³³⁴ At the end of the War the CCC was disbanded. Many of the men stayed on in Oberon and were employed as contract labour.

Allan Adams came to Oberon in 1943 to operate the only bulldozer on the construction team, and reluctantly agreed to join the union to prevent a strike. After two and a half years

³³² G.J. Taylor *The Glen Davis Story* pp.61-66

³³³ Robin McLachlan *Let's Have Water* (Department of Land and Water Conservation, 1997) pp.11,25

³³⁴ Robin McLachlan, 47

employed on the dam he started an earth moving and land clearing business, initially with Paul and Lloyd Wilson and spent “20 good, hard, profitable years” building modern Oberon.³³⁵

Tom O’Connell also worked there from 1945:

They built a crusher and crushed a lot of stone on Falls Hill on the Black Springs Road. I carted a good lot of stone to the crusher from out of Black Springs Road and from Bathurst Road and from Caves Road. After it went through the crusher, I carted it to the dam wall...

A lot of the dam was poured with wheelbarrows. A bloke would run out along the scaffold and tip a wheelbarrow load in....The townside of the wall was mainly earthen like Eucumbene...There was all hand unloading of cement bags.

Stage one, the dam wall was completed in 1949. Stage Two involved raising the dam wall for greater capacity (1954) and laying an additional pipeline to the new Wallerawang power station(1957-9). A third stage begun in 1954 involved a pipeline connection to the Blue Mountains and a three metre weir was built over the Duckmaloi River. Because of Oberon’s height above sea level the water gravity feeds to the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and beyond, however the Blue Mountains connection involved a 1100 metre tunnel under Hampton where the pipeline crosses the Great Dividing Range.

An additional spillway for the Oberon dam was added in the mid 1990s.

See appendix 3 for a log harvesters and carters

³³⁵ Mick Joffe. p.31

8. Mining

Much of this information is derived from the research of local mining historian, Roy Smith.

See his Mineral Resources and Mine Production in Appendix 4

Gold

Gold mining literally changed the face of the Oberon district. Shafts were sunk all over the shire, Chinese miners in their hundreds built water races along the rivers and creeks, tent cities and stores sprang up. With the sudden influx of miners came post offices and schools set up in any available accommodation, many in what are now remote or sparsely inhabited locations.

Oberon shire can almost lay claim to the first official discovery of gold by a white Australian. Assistant Surveyor James McBrien found “numerous particles in the sand and in the hills convenient to the river”, on the Fish River midway between O’Connell Plains and Diamond Swamp 9 to the north of the river) on February 15 1823. Also that year James Lowe of Sidmouth Valley, with his father Robert and Lieutenant Lawson discovered a gold nugget “the size of a pea” in quartz on Diamond Hill, near what is now the Lowes Mount Road³³⁶, about four kilometres from McBrien’s find. A convict had discovered a nugget earlier that year near Bathurst, but was accused of melting down stolen jewellery³³⁷.

The early gold finds were suppressed by the government fearing the chaos it would cause in the infant colony. Not until April 1851 with the first finds of payable gold at Ophir near Bathurst was it publicised, and the rush was on.

In June that year Mr Hebblewhite discovered gold towards the Campbell’s River near O’Connell, which became known as the Havilah diggings. Soon after a 220 gram nugget was found at the junction of the Isabella Creek and the Abercrombie River and about 100 miners rushed to the area³³⁸. Prospectors were soon scouring the creeks.

The first goldfields - Campbell’s River, Stoney (Sewell’s) Creek, and Native Dog were proclaimed on 2 February, 1853. In 1879 250 square miles were amalgamated into Oberon Goldfield in 1872. they were all amalgamated into the Oberon Goldfield which covered and included the Fish, Duckmaloi and Macquarie Rivers. The Jenolan Goldfield, spread over 79,000 acres, was proclaimed in 1887³³⁹

Many of the streams still bear traces of the water races built by the hundreds of Chinese miners who worked in the district. A century later poet and trout fisherman Douglas Stewart wrote of the Duckmaloi River,

The river ran clear and green and deep with shingle banks and wadable rapids
Winding through timbered hill and grassy flats, paralleled all the way by the track of
cobblestones where the Chinese fossickers in the early days had built a water-race to
aid them in their search for gold³⁴⁰

³³⁶ C.S. Wilkinson, p.202 in Roy Smith

³³⁷ Kerrin Cook and Daniel Garvey, p.1

³³⁸ Cook and Garvey.p.25

³³⁹ NSW Government Gazette, Jan 1879, pp.27-29 in Roy Smith

³⁴⁰ *Seven Rivers* (1966) in Alan Brown’s Historical Note, 29.8.1984?

The creeks were worked and reworked W. Gibbons was reported as finding a nugget of over 4 ounces (100gms) on the old Native Dog diggings in 1881.³⁴¹

Most of the miners moved on, but a number of families in the district trace their origins here to the goldrushes. One family which has stayed since the goldrushes is the Stapletons. Esma Stapleton (Sister Dominica) wrote of the arrival of her grandfather Daniel Stapleton:

My grandfather came from Tipperary to the goldrush in 1851. However, his brother Robert and sisters had come out earlier, Robert in 1841. Robert took up land at Hartley and then in 1851 came to the goldrushes at Isabella. He opened a hotel and store. There was a lot of gold at Isabella –“Golden Gully” it was called. My grandmother told me that many of the diggers were Irishmen and after they had dug shafts and washed the dirt quickly the Chinamen came along and re-washed and got lots of smaller pieces.³⁴²

The NSW Department of Mines was created under the Mining Act of 1874 and a more scientific approach to the state’s mineral resources began with the appointment of C.S. Wilkinson as Senior Geological Surveyor³⁴³. In 1877 he did a tour of the goldfields in the Oberon and Rockley districts. He reported enthusiastically:

The extensive range of country open for future mining enterprise is indicated by the payable auriferous [gold bearing] alluvial deposits in many valleys, and the frequent occurrence of both copper- and gold-bearing reefs in the hills³⁴⁴

The banks of the Campbell’s River and Sewell’s and Wiseman’s Creeks had been extensively worked for the past fifteen years when Wilkinson came through, but there were “still parties, chiefly Chinese, ground-sluicing the banks by means of water brought by races from dams higher up the stream”³⁴⁵.

Native Dog Creek, an eastern branch of Sewells Creek, had been the scene of race riots in May 1861. Accounts are sensational and conflicting but it seems that 40 or so Europeans got into a conflict with some hundreds of Chinese over a new find. A huge brawl broke out and a number of Europeans were badly injured including some who were not involved. There is no account of Chinese casualties. Two Europeans were taken into custody, and to the astonishment of the commentators, no Chinese.

Several commentators remarked that the Chinese were more successful at Native Dog because they worked harder. Two months later that rush was over, not more than 100 diggers remaining, the majority being Chinese.³⁴⁶

The 1891 census includes two Chinese families, of Willie Lee and Lin Ham at O’Connell and notes at the end: “Many Chinese men Brisbane, Stonycreek and Campbells River.

The rush was a boon to some farmers, providing them with a ready market for their produce and stock. R.W. Webb wrote:

Gold mining had a great influence on the value of the horse, and buyers came from Victoria to purchase horses in this district (Keirstone, near Tarana) and:

³⁴¹ Alan Brown’s Historical Notes 12.8.1987

³⁴² Esma Stapleton

³⁴³ Roy Smith

³⁴⁴ Wilkinson p.201

³⁴⁵ Wilkinson p.202

³⁴⁶ *The Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal* 8 June 1861, in Alan Brown’s Historical Notes, 6.8.1986

Gold had been discovered at Mitchel's Creek beyond Sunny Corner where a rush of miners gave rise to a good demand for horse feed. Father (William Webb) was selling produce which was sent by team to the goldfield. He rode out fortnightly to collect payment.³⁴⁷

Stores sprang up at the goldfields. There was a small village at Essington which included a post office (on the Beaconsfield Road near the junction with Sewell's Creek Road), and a pub, which became the first school in 1883, after most of the miners had left. The Duckmaloi post office was opened in the 1880s by the Nunan's on the Fish River³⁴⁸. They also had a store there and bought gold from the miners. Hazelgrove (originally Slippery Creek) where the Luck's-All mine was active before 1877, had a store, butcher's shop, and receiving post office, (all run by the Fitzpatrick family); blacksmith's shop, church and school (from 1879) servicing 40 families.³⁴⁹

Production records are hazy before 1877, but the most productive mines were:

Black Bullock mine, near Hazelgrove, which produced 65 kilograms of gold and 1244 kilograms of silver between 1896 and 1905;

Homeward Bound Mine (Blackman's Reef), The Reef, immediately south of Oberon, producing 33 kilograms of gold between 1885- 1887. It is now submerged under dam.³⁵⁰

Jasons Mine the most productive of the Wiseman's Creek mines, which gave 16 kilograms of gold and 92 kilograms of silver.

The Fish River Gold Mining Company dredged the Fish River near Locksley in 1901-2, obtaining 12 kilograms of gold.

During the Depression years there was a resurgence of mining. Fossickers reworked the rivers and creeks. A couple of gold mines were opened at Wiseman's Creek and produced a small quantity of gold³⁵¹. The Blue Talisman Mine, also called Jellendore Mine, sprang up at Jellendore, which was east of the river and is now part of Duckmaloi. It was a public company formed in 1933, but it is believed to have been a scam.

The late Elvie Nunan told Gail Gearon of her experiences when employed with her mother to cater for the 90 or so miners who worked in the mine. There were three grocery stores, a bakery, greengrocer and sawmill. When the mine suddenly ceased operation in 1934 the buildings were pulled down.³⁵² It is difficult to believe such an extensive and relatively recent settlement could have disappeared with so few traces.

A much more recent gold mine, Lucky Draw Gold Mine, so-called because two companies applied for an exploration title on the same day, and the Department of Mineral Resources drew a name out of a hat, with Renison Goldfields Consolidated. With modern methods the company extracted 6.5 tonnes of gold between 1988 and 1991. The open cut pit, along the Burruga-Black Springs road, is now a water reservoir 80 metres deep, and over 2000 trees have been planted as rehabilitation of the site.

³⁴⁷ 1942

³⁴⁸ pers. comm. with Brian Nunan 27 August 2002

³⁴⁹ Cook and Garvey, p.182

³⁵⁰ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 31.7.1985

³⁵¹ Betty Somerville, p.20

³⁵² Gail Gearon,

After the goldrushes finished a few prospectors stayed on. Sister Dominica, remembers some in her memoir of her childhood at Isabella around the turn of the last century:

Everyone got a meal that came to Granny's. For Sunday dinner there were always a few old select prospectors and Dr Bill.

Among the people she mentions living at Isabella at the time were Ah Young and "Ah Long a Chinese market gardener [who] lived near Hintons. He was a nice old man."

The lonely life, and death, of the Chinese miner is illustrated in this story from a Nightingale family history:

An old Chinese miner died at the mine on Aaron's property [on Sewell's Creek]. His mate came down and told Charlie [Nightingale], Aaron's father, *Ku dead Charlie*. Aaron and his mate Norman Bell who lived with Nightingales, made a coffin out of the boxes used for carrying the groceries to the Sewell's Creek store. They took the horse and dray carrying the coffin to an abandoned mine shaft, and tipped the coffin down. There were just three mourners present no miners.³⁵³

Copper

The Oberon copper mines are rather over-shadowed by the nearby Burruga mine, first called Thompson's Creek and later Lloyd Copper Mine, which opened in 1878 and was worked intermittently for many years, producing 22,800 tons of copper. Lloyds had a smelting works at Lithgow where the Oberon copper ore also went.

Most of Oberon's copper occurred with zinc and lead, and was mined from the Wiseman's Creek and Essington districts. North Wiseman's Mine, opening in 1873 and operating sporadically until 1951, was the largest producer. The Tuglow Copper Mine, and Bulls Creek Copper Mine near Jenolan Caves were small producers of copper. The Tuglow Copper Mine, according to *Lithgow Mercury* roving correspondent, Cecil Poole, was discovered by Mr J.W. Boucher of Tuglow and Mr G.F. Litchfield was sending 20 tons of ore a month to Swansea³⁵⁴

The increase in population generated by the copper mine lead to the opening of a Receiving (Post) Office in 1881 at Wiseman's Creek, converted to a full post office in 1885. In 1901 the village of Wiseman's Creek also had a school, baker, butcher, two stores and a builder. The first school at Wiseman's Creek opened in 1868 but closed in 1870. The next one, called Glenburn, was operating by 1880. There were also schools nearby at Mt Stromboli (or Stoney Creek from 1880), Brisbane Valley (previously Balfour from about 1868), Essington (1881), and Swallow's Nest (1880) probably all associated with mining populations.

Silver

As with copper, the major silver mining took place just outside the shire, at Yerranderie. Silver, or galena a lead-silver ore, was discovered by Billy Russell (an Aboriginal man) and Billy George in 1871. Between 1900 and 1912 the various mines produced 54 000 tons of ore containing over 150 000 kilograms of silver, 270 kilograms of gold and 12 000 tons of

³⁵³ Marie P. Nightingale, p.297

³⁵⁴ Alan Brown's Historical Notes, 12.4.1989 and 19.4.1989

lead.³⁵⁵ Mining had almost ceased by 1930 and in 1958 ceased completely when the township became cut off from the east by the formation of the Warragamba Dam.

Not far away was a large related deposit at Ruby Creek, Mt Werong. According to an application for a post office, mining started there in 1881, which was probably alluvial gold mining³⁵⁶. In *A Glint of Gold* Cook and Garvey report the silver mine working in 1898, 1903, 1908–12, 1919 and 1929. The Ruby Creek Silver and Lead Mining Company was formed about 1920 to exploit the deposit.³⁵⁷

Mt Werong had a Receiving (post) Office from about 1898 until 1912 when it was apparently deserted. During the Depression it reached a population of 30-35 and the post office was reopened, closing again in 1938. There is now little obvious trace of the settlement at Mt Werong as it has been engulfed by the regrowth of the National Park.

Sapphires

Sapphires were discovered before 1878 at the head of the Native Dog Creek, and have been found in the alluvial deposits of many creeks in the Oberon-Porters Retreat area. They have also been found in the many creeks draining the Mount Werong plateau. Fossickers still hunt for sapphires, especially in the disturbed ground of the pine forests.

Diamond

About 1885 a diamond was found at Prospectors Gully, and in 1905 a diamond of 28.31 carats was discovered at Mt Werong. A flawless oblong crystal, it is one of the largest ever found in Australia. As recently as 1976 a single diamond was found in the Campbells River near Oberon.

Talc

A tiny deposit of talc occurs on the northern bank of Wiseman's Creek, but is currently unmineable due to contamination problems.

Asbestos

This deadly fibre occurs well buried alongside the Oberon-Rockley road, about four kilometres from Rockley. The deposit is of no economic value.

Bismuth

An attempt was made to mine this metal was made by Mt Bindo Bismuth Ltd beginning in 1920. The quarry, on the Nunan's property at Duckmaloi, dislodged 1000 tons of marble containing small, sporadically distributed nodules of the carbonate of bismuth.³⁵⁸ The marble was coarse and crushed for agricultural use.³⁵⁹ The quarry is now used by the SES for abseiling training exercises.

³⁵⁵ Sonja den Hartog, p.19

³⁵⁶ Cook and Garvey p.183

³⁵⁷ Roy Smith

³⁵⁸ Department of Mines Report, 1920

³⁵⁹ pers. comm. with Roy Smith 13.5.03

9. Institutions

Churches

Methodist (Wesleyan)/Uniting

Methodism was strong in the Bathurst region partly due to the series of missionary visits of the Reverend Joseph Orton to the ‘miserably degraded heathen population beyond the Blue Mountains’,³⁶⁰ beginning in 1832.

Charles Whalan built a small sod walled chapel (no longer in existence) on his Glyndwr Estate in 1845. By 1850 regular church services were being held there every Sunday. Before that in 1843 Rev. Samuel Wilkinson had come from Bathurst and formed a class of several of the Methodist families from Northern Ireland.

There was also a sod walled chapel (also long gone) at Jenolan Caves by 1851.³⁶¹

In 1854 Rev. Abell was the first minister stationed at Oberon, and preached also in the Edith, Tarana and Stony Creek churches.

The second church built of stone on land also given by Charles Whalan, opened in 1873. It is now the **Oberon Uniting Church**.³⁶²

Mt Olive Methodist Church was built on Alfred Whalan’s land about 1862 when the Wesleyan Methodist committee passed the resolution in 1862 that it be built. It was built of slabs and about 1900 replaced with a weatherboard church. Some years later the Mount Olive church was shifted to Edith.³⁶³, and has now also gone.

In 1880 a Methodist church was built at Bloom Hill

In 1870 sanction was given for the building of a church at Stoney Creek [Wiseman’s Creek]. It was erected of pise on the property of William Todd, and demolished in 1947. A fibro church replaced it, and ceased to function in 1968. It is now on Hawthorne Farm.³⁶⁴
In 1886 a church was built at Edith, pulled down in 2002.

Anglican

Salem chapel at O’Connell was built in 1833 by Rev. Thomas Hassall for all denominations. It was on the junction of the Wiseman’s Creek and Oberon Roads, but no longer exists.

St Thomas Church, O’Connell a red brick building on the land given by Thomas Hassall. It was opened in 1865 and consecrated in 1869. Henry Harris of Bolton Vale (a pise house on the O’Connell-Oberon Road) lent 650 pounds towards the building of it and donated a portion of it once it was paid back. The Harris, Morgan, Black and Roberts families held big tea meetings in a nearby paddock to raise the money.

³⁶⁰ B. Greaves, p.118

³⁶¹ from Colwell:History of Methodism in Australia p.256 in Ward L. Havard p.22

³⁶² Bec Stapleton and Elise Eddison *Oberon Review* 27.6.02 p.9

³⁶³ Selwyn Hawken, *A Hawken History* (Development and Advisory Publications, 1988) p.35

³⁶⁴ Betty Somerville, p.21

The church bought 45 acres of land for the use of the clergyman's horses – his parish extended to Rydal, Duckmaloi, Gingkin and Native Dog, and all had fortnightly services³⁶⁵. Thomas Hassall left 100 acres to the church which were let as a farm, known as glebe land and then as Bayley's Farm, which was sold in 1911. In 1909 Rev, F. J. Harris was riding around his large parish on a bicycle.³⁶⁶

The belfry was demolished in 1955.

St Thomas' Rectory was completed in 1877. It is of red brick, single storey with an attic and a steep iron roof to enable snow to slide off.³⁶⁷

St Barnabas' is the oldest church building in Oberon town, built of rendered stone by Billy Robertson³⁶⁸ of Black Springs and consecrated in 1869. It was initiated by Rev. John Vaughan, first clergyman at O'Connell. Most of the beautiful stained glass windows were added around 1945.

St Adrian's, Beaconsfield (Black Springs)

St Peter's, Mutton Falls. Ann Webb gave the land and bricks for the Mutton Falls church and cemetery to be for all denominations after her husband William was killed in an accident in 1851, because there was nowhere to bury him locally.³⁶⁹–

The Anglican Church owned land at Gingkin but the church was never built and the land was later sold.

Catholic

The first Catholic services were held at 'stations' in private houses where mass was said by travelling priests. In the south of the shire these included Stilwells, Cosgroves, the Wren's Nest, Claremont and the Grady's at Fish River.³⁷⁰

St Dominic's Church, Hazelgrove is believed to be one of the first Catholic churches west of the Blue Mountains, built in the grounds of the Hazelgrove cemetery³⁷¹ on land donated by Daniel Fitzpatrick³⁷². This history was written by May Lennon who died in the 1950s

This Church is claimed to be one of the first Catholic churches over the Blue Mountains. It was built in Sydney in the early 1800s, moved to St Marys, then Mt Victoria, to Tarana and finally Hazelgrove where it was assembled in the cemetery. It was demolished about 1926 and sold to Jack O'Connell [Duckmaloi] for a barn.³⁷³

The sacristy of the little weatherboard church was destroyed by fire in 1925. The galvanised iron church hall was then converted into a church with the addition of a porch and sacristy. Before the first church was completed a mass and sermon was held at O'Connell Plains once a month.

³⁶⁵ Rev R.J. Read of O'Connell in 1880 in Peg's Box

³⁶⁶ from the Journal of Rev. F. J. Harris in Peg's Box

³⁶⁷ Doney Clague and Clague

³⁶⁸ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan 10.11.02

³⁶⁹ pers. comm. Kevin Webb, 22.8.02

³⁷⁰ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan 23.11.02

³⁷¹ Patricia Arrow, unpublished manuscript

³⁷² Nina Slattery, Sr Marie Therese pp.7,8,14

³⁷³ Nina Slattery

St Francis' is a convict built granite and sandstone church completed in 1866, designed by Edward Gell, architect of St Stanislaus' College, Bathurst. The land was part of Hassall's 600 acre grant and was bought from Donald Campbell in 1864. It was deconsecrated in 1982 and is a private residence.

The first Roman Catholic services in the Fish River district were conducted by Rev Matthew Quinn in 1868.³⁷⁴

O'Connell Convent was built of brick in 1867 to house the St Joseph Sisters. In 1877 weatherboard extensions were added and the convent took up to 12 boarders from the school next door. It was closed in 1954 and sold in 1982 and is now a private residence.³⁷⁵

St Ignatius

Oberon had a humble little iron Catholic church built in 1896. In 1937 the brick church St Ignatius was built, and was pulled down and rebuilt in 1987. It is now the largest church in Oberon.

Malachi Hall (see Sport, Leisure and Entertainment)

Avoca Church (St Vincent de Paul Black Springs) opened in 1890, built of stone transported by 'W. Stapleton, Philip Kessey, Ed., Harry and Charly Hotham, Pat Hanrahan No.3 (Daisy Bank), Martin Long, the Cosgroves and Wilds'.³⁷⁶ Prior to that travelling priests had held mass at stations throughout the Oberon district.

Galvanised iron outstation churches were built between then and 1900:

St David's Porters Retreat, now a private residence.

St Francis Xavier Brisbane Valley

St Michaels Shooters Hill, now a private residence.

Memories of St Michaels from E. D.:

Missions were a much looked forward to event. All work would cease for a week. Great mounds of sandwiches would be prepared and when Mass was over, a picnic breakfast would be enjoyed. The back to hear the priest's address... Mass in our own little church always had... that extra something³⁷⁷

St Josephs Isabella – opened 1897, later the **Church of the Holy Angels**, and later still **Our Lady of Fatima**

Masses were held at lengthy intervals at these churches.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Doney, Clague and Clague, 1997

³⁷⁵ Doney, Clague and Clague

³⁷⁶ G.M. Cashman op. cit. p.52

³⁷⁷ from The Majellan Jan-Mar 1983

³⁷⁸ information from G.M.Cashman

A church hall was erected at Porters Retreat in 1896. Around 1950 it was moved to Edith and the old Southern Cross Hall was moved from Oberon to be the church hall.³⁷⁹ Mass was held once a month at the Edith hall.

Seventh Day Adventist

In 1904 members of the Hawken family were baptised by immersion in the Fish River at Honeysuckle Falls by Pastors Caldwell and Cobb. The church was built in 1958 and prior to that services were held in the homes of the Buckley, Pidgeon, Tonkin and Maher families³⁸⁰

Christian Life Centre

Began under this name in the 1990s under Pastor Andrew Godden, who is also a local general practitioner. Services are held at Oberon Primary School.

Cemeteries (*information mostly from Mervyn Dwyer, funeral director*)

Before 1856 bodies had to be taken to a barracks to be viewed by an officer in charge to get a death certificate. The closest to Oberon were Hartley, Bathurst and Lagoon.

Private Cemeteries

Arnold graves at Jaunter (also Slys and 'the concertina man' in another location) Claytons at Arkstone – two groups.

Cosgroves at Mt Mary, Mary Vale and Black Betts all in the Porters Retreat area.

McKinnons at Mary Vale

Graves at Wren's Nest, one of Michael Murray

Wilcoxes at Nestlebrae

Hogans in Oberon town, near St Joseph's school

Hogan at Tuglow, also Mary Ann Wilcox

Stilwells at Hilltop, Mt Defiance

Halls at Gingkin

Hogan at Edith

Bloom Hill Cemetery. Henry Stapley lone grave at Bloom Hill, may have been the former church cemetery of Bloom Hill Methodist Church which was dedicated in 1876. Henry Stapley was a trustee of the church.³⁸¹ Jelbarts in unmarked graves, probably Thomas who died in 1882 and son Alfred, 1883.³⁸²

Delaney grave at The Meadows

McCauley graves at old Methodist cemetery, Sidmouth Valley

Lone grave on Springvale (once erroneously believed to be Elizabeth Whalan - near Fish River Creek crossing of Duckmaloi Road)

Stapleton graves at Isabella, (just outside the shire)

Graves at Raineville

Mt Olive – Methodist

Hazelgrove – Catholic, with graves dating from the 1850s

Foleys Creek (Brisbane Valley) the graves of Margaret (Mary) Grady 1857 is one of Australia's first consecrated bush graves³⁸³

Francis graves, Emden Vale, Arkstone

³⁷⁹ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan 10.11.02

³⁸⁰ Wheeler and Garland p.16

³⁸¹ National Trust of Australia (NSW) listing proposal

³⁸² John Arthur Jelbart p.12

³⁸³ Stewart J Greenhalgh, letter to Oberon Council 27.8.1996

Kangaroo Swamp (near Black Springs)

Mt Werong (12 graves)

Black Springs, old cemetery, Rockley Road on land donated by Michael Hanrahan. The oldest graves are Pat Hanrahan, 1858, and Mary Hogan, 1859.

General Cemeteries

Oberon

O'Connell Church of England with the oldest grave in the shire that of a shepherd boy who died in 1835.

O'Connell, Roman Catholic, behind the convent at O'Connell.

Methodist cemetery, Wisemans Creek, Todds Road (Todds, Gunnings and others).

St Barnabas, old Church of England cemetery, Oberon.

Glyndwr, old Methodist cemetery, Oberon

Shooters Hill

St Adrians, Church of England

Avoca Church

Mutton Falls, Uniting Church and Church of England

Masonic Lodge

Originally held meetings upstairs in the dining room at Rutter's Royal Hotel³⁸⁴.

The Oberon Lodge was built in 1923

Jenolan Caves has had a strong association with the Masons. Caretaker/guide Voss Wiburd was a high ranking Mason in NSW. Lodge meetings are still held in the Caves.

Schools

Oberon Public School opened in 1872, in a small building which cost 20 pounds, as a half-time school in conjunction with Fish River Creek School. The first teacher, Miss Whalan taught at Oberon for half a day and then travelled to Fish River Creek school (Titania) for the rest of the day. Four years later it was granted full-time public status, the school building had been approved and a teacher's residence added. The school grew and was improved until in 1944 it was large enough for Central School status.

St Josephs school Oberon started in 1912 in a corrugated iron building that was demolished to make way for the Church of St Ignatius.. The first brick school building opened in 1952³⁸⁵.

See appendix 1 for small locality schools.

Hospital

Oberon's first hospital, a maternity hospital, was opened by mid wife, Nurse Edith Fox in her home, a pise building still standing in North Street, in 1918. Nurse Fox delivered over 800 babies in the Oberon district. When she retired a second maternity hospital was opened in 1927 by Nurse Osborn, wife of the local chemist, in a house that had belonged to Jack Hennessy, owner of the Royal Hotel.³⁸⁶ He had connected the first piped water to his house and to the Royal Hotel, supplied from a well with a windmill at what is now the Catholic

³⁸⁴ pers. comm. Pat Hogan

³⁸⁵ *Oberon Review* 22.8.2002

³⁸⁶ [50 Anniversary of the Oberon Hospital Auxiliary, 1994]

Presbytery, and backed up by pipes to the Fish River.³⁸⁷ It changed to a general hospital and was later taken over by the Hospital Commission and opened as Oberon District Hospital in 1944 under Matron Harris³⁸⁸.

Mary Behan worked there for 33 years until 1999, the last 21 as Matron. Mary, mother of eight children, gave birth to them at the hospital, and was soon after back at work because the hospital was short staffed. The babies came to work with her for their first six months so she could breastfeed them.

The Hospital Auxilliary has raised over \$100 000 over the years in gifts and donations to support and develop the hospital. The community now has four doctors, including Dr Andrew Godden. He and his predecessors Dr Perkins and later Dr Robey provided medical care for the Oberon district for most of the twentieth century. Dr Perkins and Dr Robey practised in Ramsgate, a two storey brick Edwardian home built in 1906 by the Fox family who owned the Imperial Stores opposite. The two front rooms were used for the surgery. In 1999 it was bought by Jean Dube who opened it as a guest house³⁸⁹. Dr Robey drove an ambulance made by cutting the seat out of a Landrover and installing a stretcher.³⁹⁰

Oberon Council

Oberon Shire Council was formed at a public meeting in March 1906. Meetings were first held in the Templars Hall in Ross Street, then moved to the Memorial Hall (now RSL), built by the citizens of Oberon in 1927, and in 1949 to its current site. The first clerk was J Looby but W Minehan replaced him after a few months. The first councillors were T C Brennan, Hugh Kelly, L Todd, J Hughes, C E Richards and E Robinson³⁹¹.

The first street lights were erected outside the post office in Raleigh Street.

The town's first electricity was provided in 1936 by a generator owned by Herb David and Les Anstiss near the corner of Oberon and Dudley Streets. The system was taken over by the Council in 1947, and in 1956 was included in the Southern Mitchell County Council, operating out of Oberon Council until about 1987 when an office was opened in Oberon. In 2001 the authority became Country Energy.³⁹²

Council has provided stock saleyards, women's rest rooms, a library, caravan park, school bus services and swimming pool. In 1967 the Gingkin/Shooters Hill school bus coasted about three kilometres in neutral when the brakes failed, stopping finally in a gravel pit with the 45 children safe.³⁹³

The Oberon Library opened as a branch of Lithgow Library in 1963, run by Bev Evans. In 1992 it moved into its current purpose-built building, and in 1997 became independent of Lithgow and librarian Wendy Casey was appointed. Bev Evans has now worked there for 40 years.

³⁸⁷ pers. comm. with Merv Dwyer, 25.2.03

³⁸⁸ Wheeler and Garland p.21

³⁸⁹ pers. comm. with Jean Dube 18.11.2002

³⁹⁰ pers. comm. with Greg Toole, 3.12.02

³⁹¹ Wheeler and Garland, pp.23-5

³⁹² pers. comm. with Noelene Pye, 28.2.03

³⁹³ pers. comm. with the driver, Greg Toole

Service Organisations

The Country Women's Association had a strong branch in Oberon, which started in 1933, with first president Mrs Chudleigh. The CWA Rooms were acquired in 1936, a shop bought for 325 pounds from Len Cunynghame. The annual Blue and Gold ball, held at the Malachi Hall, was their main function for the year. The CWA also organised a Baby Health Centre in its rooms from 1937 until 1965 when the Shire Council took over. Nurses came out once a week from Bathurst.

The Younger Set, which organised social functions like dances, was very active in the early years, though lapsed during the War, restarting in 1944. When the Younger Set officially closed in 1952, funds from its account were used to start a branch library, with Mrs Doust as librarian. The library continued until after the Council library opened in 1963.

The branch's membership peaked at 80 during the War, and for several year raised a pound a day, spent on comforts for local servicemen serving abroad, sending up to 100 parcels a month. On one occasion members invited city children whose fathers were prisoners-of-war, to stay with them for a touch of country life.

Delegates helped in the formation of such bodies as the tree-planting committee, which was responsible for many of Oberon's beautiful street trees, emergency house-keeping, Meals on Wheels, homes for the aged, senior citizen's club and Oberon committee for social development. The branch also had a bush-fire committee which supplied tea and food to fire-fighters in the district.³⁹⁴

With dwindling membership and rising costs the CWA Rooms were sold in 1990, and a cheque for \$25,000 from the proceeds presented to the fund for Hathaway Cottages aged care home. The CWA finally closed in 1993. Its last president was Sheila Buckley.

Red Cross began in Oberon in the 1940s and was disbanded in 2000. Pat Hogan was its longest serving president.

Rotary was formed in the late 1960s. Inner Wheel was formed as a service organisation for wives of Rotarians in the USA in 1905. Oberon Inner Wheel Club Inc was chartered in 1972. Oberon Apex Club was inaugurated in 1954, its first service work being the collection of 2100 beer bottles³⁹⁵.

Lions Club and Probus also have branches in Oberon.

Banks

The **National Australia Bank** building was built by the Australian Joint Stock Bank in about 1882, hence the initials AJS etched on the glass in the windows of the front doors. After a temporary closure during 1893 the branch closed permanently in 1901 and Oberon was without a bank until 1912 when the Commercial Banking Company opened a branch on the opposite corner. In 1918 the CBC bought the AJS building which it still occupies under its contemporary name of National Australia Bank. A famous walnut tree, believed to be the largest in Australia, grew in the grounds, but was finally cut down in the 1990s when efforts to revive it failed.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ The Golden Years of Oberon Branch 1933-1983

³⁹⁵ Oberon Review 13 March 2003, p.17

³⁹⁶ Cunynghame, Drzyzga, Murphy, Pearce

The Bank of New South Wales (later Westpac) opened in a section of the Royal Hotel building and moved to the building beside the Royal in 1917, but closed temporarily in 1943. In 1946 it reopened on the corner of Ross and Oberon Streets, opposite the NAB, in 1943.³⁹⁷ In 1999 it became an in-store bank in Oberon Industrial and Farming.

The Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia opened beside the current post office in 1961³⁹⁸ and is still operating there as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

The Rural Bank opened in Oberon on the other side of the post office in 1965, becoming the State Bank in 1981.³⁹⁹ In 1998 it became an in-store branch in Oberon Florist until taken over by the Commonwealth Bank in 2001.

³⁹⁷ Wheeler and Garland, p.19

³⁹⁸ Wheeler and Garland, p.21

³⁹⁹ Wheeler and Garland, p.21

10. Sport, Leisure, Entertainment and the Arts

Being a rural community much of Oberon district's early recreation revolved around farming skills. The Queen's Birthday was celebrated on 24 May 1853 at O'Connell Plains with a ploughing match.

Two horses driven with reins prize 8 pounds. bullock teams 8 pounds. All teams start at 11 o'clock and to plough a quarter of an acre each. time horse two hours. bullocks 2½ hours. entrance fee 10/- paid at the starting and returned when the ground specified has been completed, otherwise forfeited. The proprietor on whose ground the match will take place to pay the funds the current rate of ploughing. Judges Mr James Stevenson, Swashfield and William Sweetman, Cambells River. sec.treas., J.M. Hassall of Milford.

Also cricket matches, quoit playing to come off on the ground the same day. A good substantial lunch will be provided at the Plough Inn⁴⁰⁰

Lord and Lady Carrington were also entertained with a ploughing match when they stayed at Oberon after visiting Jenolan Caves in 1887. This form of entertainment was eminently practical, the labour of leisure was not wasted.

The O'Connell Agricultural Society held the first three shows in the Bathurst district, at Raglan, from 1860 until 1862 and also featured ploughing matches, and there was a competition for rabbits in some of the early shows!

The Oberon Show started in 1899 and has run almost continuously ever since.

Horse racing was a very popular activity from early days. There were race courses at O'Connell, Oberon, Brisbane Valley, Isabella, Porters Retreat, Avoca (Black Springs). St Patrick's day at O'Connell was celebrated with annual races attended by about 500 people in 1853 (Bathurst Free Press). The races developed until in the 1930s at Avoca races (Black Springs):

There were blood horses and professional jockeys, bookies and a publican's booth. Frank and Tom Grady were local bookmakers of the period and some local men had race horses to compete in events. People came from miles away and from all the surrounding districts. They came on foot, on horseback, in sulkies and buggies and they often had a race or two on the way⁴⁰¹

This was the era of "the maties" a fun loving, exuberant, practical joking group who all called each other "mate" and were known as the maties by people outside the district (Black Springs) group.

Foot races were popular especially in the Black Springs district and they bet on these too.

Curly Jack Hanrahan of Daisy Bank was a noted runner and practical joker. One New Years Day about 1920, he was racing up the flat, well out in front, and with a lot of bets riding on his back. Suddenly a piece of paper blew across in front of him; Curly Jack shied, veered off the track and headed for the hills and that was the end of that. The punters lost their money;

⁴⁰⁰ *Bathurst Free Press* 24.5., 1953 from Peg's Box

⁴⁰¹ Paddy Grady Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.30

Curly Jack lost his too, because he had backed himself to win; but when such a good idea entered his head he just couldn't resist it.⁴⁰²

There are no operational racecourses in the shire now, but trotters are trained at the Oberon showground. One of Australia's most famous trotters, Hondo Grattan was owned by local man Bob Webb, in partnership with the trainer, Tony Turnbull at The Lagoon.⁴⁰³

Cricket was very popular and most localities had cricket teams.

Rugby League

Rugby League has an illustrious history in Oberon. A local competition consisted of teams from different localities and businesses in town. In the 1960s these included Tourist Hotel, Royal Hotel, Boys Club, Hazelgrove, Burruga and Black Springs. Oberon had an extremely successful team, winning the Group 10 grand final from 1961 to 1967 inclusive and in 1969⁴⁰⁴. Unfortunately the records of the Oberon Leagues Club were destroyed in a fire.

Tennis

Later tennis came in and courts were built all over the shire. In the 1950s many private homes had courts, and the game occupied much of people's leisure time. There were many more courts in Oberon town than at present, including some at the Methodist church.

Sometimes the conditions were primitive. A teacher briefly working at Gingkin Provisional School in 1931 recalled going to play tennis with neighbours of the family she boarded with, and was mystified as to the whereabouts of the court:

And no wonder, because there wasn't one. On a clear piece of firm ground there were a stump and a post and between these the young men strung a piece of wire netting, and with a sharp stick drew lines.⁴⁰⁵

Dances

One of the most enduring forms of entertainment was dances. Paddy Grady Wozencraft describes the atmosphere of dances around the 1950s:

We swaggered along the polished boards in the Quickstep, the Jazz waltz, the Pride of Erin, the Jolly Miller Mix Up and Barn Dance. We danced to Pat Foran's music and no one could play the accordion quite like Pat; he played the old songs and the hit parade songs of the fifties. Just before 2 a.m. it was take your partners for the Medley, the last dance of the night. Pat would swing into "Good Night Sweetheart", the last Quickstep of the evening, followed by "Forever and Ever" and "Now is the Hour When We Must Say Goodbye". The songs for the medley never changed.

... There were strict rules for the girls – don't drink and don't leave the hall. There were no such rules for young men. They followed a special ritual; inside for a dance, then smartly out the door for a quick drink between dances.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Paddy Grady Wozencraft p.31

⁴⁰³ Mick Joffe p.101

⁴⁰⁴ Deborah Hoolihan *Oberon Review* 21.11.2002 p.20

⁴⁰⁵ ed. Alan Brown *Schools They Remember* p.23

The generation before “danced the square dances and chain waltzes, the mazurka and schottische, the varsovienne, the tango and the charleston.”⁴⁰⁷

A Dance Floor was built in a cave at Kanangra Walls by the Bailey family amongst others. People came from as far as the Burragorang Valley to attend them.

In Oberon dances were held in the Federation Hall, where the Tourist Hotel is, then Rutters Hall, the Southern Cross Hotel and the Malachi Gilmore Hall, which had a supper room downstairs. The Malachi Hall, a fine art deco building designed by Italian architect Virgil Cizzio, was opened in 1937, built on land donated to the Catholic church in memory of Malachi Gilmore. He had come to Oberon in 1872 and owned land in Oberon and the Duckmaloi area. The Malachi Gilmore Hall was built as a dance hall cinema, seating 310 people, but has also been used for school speech nights, Anzac Day ceremonies, public meetings, auctions and even as a skating rink. It was leased by Les Anstiss until the 1950s and then by Mr and Mrs Herb David who owned it from 1966 until 1986. It is currently owned by Scott Still and is a wool store, with the Cobweb Craft Shop at the front.⁴⁰⁸ The Friends of the Malachi Hall are working to purchase the building and restore it for use as a public hall. The building was listed on the State Heritage Register in November 2003.

Les Anstiss started the movies in the Southern Cross Hall and Herb David took them over, and in the 1950s they moved into the Magna Theatre in the Malachi Gilmore Hall. Ray and Bill Cunynghame sold peanuts and lollies there.⁴⁰⁹ The Southern Cross Hall was transported to Porters Retreat where it became the Hall and the Church of St David. It is now derelict.

Mr Dobrinski introduced roller skating in the Southern Cross Hall behind the Tourist Hotel. Tournaments were held and roller hockey games in the 1930s and 1940s. Herb David then built a rink with a cement floor (at the back of Oberon Videos and Discs) as dances were held at the Southern Cross on Saturday nights.

Boxing Day was often spent as a picnic day. Some families like the Briens, Flemings and Lawrences would spend it at Jenolan Caves.

The Daffodil Festival

This festival, was started by Brenda Lyon in 1984 and is held each September. The daffodil was suggested as the flower for the festival by Olive Cunynghame as it could be grown by anyone in Oberon. As well as open gardens all round the shire there is a fair with a street parade in the town.

Kowmung Music Festival

This festival began in 1997 and involves internationally acclaimed artists playing in rural settings, such as Middle Creek Estates cow shed, small churches, and the Abercrombie Caves. The Kutrawatz brothers, pianists from Austria are scheduled to play for their third

⁴⁰⁶ Paddy Grady Wozencraft pp *Black Springs*.44-45

⁴⁰⁷ P.G. Wozencraft *Golden Gully* p.33

⁴⁰⁸ Friends of the Malachi Hall Newsletter, Sept. Oct 2000

⁴⁰⁹ pers. comm. with Ray Cunynghame

season in 2003. Taking the name of a river in the wild country of the wilderness area suggests the marriage of high art with the wildness of nature.

Jenolan Caves is also the scene for concerts, especially in the Grand Arch where there is an annual Christmas concert.

Drama

O'Connell held its fifth biannual melodrama at St Thomas' church hall in November 2002. The melodramas raise money for the O'Connell Public School and are produced, and often written by the school's secretary, Brenda Doney.

Oberon's theatre company "Wild Oats" has had considerable success in the Gulgong Festival of one act plays.

Oberon Community Art and Craft Exhibition

The 21st exhibition of was held at the Oberon RSL over three days in spring 2002 with great success. Barbara Morgan, organiser for many years, has now stood down, and the exhibition is in abeyance until someone is prepared to take on the role.

Oberon in Art

Some images of the district at the first arrival of white people were recorded in the paintings of John Lewin, who accompanied Governor Macquarie's tour to Bathurst in 1815. Lewin's series of paintings, held in the Mitchell Library, include two of Sydmouth Valley: one of creek flats with emus in the foreground, and one of the party's camp there, and depict surprisingly open vegetation.

The Dwyer family's arrival and settlement at Duckmaloi was recorded in a painting on board by an unidentified member of the family with a series of scenes including their journey by ship and different aspects of agricultural work. Tragically the painting was destroyed by a Dwyer descendant because it recorded her birthdate, and only a photograph of the original remains.⁴¹⁰

A record of life in the district in a different medium is Aunt Clara's Quilt, a quilt of patchwork, appliqué and embroidery by Clara Bate, daughter of John and Annie Hughes of Gingkin. Clara and her husband Frank Bate, who married in 1884, ran a guesthouse on their property Frankfort, at Gingkin. The patches are decorated with symbols of her daily life, a spider, garden tools, native flowers, and even a pipe the smoke from which she found objectionable. The quilt is now held by the Embroiderers' Guild.⁴¹¹

One of Australia's greatest painters, Brett Whiteley, made frequent visits to Oberon from 1979 and described the area around the Fish River, south of the town as "the most beautiful I have seen in Australia". The winding river and massive rounded granite boulders inspired many works in different media. In "Letter to My Mother" he writes lyrically of Oberon's strikingly sudden onset of spring.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ pers. comm. with Merv Dwyer 26.8.02

⁴¹¹ pers. comm. with Helen Freeth 9.8.02

⁴¹² *Oberon Review*, 'World Acclaimed Artist Writes of Oberon's Beauty' Deborah Hoolihan 17.4.03 p.4

The Oberon Bicentennial Tapestries, housed in the Cobweb Craft Shop, were designed by artist Kim Rabbidge, who then lived locally. The eight tapestries represent various images of Oberon: agriculture, forestry, heritage buildings, the four seasons, Lake Oberon and Kanangra Walls. They were stitched by over 70 local needleworkers in more than 1300 hours.

During the 1990s 24 hand painted and appliquéd banners were designed under the guidance of guest artist Tore de Mestre and assembled by 40 local needleworkers. They are used to decorate the street and public buildings for such occasions as the Daffodil Festival.

Appendix 1

Early Regional History of the Shire

Tarana/Mutton Falls

Richard Mutton who arrived in Sydney in 1827 from Cornwall was working as an overseer for Robert Lowe at Sydmouth Valley in 1827/8. He went to Sydney in 1828 but later returned to Mutton Falls (named after him) and bought land. There was an inn at Mutton Falls which he possibly owned.

William Webb, brother-in-law of Richard Mutton, who arrived in 1840 with his wife Ann, started work soon after their arrival at Keirstone, owned by Dr David Ramsay. They lived in a wooden slab hut. He was accidentally killed in 1852, but Ann continued to work at Keirstone with the help of her older sons. Each week she drove a horse and cart to Bathurst with home made cheese, butter, fresh vegetables, fruit and eggs. About 1855 she bought land at Mutton Falls and started a general store there. Her house is still there, now Mutton Falls Guest House owned by Dennis Danna.

Ann was a skilled business woman and bought numerous blocks of land around Mutton Falls. The land is still owned by her descendants, held by the Perry family. In 1861 a post and telegraph office was established at the store. Ann bought Sidmouth Valley in 1871, it is believed to prevent her youngest son Thomas moving away from the district.

Hannah Webb, sister of Thomas and bane of bushrangers, married Charles Austen in 1875. He had come to Australia to join the gold rush and was working at the store. They lived near Evans Crown and took up more land building up *The Crown*, which is still owned by the Austen family.⁴¹³

Mutton Falls School was established in 1869 and operated for many years in the church. It closed in 1887 and was replaced by Keirstone.

Tarana/Mt Olive

A Cornish family from Blisdale, "Parson" William and Ann Tom took up 500 acres beside Sydmouth Valley in 1823 which they called Blenheim. Just over the Fish River William's sister Catherine and her husband William Lane took up Tarana and, not long after, Orton Park near Bathurst, where they lived.

They were followed in 1838 by Catherine and William's nephew John Barrett and wife Johanna, and their niece Catherine and her husband John Hawken; and in 1841 by two more nieces Catherine and Walter Bryant, and Dorothy and William Dale. John Hawken worked for two years as the Lane's overseer at Orton Park, but after that ended because of family tensions he took up land (1843) on the old Bathurst road (Cox's) at Fish River Hill (Mt Olive), adjoining Alfred Whalan. Walter Bryant worked for the Lanes at Tarrannah. About 1846 John Barrett, who was then a carrier in Sydney, and Johanna joined them buying land on the Fish River. Over the years the Barrett family expanded their holding which became the property, Laureldale.

James Whalan went to live on the block at Tarana, Emu Valley, in 1837. There was an inn there known as the Hill House, that was a change station for Cobb and Co. coaches on their way to Sydney.

⁴¹³Ken Mugglestone

Mount Olive Methodist Church was built on Alfred Whalan's land after 1862 and replaced with a weatherboard church about 1900. That building was shifted to Edith some years later.

A school, Mountain Home, was started on the northern side of the river in 1880. The Barretts found it difficult to cross the river, and the Hawken and Bryants were too far away, so Crown Ridge School (for a while called Kendale) was established on Walter Bryant's land. It was attended by Hawken, Griffiths, Bryant, Delaney, Sedger and Whalan children. It closed in 1893.

O'Connell

One of Thomas Hassall's assigned convicts was Patrick Grady, who was sent to him in 1823 when he arrived from Ireland. Thomas and Samuel Hassall wrote to the Colonial Secretary in 1824 to request that Patrick's wife Margaret and children to join him in the colony, which they did in 1827. He was given his Ticket of Leave in 1833 allowing him to acquire property and be paid for his work, with the condition that he remain in the Bathurst district. In 1844 he and Margaret applied for a licence to occupy 640 acres of land in the Brisbane Valley (Essington) area. He is believed to be the first settler in the area.⁴¹⁴

Another early O'Connell resident was William Arrow from Surrey in England, who was transported in 1821 for seven years. He was assigned to a Church of England minister in the Bathurst area in 1823, believed to have been Thomas Hassall, whose parish included Kelso⁴¹⁵. He worked with a shoemaker in Kelso, where he married Sarah Burton in 1829 and took up a grant of 40 acres at O'Connell in 1836. His son John later acquired more land further up Mick's Mount. William built a house and he and Sarah raised their 15 children there. Their neighbours were Sarah's parents James and Elizabeth Burton. James had been transported in 1816, and Elizabeth and daughter Sarah had followed in 1819.⁴¹⁶

The NSW Calender and Directory of 1834 listed: William Smith, O'Connell Plains, James Whalan Fish River, Dr. Burg (A) on O'Connell Plains, Peter Dwyer Stoney Creek. Bx [Bathurst], William Heylin Bx, Arthur Kemmis Milford Vale O'Connell Plains, J.W. Lowe Sidmouth Valley, William Raymond O'Connell Pl. Bx, William Redfern O'Connell Plains Bx, Daniel Roberts O'Connell Plains Bx, James Knight O'Connell Plains Bx, W Walker Brisbane Grove.⁴¹⁷

The post office was established in 1834, possibly at the Willow Glen Inn, with William Smith in charge. At some point it moved to the corner of the Bathurst road and Beaconsfield Road and remained open until 1980.⁴¹⁸ A branch of the Government Savings Bank was established at the post office in 1900.⁴¹⁹

Swatchfield

When J.B.Richards did a survey in 1829 Captain John Crago Brown(e) was occupying Swatchfield. He must have been a major grazier as in 1838 and 1839 he applied for leases of 14,807 acres in the County of Westmoreland, mostly in 640 acre lots⁴²⁰. Swatchfield was later bought by the Stevenson family who also had Essington Park, and then by Thomas Charles Hackney. Jim Stevenson built Kalgoorlie Hall on it, according to the story that he staked a man to go to the gold diggings. The man struck it rich at Kalgoorlie and repaid him

⁴¹⁴ Lucy Price

⁴¹⁵ Catherine Arrow, pp 3-4

⁴¹⁶ Catherine Arrow p.4

⁴¹⁷ from Peg's Box

⁴¹⁸ Denis Chamberlain, p.14

⁴¹⁹ Post Office 1834-1900, inPeg's Box

⁴²⁰ Kevin Toole p.8

generously. Swatchfield was bought by the current owners the Katers in the 1930s and some of it resumed for soldier settlement blocks after World War 11. Kalgoorlie Hall is a separate property.

Swatchfield School opened in 1882 and operated almost continuously until its closure in 1957. It was at first situated on Swatchfield property but about 1909 it moved onto the Goulburn Road.⁴²¹

Arkstone

Mary Anne Redmond, whose father had taken up Bingham, married Roger Murphy in 1829. As a marriage settlement she received 500 acres of Bingham, called Ballyroe. Roger had been convicted for his involvement in the Ballagh uprising in 1815, the destruction of an infirmary which was planned for occupancy by the English militia.⁴²² He came out on the Surrey 2, whose captain was Thomas Raine of Raineville.

Murphy was another successful emancipated Catholic in Sydney. He proceeded to take up a huge amount of land in the Porters Retreat area and further west. In 1836-7 he bought Buckburridgee, Jeremy, Paling Yards, Isabella River and leased land at Fell Timber, Bradley's Flats among other places. He was the first really big grazier in the area, in fact from Little River to the Abercrombie and west to Mt David was known as 'Murphy's Park'⁴²³. By 1839, after two years of severe drought, however he tried to sell. Mary Anne leased out her land to her brother-in-law John Scarvell (of Arundel Park) in 1845. Roger Murphy struggled through insolvency and maintained his pastoral interests on a reduced scale. He probably did not live in the district, but died in 1855 on the road from the Abercrombie to Goulburn.⁴²⁴

Porters Retreat/Paling Yards

There appear to have been two landholders called Brown at Porters Retreat in the very early days. Surveyor J. B. Richards camped at Captain Browne's, Porters Retreat in 1829, near the head of the Campbells River.⁴²⁵ This is believed to have been Captain John Brown of Brownlea, Dunn's Plains (Rockley). Surveyor Townsend's 1837 map of Little River marks "Merchant Brown's old station Gurnang" south of Little River.

Captain King also had a sheep station there in 1829 and probably earlier. It was owned later by Archibald McColl who had had a lease on Mary Vale⁴²⁶.

Another early landowner was Patrick Mahoney, who had come out as a convict in 1815 with brothers Michael and Maurice. He took up a 640 acre block at the head of the Little River in 1838: the property Porters Retreat. Patrick had brought out his immediate family from Ireland in 1855. By 1862 his brother, John Mahoney, John's daughter Honora Murray/Cleary and his son-in-law Thomas Cleary had mortgaged 2566 acres at Porters Retreat. In 1865 with drought, recession and financial difficulties all was lost.⁴²⁷

Patrick had no children but the property 'Porters Retreat' was taken over by Mahoney relation⁴²⁸. Dr Joan Harris, who last lived in the Porters Retreat house, was a descendant.

⁴²¹ Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.57

⁴²² Max Barrett, pp. 4,63-4

⁴²³ Kevin Toole p.8

⁴²⁴ K. Toole pp.8-9, and Max Barrett pp.95-111

⁴²⁵ Brian Johnston p.99

⁴²⁶ pers. comm. with Hubert McKinnon

⁴²⁷ Mahony family history

⁴²⁸ G.M. Cashman p.37

David and Cecilia Cosgrove had tried to take up the land they worked south of the Abercrombie, but were thwarted when William Macarthur bought it. They moved to the Little River in 1837-8 (now Mary Vale). They had worked for Merchant Browne, who held Gurnang, at his estate near Penrith, Abbotsbury.⁴²⁹ Thomas Cosgrove, David's brother, had arrived in NSW a few months after Throsby's expedition and was assigned to Throsby, as shown in the 1822 Muster. He was a shepherd to William Lawson about 1823, and may have passed through the Porter's Retreat area to get there.⁴³⁰

The Cosgroves tried a new tack to acquire land. Sydney man Charles Marshall applied for the property on his own behalf and paid 290 pounds on Cecilia's behalf. This sale did not go through as Marshall did not pay the mortgage and it was sold in 1845 to Alice Gibson, sister of William Pitt Faithfull. The following year he bought it from her. So both the properties the Cosgroves had tried to buy ended up with the two men who had wanted to evict them (and other small settlers suspected of cattle stealing, from the Taralga district.⁴³¹ Mary Vale was later bought by the McKinnons, who still own it. Their present homestead was built of pise by James Inglis of Oberon, who built a number of pise dwellings early in the twentieth century including his guest house Dulce Domum.

In 1842 John Tingcombe owned 640 acres at Paling Yards or Wallangriva. In that area Archibald McColl later had a property, maybe King's sheep station. He and Stilwell (at Mt Browne) were mentioned by Charles Macalister as being 'good and true bushmen' in 1853. Michael Murray purchased land near the Wren's Nest in 1853 and later became the owner of that property (which had originally been taken up in 1842).⁴³² He was murdered with a tomahawk by a shepherd in 1869. Even the pig dung poultice he applied was unable to save him! Sydney Scarvell, brother of John of Arundel Park, bought 30 acres at Jacob's Valley on the Little River also in 1853, perhaps for traveling stock.⁴³³

Daniel and Ann Maloney selected 30 acres in the Porters Retreat area in 1856, calling it Spring Vale, and moved there from Bullock Flat where they had lived for three years. He added to the land, and when he died in 1894 his will stipulated that 150 acres owned outright were never to be sold. Daniel was the first postmaster at Porters Retreat.

Foleys Creek/Native Dog/Brisbane Valley

The Foran, Rawson and Grady families, all related, were the earliest settlers in the Brisbane Valley area, now called Foley's Creek. Ellen Grady, daughter of Patrick and Margaret Grady (*see O'Connell*), married Patrick Foran in 1829 in Sydney. He was granted a conditional pardon in 1835 and the same year Ellen applied for a grant of 640 acres at Native Dog Creek. They lived at Stoney Creek (later called Davies then Sewells Creek⁴³⁴). Ellen's sister Mary married Samuel Rawson, a convict, and they moved to Brisbane Valley (Foleys Creek) about 1841. Samuel worked as a blacksmith and farmer in the area.⁴³⁵ The girls' parents (Gradys) applied for a license to occupy 640 acres in the area in 1844. Four of the family were buried on the Brisbane Valley Cemetery⁴³⁶. Mary's will stated that she owned 30 acres, house, garden and sheep.

⁴²⁹ B. Johnston p.18

⁴³⁰ Brian Johnston, *Cecily Cosgrove A Bush Pioneer* (Belfield, 1983) p.99

⁴³¹ Brian Johnston

⁴³² pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan 1.11.02

⁴³³ Brian Johnston p.61

⁴³⁴ Norman Greenhalgh *Our Family Tree* (1998) p.19B

⁴³⁵ Lucy Price

⁴³⁶ Lucy Price

John Gibbons is also buried in this cemetery. He was transported in 1836 and assigned to Thomas Arkell at Charlton, on the Campbells River. In 1848 he married Maria Rawson and had nine children. He had a grant of 30 acres at Racecourse Creek near Campbells River, and another near Fish River Creek. After John's death in 1868 Maria married Daniel McPhee of Kangaroo Swamp (west of Black Springs, near Mimosa Dell) and had three more children.⁴³⁷

Other early residents of Brisbane were James Donnelly and his wife Ann Peggs, parents of Rose Donnelly who in 1835 married James Grady (another child of Patrick and Margaret. James and Rose Grady lived nearby at Norway.)

Foleys Creek had a post office and a store.⁴³⁸ The Brisbane Valley school was operating by 1875. In 1904 its name changed to Balfour Public School and it operated until 1969.

Isabella

The Isabella River was apparently named after John Scarvell's (of Arundel Park and elsewhere) first wife.⁴³⁹ Another theory is that two Walsh brothers of Mary Stapleton came to Australia on the Isabella.⁴⁴⁰

Robert Stapleton came to Australia from Tipperary in 1841, and took up land at Hartley, but when the goldrush started came to Isabella where he opened a hotel and store. His brother, Daniel, and Alice Stapleton and two daughters emigrated in 1851. Alice died shortly after arriving in Sydney, and Daniel is said to have set off on foot for the goldfields. In 1853 he married Mary Walsh in Sydney and the family set off for Isabella. They settled on a holding of two acres with a 20 acre mining lease, and their 10 children were born there. Daniel was the first postmaster of Isabella, and for the life of the post office, nearly a century it was run by a Stapleton.⁴⁴¹

Some of the prospectors who stayed on there were John Bradley, Jim McGuinness, Donald McVicar and "Dr" Bill France. Other early residents were the Gibbons, Ryans, Bob West and Hintons.⁴⁴²

Essington

Captain King died in 1856 and his widow still owned the 2000 acres of Essington Park in 1874. On the west side Henry Humphries bought 350 acres in 1857, part of his extensive holdings in the Oberon district. He built the present Essington Park homestead on the 350 acres in 1860.

In 1876 the King brothers sold their 2000 acres (Essington Park) to the brothers Archibald and John Stevenson. Both these men married daughters of Henry Humphries, Harriet and Susan respectively.

Henry Humphries ran into financial problems towards the end of that century with the increase in government land rental and the drop of wool prices and sold much of his land to John and Archibald Stevenson. Archibald became the sole owner of the 350 acres with the house in 1904 and enlarged the upper floor, changing the appearance of the house from "pioneer" to colonial.

⁴³⁷ Norman Greenhalgh p.10

⁴³⁸ pers. comm. with Warren Rawson 16.5.03

⁴³⁹ G.M.Cashman p.36

⁴⁴⁰ pers. Comm.. with Alan Hoolihan 12.5.03

⁴⁴¹ Paddy Grady Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.80

⁴⁴² Esma Stapleton, Sister Dominica

After Archibald's death in 1927 T C Hackney bought *Essington Park*, which was now 3000 acres (and Swatchfield). The Hackneys further increased the estate to over 7000 acres. By the 1940s the family, after several tragedies, was in financial difficulties and about 4000 acres was sold to the government for eight soldier settlement blocks. The recipients were H G Clapham, L B Colley, W M Hogan, J H Salmon, G D Inwood, L J Wilkinson, D C Dean and C H Evans. The Salmon family expanded their holding in the area and in 1963 bought the homestead and surrounding land. The homestead and 12 acres of land was sold and has exchanged hands several times since.⁴⁴³

Thomas Wilcox, another son of William and Caroline, had the property *Sweet Wattle*, now owned by Arthur Lang. He married Barbara Hughes in 1857 and they had 14 children 4 of whom predeceased him. He died in 1900 of snake bite and the property was then sold to the Langs.⁴⁴⁴

Sewells Creek

Joseph Sewell as transported for seven years, on suspicion of stealing in 1816. He purchased 984 acres of leasehold land after he obtained his ticket of leave. The property was called *Claremont* but is now called *Thane*. During the gold mining days on Sewell's Creek about 200 miners lived there and the Sewell family ran a store beside their home. Joining the store was a butcher shop which is still standing.⁴⁴⁵ The property is still in the hands of his descendants the Nightingales.

Black Springs

Patrick Hanrahan's diary of 1856 until 1858 mentions Behan, Clayton, Foley, Foran, Grady, Kessey/Kasey, McQuirk, O'Neil, Roberts, Wilde, Connolly, Booth, Spencer and Pye.⁴⁴⁶

Mimosa Dell school opened in 1881. All 27 of the first students were Roman Catholic. Prior to it opening many of the student s were receiving education on the property of John Grady who employed a school master privately. Mimosa Dell was full time until 1893 but continued half time with intermittent closures until 1950.⁴⁴⁷ The school was reopened in 1958 under the name of Black Springs.⁴⁴⁸

Daisy Bank school opened in 1895 and operated half time and provisionally except between 1899 and 1927 when it had Public status (full time)⁴⁴⁹. It finally closed in 1969.

Shooters Hill

One of the first residents at Shooters Hill was Daniel McQuirk, there in the 1830s.⁴⁵⁰ James Watson, who was born at Cobbity, was friends with a chap called Billy Armour. Billy either had a block of ground at Shooters Hill or was in the process of taking it up and was making trips up here about it. On one of these trips he invited James to come along with him. James...decided to select a block for himself, on a creek at the head of the Tuglow River.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴³ Robert M. Rawlings

⁴⁴⁴ Catherine Arrow and Irene Birch p.16

⁴⁴⁵ Marie P. Nightingale p.168

⁴⁴⁶ G.M.Cashman p.22

⁴⁴⁷ Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.57

⁴⁴⁸ Department of School Education archives, Strathfield

⁴⁴⁹ Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.58

⁴⁵⁰ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan

⁴⁵¹ Malcolm Watson

This was in the early 1880s. James and Mary Watson came up through Camden and Mt Werong, and started a store around 1890, as there were a lot of people at Shooters Hill at that time.

In 1909 one of the best-known settlers here [Shooters Hill] is Mr P Feebrey, who, from being a tenant, has now become the owner of a very fine farm of 500 acres, including a fine orchard planted by his predecessor, Mr Armour...⁴⁵²

Pat Feebrey had the post office and his brother, J Feebrey also lived at Shooters Hill. Jon Barker was resident there from 1886 and in 1907 was producing “wheat, rye, oats, potatoes, and enormous onions and, as well, he dairies”. Next door to him was Mr J Dennis who had come [from the Burragorang Valley] in 1887, and had another store at Shooters Hill.⁴⁵³

Other early Shooters Hill resident from the Burragorang were Maxwells and Gormans⁴⁵⁴. Also there early were Davidsons, Thompson, and Dunk⁴⁵⁵.

Gingkin

Gingkin, also known as Beung, was a 640 acre grant taken up by James Whalan in 1841. He had apparently followed the Fish River up to its source (the Duckmaloi) looking for summer grazing for his stock. It was bought in 1865 by John and Annie Hughes, who came from the Bathurst area⁴⁵⁶. John Hughes was connected by marriage to the Whalans.

Campbell Whalan, [or John McLean according to Ab Whalan⁴⁵⁷] another brother of Charles and James, took up land on the Hollanders River (but probably lived at Edith). He established a butcher shop in the area serving fellow farmers on an “as required” basis. His son Campbell took over the business. Campbell (1) was instrumental in the construction of the road down the Two Mile and the first Caves House. He built his house at the top of the Caves hill.⁴⁵⁸

Other early families at Gingkin were the Luthers at Wetzlar; Bates, Brennans, (daughters of John Hughes⁴⁵⁹); Spencers, and Cranfields.

John Fleming and his wife Susannah (nee Brien) arrived in Australia from Northern Ireland in 1839 in the footsteps of his younger brother William. They are believed to have worked for James Whalan at Gingkin where two children were born, before moving to buy land beside his brother William at Ferndale, on the Fish River, east of Oberon after 1843.⁴⁶⁰

A letter sent to the Sydney Mail written by John Hughes in December 1878 notes that C&H Dunn (cattle dealer from Camden) lately had taken up 2000 acres and the Dennis family had taken up five large selections. Henry Dunn also had a land in the Burragorang Valley where Billy Russell (Aboriginal) stripped stringy bark for a house, and William Dennis lived at Black Goola on the Cox’s River where his son Jim was born.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵² Oberon and Its People *The Town and Country Journal* 16.6.1909

⁴⁵³ Alan Brown’s Historical Notes, 12.4.1989 and 19.4.1989

⁴⁵⁴ Billy Russell: p.16

⁴⁵⁵ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan, 4.11.02

⁴⁵⁶ letter from John Hughes, 2.12.1878

⁴⁵⁷ 1969 memoir,

⁴⁵⁸ Ronald F. Whalan p.69

⁴⁵⁹ Pioneers: Hughes and Whalan p.15

⁴⁶⁰ RN Beattie *A Scots-Irish Knot*, p.55

⁴⁶¹ William Russell: pp.18 and 15

Jane Batchelder, who with her husband John had moved from Fish River Creek to Gingkin after 1871 was the first post mistress.

Tuglow

The first known settler at Tuglow was Henry Hogan, son of Philip and Mary, some time before 1845 as his wife Anne (McQuirk) drowned there in 1845. Her death split the Catholic community. Henry was convicted of her murder, though the judge allowed there was room for doubt, and sent to Van Diemen's Land. He married Mary Dillon while there in 1852 and returned to live at his place on the river flats at Tuglow. His land application mentioned that the land had been 'previously held' by Dunsmore. Dunsmore's lease extended to Jaunter.⁴⁶²

John Wilcox, son of William and Caroline (see Norway) moved to Tuglow at an early age where, aged 23, he met and married Mary-Anne Humphreys in 1856. She was 16 and a shepherdess moving sheep for her father when she met him. John was killed at 65 uprooting a tree. Mary Anne was one of the remarkable women in the early days of Oberon's history who continued farming after the deaths of their husbands. She is reputed to have taken produce to Lucknow (near Orange) by dray.⁴⁶³

The Dennis family, like a number of other settlers in that area (Arnolds, Barkers, Luthers, Hoolihans), came from the Burragorang Valley. William Dennis came to Bacchus Marsh in the 1870s. One of his sons, Joe, moved to Tuglow with his wife Kate (Gorman) and built the house there. Their descendants owned Tuglow until the 1990s.⁴⁶⁴

Chatham Valley School opened in 1884 and its name changed to Gingkin about 1903. It closed in 1949.

Jaunter

The Arnold family came to Jaunter in 1872 and was there until the late 1990s. Another early family there was the Bouchiers who had Clover Hills.

Jerrong

Jerrong's early settlers were Scottish: McKenzie, Archibald McColl, McDonald, Ross, and later McLennans and Scotts.

Fish River/Duckmaloi River/Titania

The name Fish River can be confusing. Oberon town is on the Fish River Creek. This was sometimes called Fish River in the early days. The Duckmaloi was called Fish River also and on some early maps has both names (i.e. Fish and Duckmaloi). The Fish River Creek school, which opened in 1871, was at what is now Titania, near Applegrove. The names of the Fish River Creek school and post office, which were in the one building, were changed to Titania in 1904 at the suggestion of the daughter of the headmaster, Joseph Harris. When the school closed the post office continued, known as Titania Post Office.⁴⁶⁵

The Armstrong, Wilson, Beattie, Brien, Henderson, Eaton, Fleming, Fawcett and Cunynghame families were neighbours and interrelated in Fermanagh, Ireland, and took up land in the Fish River Creek area. Most were Wesleyan Methodists. The following information comes from Ross Beattie's unpublished work *A Scots-Irish Knot*.

⁴⁶² pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan 18.5.03

⁴⁶³ Catherine Arrow and Irene Birch

⁴⁶⁴ pers. comm. with Alan Hoolihan 20.5.03

⁴⁶⁵ pers. comm. with Alan Brown, 13.5.03

William Armstrong and his wife Mary Ann (Wilson) arrived in NSW in 1839 and took up land in the district. In 1844 William and Rebecca Wilson came with three young children and took up three land grants in 1853 and 1854, south east of Glyndwr (Charles Whalan's property). One of the young children was Jeremiah Wilson, later to become the first caretaker of Jenolan Caves.

Five Eaton siblings, some married, and the son of another migrated at different times during the 1850s. William Fleming's brother, (see Oberon) Thomas, and his wife Elizabeth (Eaton) came to Australia in 1851. He bought a property at the junction of the Fish River and Deep Creek which he sold to David Eaton in 1892. Dr John Eaton settled in the Fish River district in 1854 and was Oberon's first doctor. His brother, Robert Coleman Eaton built Apple Grove, in the 1860s.⁴⁶⁶ It is still standing, owned by descendants of the same family.

George and Jane Bailey came to Australia from Northern Ireland in 1841, and in 1844 he was a farmer residing at Charles Whalan's Glyndwr. George took up land on the Duckmaloi (near Titania Road) in the early 1850s. In 1853 he bought a neighbouring 32 acres which was west of 30 acres owned by the Armstrong family. His farm was called Bloomfield and is still in the hands of his descendants, the Beattie family. The house, a two storey pise dwelling, built about 1855 survives although was severely damaged in a fire in the 1920s. George Bailey also owned a butcher shop, a pise building still standing east of the Royal Hotel.⁴⁶⁷

Andrew McGregor Beattie began working for George Bailey in 1880 and married his daughter Matilda in 1884. They inherited it and added considerably to the size of Bloomfield⁴⁶⁸.

Four of the George and Jane Bailey's children married Morrrows. Several Morrow families emigrated from Northern Ireland, including George Morrow who arrived in 1844 and worked as a carrier and road contractor. He is believed to have cut the "Two Mile" to Jenolan Caves.

William Brien, whose mother was a Beattie, emigrated to NSW with one of the Eatons in 1858-1860, and started to develop a block of 34 acres which was later to be part of Ferndale. He gradually added to it to build up a substantial holding and in 1867 married Mary Jane Fleming. The first portion of the *Ferndale* property taken up was by James Whalan in 1851. The Ferndale homestead, on the site of the current new house, was started in 1880. William died in 1882 shortly after finishing the house, leaving Mary Jane with eight children. She later married her neighbour Robert Edgar.⁴⁶⁹

The Fish River Creek school began in 1871 on about 47 acres bought from Mr J. Armstrong. An 1876 petition for the appointment of Mr Spencer as a teacher was signed by Alexander Graham, Robert Whalan, J B Keen, Henry Campbell, Robert Whalan, John Whalan, Campbell Whalan, Erskine Bailey, George Bailey, Robert Armstrong, C Lawrence, Jeremiah Wilson, Robert Eaton, Jane Eaton, Sydney Cunningham, Alexander Wilson and John Lewis. The school closed in 1940.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ pers. comm. with Frank Fawcett 15.9.02

⁴⁶⁷ RN Beattie *George Bailey and Jane Armstrong* p.2

⁴⁶⁸ RN Beattie *George Bailey and Jane Armstrong* p.34

⁴⁶⁹ Colin Fleming Brien, pp.1-3,14

⁴⁷⁰ Dept of Education archives

Edith

Edith was originally called by the Aboriginal name, Buckemall, but was changed to Edith, after Edith Bailey.⁴⁷¹

The establishment of Edith is credited to John McLean Whalan, brother of Charles Whalan of Glyndwr, who was the last of the brothers to settle in the Oberon area. He owned Buckemall and Woodlands, and was responsible for the establishment of the Methodist church at Edith.⁴⁷² A hut, well known by bushwalkers was erected by him in the Jenolan Caves/Kanangra Walls area as a stockman's hut.

A number of John Whalan descendants were connected with Jenolan Caves, one was Orton John Whalan who lived for many years at the Lower Farm⁴⁷³. Campbell Whalan also lived at Edith, but took up land on the Hollanders River. John Armstrong, who arrived in 1839, also settled at Edith.

Edwin Wilcox, born 1837, one of William and Caroline Wilcox's six sons, had a grant of land on McKeon's Creek where he met and married Susannah Dawson⁴⁷⁴, (daughter of Thomas Dawson, mentioned in William Pitt Faithfull's letter of undesirable people in the Taralga area⁴⁷⁵)

Mary and John Blattman lived in the Edith area about the 1860s and 1870s. He died leaving her with six 6 children, the oldest 11, and she continued to run the farm for twenty years. She is celebrated in the tribute to Australian pioneer women *Mary of Maranoa*.⁴⁷⁶

Other early residents were Booths, "between Buckamall Creek and the school...the old paddock below the school was known as Booths old paddock"; and the Morrows who lived east of Burrows [Burroughs]crossing.⁴⁷⁷

Oberon /Back Creek

In 1837 Sergeant Charles Whalan took up 988 acres of land on the Fish River Creek. He established the first post office, built the first church and erected his own mill for crushing grain, which was used by farmers for up to 50 miles around.⁴⁷⁸ Sergeant Charles was noted for his generosity and many of the early farmers at Oberon found employment with him and in some cases settled on land given by Charles from his grants.⁴⁷⁹ His descendants married and intermarried into the Booth, Cunyngame, Bailey and Armstrong families.⁴⁸⁰ William Armstrong and his wife may Ann (Wilson) arrived in NSW in 1839 and "made their home on Glyndwr Estate. They proved admirable settlers as did Mr John Armstrong a brother, and John and Campbell Whalan", according to Sarah Hughes, daughter of Charles Whalan. Another family who arrived in 1839 were the Grahams who took up Flowerdale, to the east of the town.

Another long standing Oberon family, the Cunyngames, came to Oberon early. Mary Whalan had married Robert Dryborough Cunyngame in Sydney but died leaving three sons,

⁴⁷¹ letter re History of School Building from P. Luney, 29.10.1913, Department of School Education archives, Strathfield

⁴⁷² Ross Beattie *George Bailey and Jane Armstrong* p.52

⁴⁷³ Ronald F. Whalan p.68

⁴⁷⁴ Catherine Arrow and Irene Birch p.17

⁴⁷⁵ pers. comm. Alan Hoolihan 29.10.02

⁴⁷⁶ Eve Pownall, pp.170-172

⁴⁷⁷ Ab Whalan born 1888

⁴⁷⁸ Ronald Whalan p. 67

⁴⁷⁹ Ronald Whalan pp66-7

⁴⁸⁰ Ronald Whalan p.71

still children. who went to live with the Whalans at Prospect and then came to Oberon to live with Charles Whalanaboutn 1841.

William and Lucinda Fleming were the first of the Fleming family to come to Oberon. They arrived in Australia from County Tyrone, Northern Ireland in 1836 and in the Oberon area soon after. In 1851 he purchased 80 acres on Fish River Creek near Bullock Flats; (land which was one of a number of selections made available by a government proclamation of 25.11.1850, and sold for 1 pound per acre.) They built a homestead on Springfield, their principle property before 1868. The block now contains residential housing forming part of Oberon town.

The Harvey family were among the very early settlers, emigrating in 1838. Mrs Harvey joined her husband in the area in 1842. When the Harveys first came to Bullock Flat they occupied Wattle Grove [a 640 acre property on Fish River Creek, just west of the town] on the 'halves' system [perhaps with Richard and Mary Mutton]. They built their own house, and thatched it with reeds fastened with thongs of kangaroo hide. Seven years elapsed before sufficient ground was prepared to sow a crop.⁴⁸¹

After leaving Mutton Falls, Richard and Mary Mutton were at Wattle Grove, (just west of Oberon), from a date unknown. They sold it to their sons in 1849.

The Harveys moved briefly to Newbridge but later returned and grew wheat on land that was part of Essington Park (in 1909). When land could be bought at auction the Harveys bought blocks which they called "The Retreat". The Retreat was still in the Harvey family until 1992.

In 1851 Margaret Bailey, daughter of George and Jane (see Titania) married John Parkinson Mawhood.⁴⁸² They had eight children the first ones at Bullock Flat, then at King's Creek and the last ones at Racecourse Creek (now under Oberon Dam). In 1865 the family returned to England and had 6 more children, and some of the family, including Shafto, founder of the current Mawhoods-Mitre 10, re-emigrated in the 1920s.⁴⁸³

In 1858 Phoebe and John Robinson emigrated from Northern Ireland and settled at Back Creek (on the Jenolan Caves Road a few kilometres from town, near the corner of Shooters Hill Road). One of their daughters married a Batcheldor and lived at Bracondale (on the Shooters Hill Road, near the quarry).

James and Maria Batcheldor emigrated about 1858 from England and settled at Fish River Creek. James became a man of property in Oberon and was a publican and storekeeper.⁴⁸⁴ James Doust also came about 1858 and opened a store at Tussocky Flat.⁴⁸⁵

John Hogan, son of Philip (see Black Springs), was an innkeeper. He owned the Brighton Hotel and bought Batcheldor's store. He is buried on the block he and his wife Ann owned in town, to the north of St Joseph's school.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ *The Town and Country Journal*, 9.6.1909

⁴⁸² Vera Joan Lynch and Kenneth Roughley, p.99

⁴⁸³ RN Beattie *George Bailey and Jane Armstrong* p.4

⁴⁸⁴ RN Beattie *Batcheldor and Masters* p.16

⁴⁸⁵ *Pioneers...Hughes and Whalan* (Sydney, 1949) p.21

⁴⁸⁶ pers. comm. with Don Hogan 1.11.02

George Bailey, son of William and Jane, ran a butcher shop and owned eight blocks of land in Oberon.⁴⁸⁷

In 1866 the population of Oberon was about 30 persons.⁴⁸⁸

Duckmaloi

Duckmaloi was originally known as Irish Corner. Its early settlers were Irish, first Irish protestants and later many free settlers who came out during the goldrushes.

The earliest known settlers at Duckmaloi were John and Margaret Brien, from County Tyrone, who took up a virgin selection at the junction of the Fish River Creek and Duckmaloi Creek in the 1840's and engaged in sheep raising and general farming. Their lives there were marred by a series of tragedies. Their daughter Diana was burned to death in a house fire at the age of four in 1847. In 1852 another infant daughter, Margaret, wandered away and became lost:

The distraught father searched everywhere for the missing child over a lengthy period of time, but in vain. At the time it was thought the child had been taken by blackfellows or native dogs. The father from that time onwards always left the house door open day and night, and with a light burning, hoping that some day the child would return through the open doorway.⁴⁸⁹

Then in 1854 a son, 14 year old John Brien died under suspicious circumstances. The family did not accept the coroner's finding of accidental death and believed another shepherd nearby may have caused his death. The family moved down the Fish River to Emu Creek in 1857, and in 1860 Margaret died. The family later settled on Fish River Creek at Deep Creek.

Outside the shire, between Mt Bindo and Jenolan Caves the Duggan family took up land in 1854 and Frank and Carmel Duggan still live in the original pise house at Bindo.

Early settlers were John and Jeremiah Nunan and William Reeves who took up land between the Duckmaloi and Fish Rivers on the same day in 1853. John Nunan had been transported in 1829 and his son, Jeremiah, arrived as an assisted immigrant in 1839. In 1860 more of the Nunan family arrived from Ireland and settled there: daughter Margaret Hennessy, and family. Margaret died in Sydney shortly after arriving, apparently without being reunited with her father, and her husband James Hennessy died later the same year at Fish River Creek when a tree fell on him. The Hennessy children were reputedly raised by the Ryan family. On the same ship as the Hennessys were John Nunan's grand children Margaret and Patrick Grady. Patrick Grady married Mary Higgins, daughter of Catherine Slattery and John Higgins, who was born at Snake's Gully, near Oberon in 1856.

The Reeves moved to the eastern side of the Duckmaloi, and Mt Reeves is doubtless named after that family.

Other early settlers included John Kirby, a free settler from Ireland, who settled at *Golden Valley*, at the junction of Slippery Creek and the Fish River in or after 1859;⁴⁹⁰ the Daniel Gearons (1860s, free settlers from Ireland); the Dwyers (Sarah Dwyer was buried in the

⁴⁸⁷ pers. com. Beryl Armstrong 12.02

⁴⁸⁸ Bailliere's NSW Gazette, 1866

⁴⁸⁹ Noel Wickliffe p.47

⁴⁹⁰ pers. comm. with Pat Dwyer 25.2.03

Hazelgrove cemetery in 1862); the O'Briens, Edward McManus, O'Connells and the Kirks. The Kirbys also had a family tragedy in that district, when two young daughters were drowned in the Fish River. The immediate family moved away, but returned to Oberon later.

The Gearon, Nunan and O'Connell families are still at Duckmaloi; and the Dwyers and Kirbys are in Oberon district.

Joseph Luxton, who was born at Glyndwr in 1858 wrote his recollections the early days of the district in 1945:

In the early '70s alluvial gold was discovered in both rivers, Fish and Duckmaloi, and I believe there were some very satisfactory results. A party of men, some with families came to the rush and later took up a lot of land and settled down to market farming – they were Irish to a man, and that place is now known as Irish Corner

Athelia Kirk acquired numerous blocks on the eastern side of the Duckmaloi from the mid 1870s and lived with her husband Robert at Belle Vue, later called Jellendore. She was a hard working woman, and used to ride from Lithgow to Duckmaloi with bags of flour and other provisions slung over the pommel of her saddle. “Despite her rough life, Athelia had a yearning for a more genteel style” and had a governess to educate her children.⁴⁹¹

The Nunans ran a store and the post office (for all its 97 years) first down the Duckmaloi-Hazelgrove road not far from the Fish River and later near the corner of the Duckmaloi Road and Junction Road.

The first school at Duckmaloi was also in that corner, but later moved to the junction of Junction Road and the road to *Golden Valley*.

Malachi Gilmore, who arrived in 1872 and whom the Malachi Hall is named after, owned a block at Duckmaloi.

Hazelgrove (Slippery Creek)/ The Meadows

Hazelgrove was originally known as Slippery Creek. Among the settlers who came after Daniel and Margaret Fitzpatrick (1835) were James and Margaret Lennon who moved to Hazelgrove about 1850. They had previously settled on Tara Vale in Snake Valley, Tarana, in 1842, after moving they built a wattle and daub home called Macquarie View.⁴⁹²

Catherine Fitzpatrick, born at Slippery Creek in 1835, married Thomas Slattery in 1852 and they lived at *Woodlands*, between Hazelgrove and The Meadows, which Thomas had taken up for her. It bordered her father's place.

Daniel Fitzpatrick gave land for the church, the first Catholic church in the Oberon district and a dance hall and sports field.⁴⁹³ The signatories of the petition for the first school in 1878 were William Fitzpatrick, Daniel Fitzpatrick (Daniel's sons), James Ryan, John Higgins and George Pickering.

William and Daniel Fitzpatrick also lived at Slippery Creek. William and his wife Catherine Hartigan became the hub of the district. They lived where Greg and Cecily Fitzpatrick now live (*Gregaldon*) and called it 'Hazelgrove'. They established a post office and William ran a

⁴⁹¹ Carol Ann Liston

⁴⁹² pers. comm. with Bev Evans 11.02

⁴⁹³ Nina Slattery ... Sister Marie Therese

butcher's shop that was carried on by his son Alf. William died in 1896 and Catherine opened her house to supply meals for travellers on the Oberon-Tarana road to support the family.

The Hazelgrove Catholic church also served Duckmaloi, as the Catholic church planned for that locality was never built.

Henry Brien, born at Kelso in 1837 and married to Ann Jane Eaton in 1859, bought land at Meadows Creek. He was also the first Brien to own land at what became Ferndale, but left the district, probably after his wife died in 1888.

Mary Gilmore married William Cleary (from Porters Retreat) at Slippery Creek in 1873. John Burns was there maybe well before 1882 when he married the widow Elizabeth Gibbons (nee Judd).⁴⁹⁴

Wiseman's Creek

Laurence Foley and Mary Sullivan were both transported from Ireland and married at Kelso in 1828. By the early 1840s they were farming at Wiseman's Creek. Their daughter Bridget married Edward Hotham in 1852 and they lived beside her parents on a farm called Sweet Briar.

William and Charlotte Todd settled in Wiseman's Creek in 1854 on Hawthorne Farm. They built and ran a general store, a mud building that still exists. Their eldest son, David (Davey) worked with his father until 1863 then took up his first allotments about two miles upstream from the store on Stoney Creek which was to be Mountain View. This part of the creek was later called Davey's Creek, and now Sewell's Creek. He married Lettisha Connelly in 1865. They built the homestead (still standing) in the 1880s of wattle and daub. It is perhaps the only two storey wattle and daub house in existence in Australia. Their general store was possibly open from 1868.

The first school at Mountain View was in an upstairs room from 1868-1870, subsidised by the government. The next school in the district was called Stoney Creek, but the name changed to Mt Stromboli. It opened in 1880 and operated provisionally and then half time, house to house until 1899. Glenburn school opened in 1880 and continued with various changes of status until 1964. Another school in the area, Tanners Mount, operated at least in some form between 1893 and 1916.⁴⁹⁵

Norway

Arundel Park was taken up as a 2560 acre property by John Scarvell in 1830.⁴⁹⁶ He married Edward Redmond's daughter Sarah and must have successfully weathered the drought and rural depression of the mid 1830s as he leased his sister-in-laws, Mary Anne Murphy's (nee Redmond) property which included 500 acres at Bingham, from about 1845.

James Grady, son of Patrick of Brisbane Valley, married Rose Donnelly in 1835. James applied to lease land in the Fish River district in 1837, and in 1854 he bought three 30 acre blocks near the source of Fish River Creek and acquired numerous other blocks until 1859 when his estate was considerable. James and Rose employed a governess for their nine surviving children, and neighbouring children.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Nina Slattery ... Sister Marie Therese, p.19

⁴⁹⁵ Betty Somerville, pp.4-6

⁴⁹⁶ Kevin Toole p.6

⁴⁹⁷ Wozencraft *Black Springs* p.67-8

William and Caroline Wilcox and five sons arrived in Sydney from Cornwall as free settlers in 1839. They took up land on Fish River Creek (Nestlebrae) and when they arrived there was three feet of snow! Their youngest son Henry inherited the farm on his father's death in 1880. He married Harriet Robinson in 1875. They later moved to Bathurst.

The Wilcox's eldest son Richard, who married Margaret Foran, built a brick house at Round Hill (near Redbank). He obtained several 40 acre land grants by building a cabin on each and living in each one for three months of the year. This was a government stipulation for anyone to obtain a free grant of land.⁴⁹⁸

Another son, William, lived on the Fish River and had 17 children with two wives. The Retreat was in the Harvey family until 1992. The Grange is still owned by Walkers.

Bloom Hill

Reverend William Walker's place, called Brisbane Grove was on the Lagoon Road at Bloom Hill, and was a two storey pise house, now demolished. A member of the Spicer family who bought Brisbane Grove in 1866 wrote:

Brisbane Grove with a frontage of two miles to the Fish River was a grant of 200 acres to Rev. William Walker....Rev. Walker had been sent as missionary to the Aborigines by the London Missionary Society....With the grant a few convicts were assigned to him and Brisbane House modeled on the plan of an English Manor house, was built by them of solid walls 15 inches thick of clay mixed with straw, horsehair or whatever came to hand, of two stories with several cedar door and mantle pieces, the beading and decoration of which was carved by a convict with a butchers knife. In the first place the roof was thatched, then shingled with shingles split from eucalyptus box trees, and then corrugated iron. Beside the house outhouses were also built for servants quarters, kitchens, coach house and stables for the horses brought to the country for breeding, purposed for sale to the Indian market. Timor ponies were brought too, and they are said to have brought to NSW the first Bathurst Burr for their tails were matted with the seed.

Rev Walker also planted an extensive orchard and a vineyard but in 1866 when John Spicer bought Brisbane Grove there was scarcely a dozen trees left, but the briar hedges which evidently had been planted around paddocks of fifty acres or more, had spread through the land and were an almost impenetrable mass of thorns.

...the part known as Brisbane Grove was bought by my father in 1866. A wheat crop almost ready to harvest was standing in a paddock that had not been cleared of stumps. The trees, and there were some giants among them, from the size of the stumps, had just been sawn off, but the grain from the crop realised the purchase price money.⁴⁹⁹

A letter from Florence Denton adds this information:

I think my great grandfathers old mud house, Brisbane Grove at O'Connell, must have been one of the oldest occupied buildings west of the Blue Mountains. In Historical Records vol. 13 he is writing for a further grant of land. His letter is dated 10.6.1827. He says 6000 pound has been laid out in buildings, stock yards etc". That looks as if the house may have been built about 1826. He was assigned 20 convicts

⁴⁹⁸ Catherine Arrow and Irene Birch

⁴⁹⁹ Ruth? Spicer, undated, from Peg's Box, the archives of Peggy Savage

whom he at once set to build his house...n.b. The carved mantel piece is in the Bathurst Historical Museum⁵⁰⁰

Brisbane Grove was said to have been a staging post for Cobb and Co⁵⁰¹. It is now owned by the Condon family.

Watson McKibbin of Macquarie wrote that at some point “the Bloom Hill area was cut up into 40 acre blocks for closer settlement but the areas were too small to make a living, they were gradually sold.”⁵⁰² The land was gradually bought up and amalgamated into larger holdings.

Bloom Hill School operated from 1869 until 1939.

⁵⁰⁰ Peg's Box

⁵⁰¹ pers. comm. Ken Morrow 25.19.02

⁵⁰² Peg's Box

Appendix 2

Tourist Accommodation – Oberon Shire 2002

Duckmaloi Farm

Duckmaloi

Jenolan Caves House

Jenolan

Lake View Ridge

Harveys Lane, Oberon

Mutton Falls Homestead

Mutton Falls Road, Tarana

Ramsgate Historic Guesthouse & Tearooms

Oberon Street, Oberon

Tapio Guesthouse in a Garden

Oberon

The Church & Schoolhouse

O’Connell

Jenolan Caravan Park

Oberon

Royal Hotel

Oberon

Big Trout Motor Inn

Oberon

Highlands Motor Inn

Oberon

Mountain Lodge

Jenolan

Titania Motel

Oberon

Avaleigh Elms

Black Springs

Bellbird Cottage

Jenolan

Billabong Cottage

Jenolan

Bindo Creek Cabins

Duckmaloi

Binoomea Cottage

Jenolan

Duckmaloi Park Lodge

Duckmaloi

Edith Schoolhouse

1130 Edith Road, Edith

Fernlee Farm

Black Springs

Jenolan Cabins

Jenolan

Jenolan Caves Cottages

Jenolan

Linton Vale

O'Connell

Locham Farm

Edith

Melaleuca Mountain Chalets

Duckmaloi Road, Oberon

Penarth Pastoral Co

Oberon

Raptures Retreat

Gingkin

River Bend

Duckmaloi

Stone Hedge

Duckmaloi

Tarpeena Retreat

Oberon

Yarrabin Guest Property

O'Connell

Yellowbox Country Cabins

Wisemans Creek

Appendix 3

Local Timber-Related Businesses

Many Oberon farmers had needed another source of income as their farms were not economically viable until the 1950s. They worked as shearers, school bus drivers, post masters or mistresses. Working in the timber industries provided a reliable local income for many families.

Greg Toole provided a list of early timber cutters working for Timber Industries, Donald Bailey, Roy Bailey, Ted Toole and his Dad Oswald, Keith Stacey, Ursil Bonham, Carl Foley, Leo Behan, Harry Graham, Bob Brown, Peter Cook, Joe Moffate, Phil Maher, Andy Swannell (killed by a falling tree), Ian MacIntyre, Sony Howard, Greg Toole, Stan Graham, Bob and James Cooper.

Local Logging and Haulage contractors

Bert Boyd lived at Tumut and worked for Mr Cotton senior at Batlow. When they took up the hardwood contract in Oberon he moved there with his family to cut and cart hardwood. Bruce Boyd, his son, was 14 when he came. He has two sons Robert and Brian in the business, but they finished in Oberon when Carter Holt Harvey took over.

Jack Gibbs came to Oberon in 1931 doing relief work at Vulcan State Forest. Workers had six weeks on and six weeks off. Jack used to walk 16 miles to work on Monday and home on Friday, until he met Joe Robinson who used to ride his horse from Melville Park to Oberon and they used to take turns to ride the horse.⁵⁰³ Jack stayed in Oberon and his son Ken established himself as a logging contractor in 1955. The business expanded and has had three generations working in it.

Trucking

Hector Williams started carrying with horses and drays and was one of the first people in Oberon with trucks.

O'Connell Transport

Tom O'Connell started trucking around Oberon with his father's truck in 1928. During the Depression he "got the whisper" and won a tender for carting on the road to Kanangra Walls and bought a tipping truck. He worked on the Oberon Dam after the war and had four or five trucks. A number of people with trucking businesses in Oberon started working for Tom.

I financed some of them into their own trucks. Alf Ball worked for me early on and his son Graham now has a good business. John McCusker was with me for a slant and now he's very successful at shifting trains...a good little worker. Bruce Boyd was in logging and carried on when I slowed down. He did a lot of his early logging in my trucks. Anyone that wanted to have a go, I'd give 'em a go. Well yes, to a point, I was a pioneer in Oberon trucking.⁵⁰⁴

Tom's nephew Dennis O'Connell started his own trucking company and now has a big stock transport business in Oberon.

⁵⁰³ Timber Industries 50th supplement p.41

⁵⁰⁴ Mick Joffe op. cit. p.18

In the 1950s the four Casey brothers, Len, Chris, Joe and Ron came to Oberon from Orange for a logging contract. After some years the contract did not continue and they moved into other lines of work, Len and Joe remaining in the Oberon district.

Tom Howard and Les Rawlings also drove logs to the mill.

Gibbs brothers and Mangan have been harvesting and carting logs for many years.

Don Cesarone started carting logs and then his business was taken over by the Brien Brothers.

Oberon Freighters

Local twins brothers, John and Bill Brien, started a haulage business J. and W. Brien in 1957, forming the company Oberon Freighters in 1963. They had the contract to cart Pyneboard and had the first semi-trailers in Oberon but went out of business when CSR opened up the tenders to outside freighters at the end of the century, and most of the work is now done by Linfox.

As of May 2003 much of the harvesting is done by Dohnt, and log carting by Gibbs Brothers and Goomboorian of Gympie.

Appendix 4

Mineral Resources and Mine Production Figures

Roy Smith

(1) GOLD

Gold occurs widely scattered throughout the Oberon District with most production coming from a series of mines in quartz reefs, veins and alluvial workings. The primary sources of the gold tend to be upwellings from super within the earths crust alongside geological faults and fracture zones and in quartz veins associated with liquids emanating from nearby granite bodies. Gold also occurs as disseminated grains within pre-existing chemically altered host rocks.

Oberon District Gold Mines

Stevens (1972, 1975) records the presence of a number of small gold deposits in the vicinity of Oberon. Their location is shown on the Bathurst 1:250,000 metallogenic map. Little detailed information is available on these deposits and the following summary is taken largely from Stevens (1972, 1975).

Lucks-All (Golden Horseshoe) Reef (Grid Reference 279845)

This and the following two deposits are vein type deposits localised within Silurian sediments and volcanics of the Kildrummie-Campbells Groups. Stevens (1972) records a production of 8.12 kg of gold from 1065 t of ore produced in the years pre-1897 and 1911-1914.

Malloys Reef (GR 280844)

Recorded production from this deposit is 0.62 kg of gold from 19 t of ore in the period pre-1877 and 1883.

Faugh-a-Ballah Reef

A small but unknown production of gold has been recorded from this deposit which was worked prior to 1877. Stevens records that the host rocks to the vein comprise arkosic sandstones.

Unnamed (GR 283843)

No information is available regarding this gold deposit which is located immediately to the north west of the Black Bullock Mine.

Black Bullock Mine (GR 284842)

This deposit has been primarily a silver producer with small amounts of gold recovered as a by-product. According to Stevens the Black Bullock Mine has produced over 1244 kg of silver and 65.25 kg of gold from 3048 tonnes of ore. This was produced in the period 1899-1902 and again in 1905. The precise nature of the mineralisation is uncertain. Stevens (1975) notes that pyrite (including gelpyrite) and quartz occur within a breccia localised within siltstone country rock. The ore body appears to have irregular boundaries. In addition to pyrite small amounts of galena and arsenopyrite have been observed.

Lambert and Davis Reef (GR 282839)

Again a small amount but unknown production of gold has been derived from this deposit which was worked in the period pre-1877 and again in 1883. It is classified by Stevens as of vein type.

Oberon Deep Lead (GR 282835)

This alluvial deposit is located immediately to the west of the town of Oberon. It has been classified by Stevens (1972) as a Tertiary deep lead but the amount of gold produced from the deposit is not known.

Homeward Bound (or Blackman's) Reef (GR 282834)

This deposit is of vein type and is localised within a granitic host rock which forms part of the Carboniferous Oberon granite. Total production of gold amounts to 33.12 kg from 1081 tons of ore produced during the years 1875, 1883, 1885-1886 and 1889. The vein is recorded as trending north 70 degrees east with a moderate dip to the south. Workings extend to a depth of 24m below surface.

Fitzpatricks Reef

Occurs near the boundary of the Duckmaloi stock being formed as a district contact deposit with the granite. Located slightly to the north of Nunans Hill at Duckmaloi.

References

GS1948/035, Gibbons and Pegum (GS1962/079) and Stevens (1972,
B P J Stevens *A Metallogenic Study of the Bathurst 1:250,000 Sheet*
Department of Mines, 1975
Coleman (GS 1960/053)
Dickson (GS 1963/023)

Dad's Millions

Also known as the Baring Hill gold mine is situated 8 miles west of Oberon on the western slope of Mt Baring, just above the Brisbane Valley Creek crossing on the Rockley Road. The Dads Millions Gold Mining company operated between 1911-1914 producing 11 and a half kilos of gold from 26 tonnes of ore. The Baring Hill company erected a cyanide plant and between 1914-1916 produced 25 kilos from 525 tonnes of ore

Gilmandyke Gold Mine

Small gold deposits in rocks from the earth's mantle. Production amounted to 32,400 grams in an environment similar to the much larger Lucknow gold deposits. Worked the period 1895-1900.

References

GS67/039 Dads Millions Goldmine – Department of Mineral Resources, Sydney

Wisemans Creek Gold Mines

Several mines have been developed in gold bearing quartz veins or the mineralised host rocks. These include:

Mulhalls and Larrys Flat Mines (GR 293840)**Mabel Mine (GR 272842)****Jasons Mine**

Stevens records a production of 16.45 kg of gold and 92.44 kg of silver from this mine. Gold is associated with tetrahedrite at this locality.

Hansard Mine (GR 271845)

Murphys Mine (GR 271846)**Blackmans (Blackfellows) mine (GR 272847)**

This deposit has a recorded production of 5.07 kg. The mineralogy of the Blackmans mine is characterised by the presence of magnetite, pyrite, gold and secondary haematite.

(2) COPPER

Copper occurs chiefly as the Iron and Copper sulphide, chalcopyrite. These deposits are considered to have been formed from volcanic emanations on the sea floor.

Wiseman's Creek District

The Wiseman's Creek district is characterised by the presence of zinc-lead-copper mineralisation together with minor gold and silver. The more important deposits represented by the Phoenix, North Wiseman's, South, Wiseman's and Bells Mines are of the stratiform massive sulphide type localised within Silurian acid volcanics. The deposits exhibit characteristics similar to those of Mt. Bulga, Captains Flat, and Woodlawn. Like these deposits the sphalerite, galena and chalcopyrite, contain minor to trace amounts of gold. Gold values in the sulphide ores from this region range up to 2 – 3 g/t.

Bells Mine

A very small producer of zinc, lead and copper.

Phoenix (or Larry's Hill) Mine

Located off the Soldiers Point Road at Wisemans Creek opened about 1895 as the Phoenix. A shaft was sunk and ore sent to Lloyd's Smelting Works at Lithgow (about 150 tons). Following the dispatch of 650 tons of ore in 1905 worth 1707 pounds the mine closed in 1906. Reopened in 1908. Ceased operation in 1918.

North Wiseman Mine

Located adjacent to Soldiers Point road. This is the original "Wisemans Creek Lode" and was opened about 1873 by the English and Australian Smelting company. Smelting works were erected in 1876 and in 1879 1750 pounds worth of copper ore was obtained. Closing in 1881 it reopened again in 1885 – 1907 and again sporadically 1941-1951. The largest producer of all the Wiseman creek mines.

South Wisemans Creek Mine

Located on the Soldiers Point Road. This was a very small producer which commenced operations in 1875 by means of a tunnel through talc schist. Only about 200 tons ore produced.

ROCKLEY – ESSINGTON ESTATE**Jackass Mine**

Produced 0.64 tons copper from 8 tons of ore prior to 1878.

Fullback (or Dingo) Mine

Produced 11 tons of 15% copper ore from 211 tons between 1901 and 1907.

Prosper Mine

Produced 7 tons copper from 95 tons of ore mostly between 1907 – 1908.

North Essington Mine

A very small producer between 1904 – 1908.

Cash-Essington Mine

Located above Native Dog Creek where it crosses the Rockley road. 15 tons of copper produced periodically pre 1877 – 1958.

Summerhill Copper Mine

Produced 65 tons of copper, operated 1847 – 58, 1897 and 1901.

TUGLOW DISTRICT**Tuglow Copper Mine**

Located adjacent to the Jaunter Road. This mine produced 11.6 tons of copper, 3.9 tons of lead and 9 ounces of gold during the period 1898 – 1900 and 1906.

JENOLAN CAVES DISTRICT**Bulls Creek Copper Mine**

Copper ore (bornite) occurs in Bulls Creek where its junction with the Jenolan River about 2 km downstream from Jenolan Caves.

(3) SILVER LEAD**MOUNT WERONG DISTRICT****Ruby Creek Mine**

This was a large deposit containing several lodes of coarse grained silver bearing galena (or lead ore) with sphalerite (zinc) and pyrite with lesser chalcopyrite. These deposits are believed related geologically to the Yerranderie silver deposits. The Ruby Creek Silver and Lead Mining Company was formed about 1920 to exploit the deposit.

4) SAPPHIRES**Oberon Porters Retreat Areas**

Sapphire is present as blue rhombohedral crystals and subangular crystal fragments in the Holocene alluvial deposits of many creeks in this area.

The initial discovery was at the head of Native Dog Creek (Wilkinson 1878). Subsequently, sapphires have been found in various alluvial deposits, including the Isabella River near Isabella, the Campbells River between Mount David and Daisybank, the Vulcan State Forest near Black Springs, the headwaters of the Fish River and the Retreat (or Little) River near Oberon-Taralga Road.

The sapphires are usually associated with pleonaste, zircon, corundum (opaque, brown), ilmenite, olivine, garnet, and gold.

Mt Werong

The sapphires have been recovered from the Holocene alluvial deposits of many creeks draining the Mount Werong plateau, especially Lanigans, Limeburners, and Werong (or Ruby) Creeks. These deposits have been derived mainly from the redistribution of a Tertiary deep lead. In addition to quartz sand, rounded quartz pebbles, and clay, these deposits contain a proportion of heavy and resistant minerals, including zircon, pleonaste, fine waterworn gold, blue and green sapphires, ilmenite, and garnet.

The sapphires from this area are generally small angular pieces of poor quality, though some fine light-blue stones have been recovered.

MacNevin and Holmes, *Gemstones*, Geological Survey NSW (1980) p.76

MINOR RESOURCES

Diamond

About 1885 a diamond was found at Prospectors Gully and in 1905 a diamond of 28.31 carats was discovered at Mount Werong. It is one of the largest ever found in Australia being a flawless, oblong in shape. A single diamond of 0.846 carats was found late in 1976 in recent gravels in the Campbells River near Oberon.

MacNevin and Holmes, *Gemstones* (1980) p.64,76

Talc

A tiny deposit occurs in Portion 192, Parish-Jocelyn, County Westmoreland on the northern bank of Wisemans Creek, 32 km south east of Bathurst. The material is a talc-mica schist rock of good quality, but is currently unmineable due to contamination difficulties.

Talc Steatite and Pyrophyllite, G.S. Gibbons, *Geological Survey NSW* (1964) p.11

Molybdenum

This metal occurs on Diamond Hill several kilometres north of Oberon off Lowes Mount Road. Pyrite with minor molybdenite and chalcopyrite occur together, but are uneconomic to mine.

Asbestos

This deadly fibre occurs associated with dark (ultrabasic) rocks derived from the earth's mantle alongside the Oberon-Rockley road about 4 kilometres from Rockley. Deposits are well buried and of no economic value.

Bibliography

- Catherine Arrow, *The Arrow Story: Australian Pioneers 1821-1990* (1990)
- Theo Barker, *A History of Bathurst* (Crawford House, 1992)
- Jim Barrett *Kowmung River* (Glenbrook, 1993)
- Jim Barrett *Kanangra Walls*, (Glenbrook, 1993)
- Max Barrett *Because of These* (Church Archivists' Press, Toowoomba, 1992)
- Yvonne Berrell, *A Brief History of the Exploits Early Berrell Families of the County of Georgiana* (1988)
- George Boxall, *Australian Bushrangers: An Illustrated History* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1978)
- Colin Fleming Brien *The William Brien Family of Oberon* (1980)
- Alan L. Brown, ed. *Oberon in Retrospect* [Oberon]
- Alan L. Brown, ed. *Schools They Remember* (Oberon Heritage Series no.2)
- Alan L. Brown, ed. *How I Saw Oberon* [Oberon]
- R. Cambage *Exploration between the Wingecaribee etc., Rivers*, JRAHS vol. VII 1921
- G.M. Cashman *Avoca The Faith of the Pioneers* (The Church of St Vincent de Paul, Black Springs, 1988)
- Denis J. Chamberlain, *Plains of O'Connell* (Bathurst, 1991)
- Mary Coe *Windradyne: A Wiradjuri Koori* (Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1989)
- Kerrin Cook and Daniel Garvey *A Glint of Gold* (Genlin Investments, Pymble, 1999)
- G. Davison, J. Hirst, S. MacIntyre eds, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Margaret de Salis, *Captain Thomas Raine An Early Colonist* (Sydney, 1969)
- Brenda Doney, Jeannie Clague, John Clague ed, *The Historical significance of O'Connell Village* (O'Connell Village Preservation Group, 1997)
- Sonja den Hartog *The Yerranderie Silver Field* (The Oaks Historical Society, 4th edition, 1988)
- Bruce Elder *Blood on the Wattle* (New Holland, 1988)
- Colin Fleming Brien & Noel Wickliffe Brien *The Brien Family of Irish Origins*. (DAP Dubbo)
- Gail Gearon, *Irish Corner* (Duckmaloi, forthcoming)
- Patrick Grady and Samuel Rawson, *Brisbane Valley Battlers* (Green Point)
- Bernard Greaves, *The Story of Bathurst*, (Angus and Robertson, 1964)
- Alexander Harris *Settlers and Convicts: Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods* (first published London 1847; Melbourne University Press, 1969)
- Ward L. Havard, *The Romance of Jenolan Caves* R.A.H.S. November 28, 1933, reprinted by NSW Department of Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- Selwyn Hawken, *A Hawken History* (Development and Advisory Publications, 1988)
- John Arthur Jelbart [Jelbart Family History] 1998
- Mick Joffe *Living Treasures of Oberon* (Landers Publishing, Dural, 2001)
- Brian Johnstone *Cecily Cosgrove: A Bush Pioneer* (Belfield 1983)
- Vera Joan Lynch and Kenneth Roughley, *Out of Cornwall: The Story of Richard and Mary Mutton* (Cowra, 2000)
- Charles Macalister *Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South* (Chas. Macalister Book Publishing Committee, 1907)
- George Mackaness, *Fourteen Journeys Over the Blue Mountains* (Horwitz- Grahame 1965)
- Andy Macqueen *The Life and Journeys of Barrallier 1773 –1853* (Springwood, 1993)
- Robin McLachlan *Let's Have Water* (Department of Land and Water Conservation, 1997)
- Lorraine Maloney, *Maloney Family of the Oberon District* (undated)
- Roy Mendham (compiler), *The Dictionary of Australian Bushrangers*, (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1975)
- Ken Mugglestone, *William and Ann Webb* 1990

- Bede Nairn *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1851-1896, vol.6 (Melbourne University Press, 1976)
- Marie P. Nightingale *The Rockley Blacksmith and his Family*
- Patrick O'Farrell *The Irish in Australia* (New South Wales University Press, 1987)
- Bernard O'Reilly *Cullenbenbong*
- Edgar Penzig *The Sandy Creek Bushranger* (Historic Australia Publishing Company, Lane Cove, NSW 1985)
- Edgar Penzig, *Rogues, Vagabonds and Bloody Thieves*, (Katoomba, 1992)
- Eve Pownall *Mary of Maranoa* (F.H. Johnston, 1959)
- Ron Preston, *Byways of Steam* (Eveleigh Press, 1990)
- Lucy Price *Brisbane Valley Battlers* (Green Point)
- Portia Robinson *The Women of Botany Bay* (revised edition, Penguin, 1993)
- William Russell, "*Werriberrie*" (facsimile edition, Oaks Historical Society fourth printing 1995)
- Nina Slattery Sister Marie Therese *The Story of a Family*
- Jim Smith *Aborigines of the Goulburn District*, (Goulburn & District Historical Society, 1992)
- Jim Smith *Aboriginal Legends of the Blue Mountains* (1992)
- Jim Smith *From Katoomba to Jenolan Caves* (Second Back Row Press,)
- Jim Smith *Legends of the Blue Mountains Valleys* (Den Fenella Press, Wentworth Falls, 2003)
- Betty Somerville, [A history of Mountain View] updated edition 1996.
- G.J. Taylor *The Glen Davis Story*
- Kevin Toole, *The Annals of Burruga* (Burruga, extended edition 1986)
- Elizabeth Warburton, *Private Property: A Family and a Firm* (Raine & Horne, Sydney, 1998)
- Malcolm Watson, *How the Watsons Arrived in Australia* [about 2001, Oberon]
- Ronald F. Whalan *The Whalans In Australia 1791-1969*, (Liverpool, 1968)
- C.S. Wilkinson *New South Wales Department of Mines Annual Report 1877*
- Barry Webb ed. *Oberon-Tarana Railway* [Oberon]
- Barry Webb ed. *Tarana* [Oberon]
- Joy Wheeler and Blue Garland *Oberon-Jenolan District* (2nd edition Oberon, 1998)
- Paddy Grady Wozencraft *The Black Springs Story* (Sylvania, 1987)
- Paddy Grady Wozencraft *Golden Gully*
- [50 th Anniversary of the Oberon Hospital Auxilliary, 1994]

Papers, Journal Articles and Theses

- R.Cambage *Exploration between the Wingecarribee etc., Rivers*, JRAH vol 7(5)
- P. Gemmell-Smith 'The Wild Cattle of the Kowmung' *Reflections: The National Trust Quarterly*, Summer 1998-99pp. 32-34
- James Jervis *William Lawson: Explorer and Pioneer* RAHS vol.XL, part 2
- Grace Karskens, 'Historical and Architectural Development of Caves House Precinct' in *The Caves House Precinct, Jenolan Caves Reserve: Conservation Plan (Built Environment)* by Robert Moore, (1987)
- Carol Ann Liston *An Australian Genealogy* (Dec. 1980)
- Watson McKibbin, *History Notes from Watson McKibbin* from Peg's Box, archives of Peggy Savage
- Michael Pearson, *Seen Through Different Eyes: Changing Land Use and Settlement Patterns in the Upper Macquarie River Region of N.S.W. from Prehistoric Times to 1860*, March 1981, thesis ANU

Michael Pearson *Bathurst Plains and Beyond: European Colonisation and Aboriginal Resistance*, in *Aboriginal History* vol. 8, 1-2, 1984
 Pyneboard 25th Anniversary Supplement *Oberon Review* 5.6.1985
 Robert M. Rawlings *A Brief History of Essington Park* (Oberon Historical Society, 1974)
 Martin Scott, Keir Vaughan-Taylor *Tuglow* (draft) (Sydney University Speleological Society [1990s])
 Jim Smith, *Wywandy and Therabulat*, Lithgow District Historical Society, 22.10 1991
 'The Timber Industry Around Bathurst', supplement in *Western Advocate*, 2.8.1973, p.8
 Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society Newsletter
 'Timber Industries Ltd 50th Anniversary Supplement' *Oberon Review* 29.9.1993
 Visitors Guide Kanangra-Boyd National Park, March 2002, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
 S. Cunynghame, J Drzyzga, M Murphy, S. Pearce *The Walnut Tree*, ed Alan Brown, (Oberon District Historical Landmark Series, No. 1, 1981)

Newspapers, Newletters and Magazines

Oberon Review, especially Alan Brown's Historical Notes
 Lithgow Mercury
 Bathurst Times
 Town and Country Journal
 The Sunday Mail
 Western Advocate
 The Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal
 The Sydney Morning Herald
 Forest and Timber March, April, May 1970

Outback magazine June-July 2002

The Majellan Jan-Mar 1983
 Friends of the Malachi Hall Newsletter, Sept. Oct 2000
 The Golden Years of Oberon Branch 1933-1983 [Oberon Country Women's Association 50th anniversary program]

Personal Communications

Bill Allen
 Claude Brien
 Sheila Buckley
 Stella Cranfield
 Ray Cunynghame
 Merv and Pat Dwyer
 Toni Dwyer
 Bev Evans
 Frank Fawcett
 Marian Fawcett
 Helen Freeth
 Bill Hardie
 Dr Don Hogan
 Pat Hogan
 Domino Holbrook-Costa
 Alan Hoolihan
 Arthur Lang

Hubert McKinnon
 Brian Nunan
 Mick O'Connell
 Noelene Pye
 Warren Rawson
 Barry Richard
 Janelle Rodwell
 Jim Smith
 Roy Smith
 Greg Toole
 Chick Totic
 Malcolm Watson
 Kevin Webb and Lyn Woods
 Rob Whyte

Unpublished Manuscripts

Patricia Arrow, notes on Fitzpatrick family and St Dominics church, Hazelgrove, held by author Ross N.Beattie, A Scots-Irish Knot Descendants and Associated Families of Beattie, Henderson, Brien, Eaton and Related Families from around Kilskeery TYR, Ireland 2002
 Ross Beattie, *Descendants and associated families of George Bailey (1805c-1882) and Jane Armstrong (1808-1879)*, (Carlingford, 2002) beattier@epa.nsw.gov.au, as of August 2002
 Ross Beattie *Some Descendants and Associated Families of William Batchelder and Mary Masters* (Carlingford, 2002)
 Monty Cotton, letter 15.11.02, held by author
 Stewart J Greenhalgh, letter to Oberon Council 27.8.1996
 Narelle Kissell, *John Foley* undated, held by Alan Hoolihan
 Arthur Lang, notes on *Sunnyclime* for the Rogers Family Reunion
 Joseph Luxton [Memories. 1945] copy held by Alan Brown
 The Mahony's
 National Trust of Australia (NSW) listing proposal, cemeteries in Oberon District
 Oberon Shire Council, letter to Keith J. Williams, Taralga
 Louisa Roberts, Senior Geography Project for HSC 1997, [Changing Land Use in the Oberon Area]
 Roy Smith [History of Mining in the Oberon District, Duckmaloi, 2002]
 letter from Greg Toole, letter to the editor of Oberon Review, 1994, archives of Alan Brown
 Esma Stapleton, Sister Dominica, 1964, copy held by Mary Behan
 Pat Tempest, notes on Sloggett/Wilcox families, held by author
 Elizabeth Pearl Webb, (born 1891), Webb family history
 R.W. Webb *Tarana Pioneers of Bathurst District* (1942)
 Ab Whalan, *My Memories of Uncle Cam, C J Whalan Cam11* [1969], born 1888, held by Merv Dwyer

Libraries and Archives

Archives of Alan Brown
 Archives of Alan Hoolihan
 NSW Department of Education archives, OTEN, Strathfield
 Peg's Box, the archives of Peggy Savage, held by the O'Connell community.
 Mitchell Library: Sir Thomas Brisbane's Letterbook and King family Papers