

THEMATIC HISTORY
LAKE GEORGE,
MOLONGLO VALLEY & BURRA
PALERANG COUNCIL
New South Wales



View of Lake George – late 19th century – Charles Kerry
National Library of Australia

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Report

This report, *Lake George, Molonglo Valley & Burra - Thematic History*, has been commissioned by Palerang Council following their recent formation which amalgamated parts of the now obsolete Yarrowlumla Shire and the former Tallaganda Shire.

The aim of the project is to provide a European history of the western portion of Palerang Council, which has not been previously studied, in the form of a thematic history. This can be used as a framework against which the cultural significance of non Aboriginal sites in the Shire can be assessed.

Heritage sites offer tangible evidence of the Shire's history and evolution culminating in the present day community. They allow interpretation of lifestyles and customs and require formal acknowledgment to assist future protection.

1.2 Study Area

This report focuses on the western portion of Palerang Council, as shown on page 5, located in the Southern Tablelands, a region in southeast New South Wales. It is east of the Australian Capital Territory, north east of Cooma-Monaro Shire and its tablelands are part of the Great Dividing Range. It comprises the counties of Murray and the southern portion of Argyle, two of the 141 counties in NSW which are further divided into parishes¹. The study area is irregularly shaped but generally runs north south along the eastern side of Lake George, comprising the area around Bungendore, the Molonglo Plains and Captains Flat. It also includes the district south west of Lake George, the Burra locality, extending to Deep Creek, north of Michelago, which is Palerang Council's boundary with Cooma-Monaro Shire. This area was previously part of the Yarrowlumla Shire until Palerang Council was created in 2004. Apart from Cooma-Monaro the Council has adjoining boundaries with Eurobodalla, Shoalhaven, Goulburn-Mulwarree, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley, Queanbeyan City local government areas as well as the Australian Capital Territory.

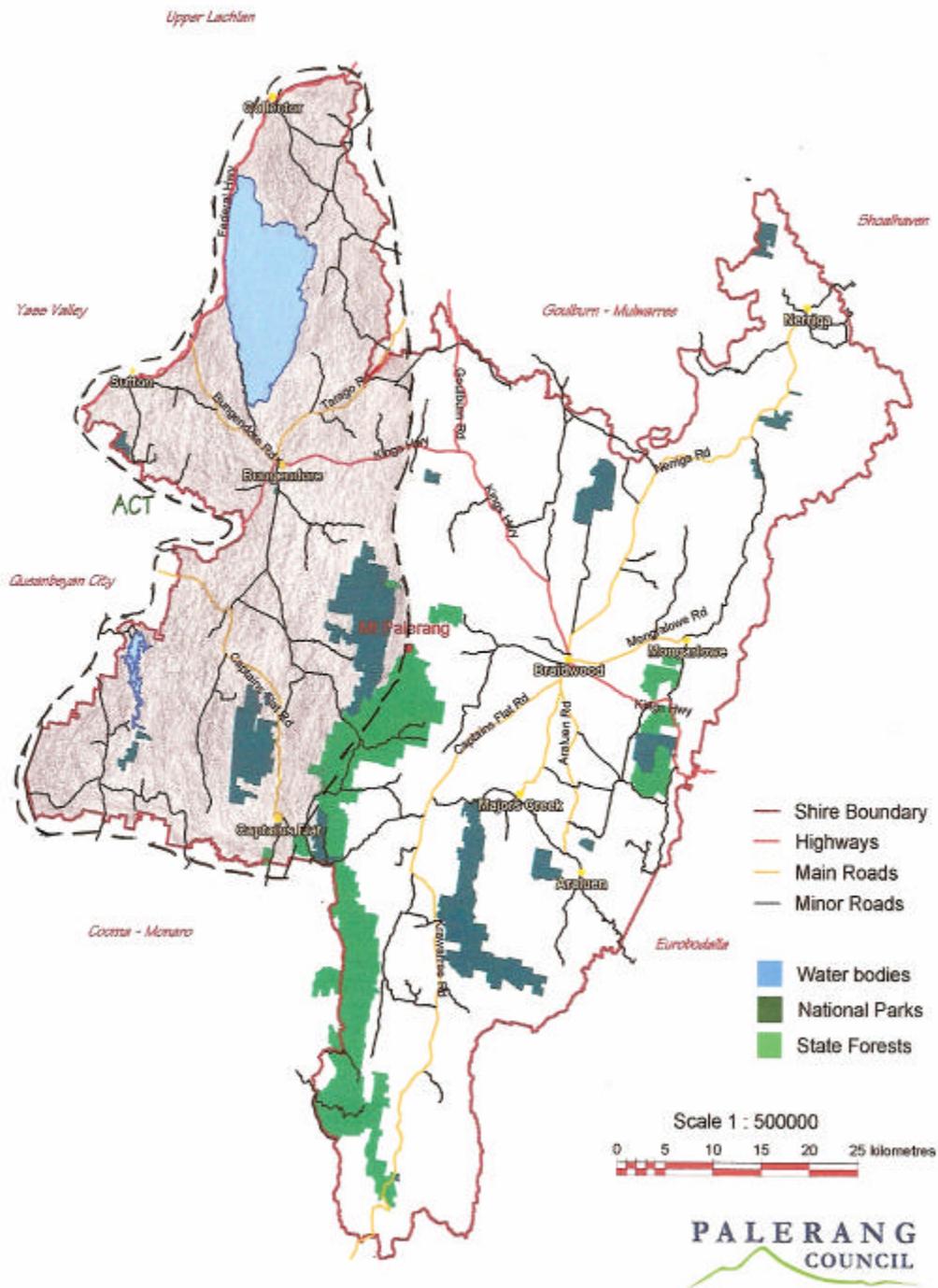
Bungendore is the largest village with a population of about 2,200 followed by Captains Flat, population 400. There are a number of small settlements the most significant being Hoskinstown and Rossi.

1.3 Methodology

The report has been prepared in accordance with the NSW Heritage Office's publications *History & Heritage*, *Investigating History* and *Historical Research for Heritage* and other relevant publications produced by heritage authorities throughout Australia.

Respect for custodians', owners' and local community views regarding heritage places and their value have been taken into account. Liaison with members of the community with an interest in local heritage has been undertaken.

¹ www.lands.nsw.gov.au/publications/glossary



Map showing Palerang Council boundaries and adjoining shires
Study area shaded with boundaries - - - -
Palerang Council

1.4 Historic Places



Map showing approximate locations of historic places mentioned in this report
NTS Legend following page

Legend for heritage places referred to in this report and noted on map previous page:

1. Winderadeen
2. Currawang
3. Willeroo
4. Woodlawn
5. Currandooley
6. Boro
7. Boro Mulloon Coach Road
8. Palerang
9. Mulloon Creek
10. Werriwa
11. Deep Creek
12. Ashby
13. Turalla
14. Turalla Creek
15. Gidleigh
16. Radio Telescope
17. Molonglo River
18. Carwoola
19. Molonglo
20. Foxlow
21. Queanbeyan River
22. Googong Reservoir
23. London Bridge
24. Waterholes
25. Bywong
26. Mac's Reef
27. Douglas
28. Geary's Gap
29. Brooks' Creek
30. Ballaba

1.5 Limitations

A thematic history deals with history through interpretation of various relevant themes, as identified by the Australian Heritage Commission (national themes) and the NSW Heritage Office (state themes) and local themes. Therefore it is not a detailed, chronological report of events and dates. A thematic history is not intended to replace existing histories written and designed to serve other purposes. Its main purpose is to provide a context and data against which potential heritage items are compared and their values measured. Persons seeking more comprehensive historical information should refer to publications listed in the bibliography.

Every effort has been made to verify dates and historical data included in the thematic history although a number of documents and publications have conflicting accounts. This will have no impact on the outcome of the report but people relying on such information should make their own investigations as to its veracity.

Published documents on the district were found to be quite limited and there was little or no available data relating to some themes and activities. One specific area where information was found to be deficient was the history of building materials and techniques, builders, the evolution of building designs and other related topics. This would be a worthy subject for future investigation.

1.6 Disclaimer

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2.0 The Natural Environment

There are a number of significant landscapes and landforms in the western portion of Palerang Shire. The most notable are Lake George, Tallaganda and Tinderry forests and the Molonglo Plains.

Lake George was formed by landforms rising over 30 million years ago which interrupted the flow of three rivers the Yass, Molonglo and Yandyguinuala. About 5 million years ago the hills around Lake George stopped rising, the waters of the Yass River were trapped and fed into the tectonic depression. In dry times the Molonglo River flow wasn't adequate to cut through the valley and instead flooded the Molonglo Plains. The hills which had risen are known as the Lake George Fault and run from Lake George south into the Jingera and Tinderry ranges. Lake George is considered to be one of the most important geological features in Australia providing a continuous sequence of geological evidence and climatic history over the last 350,000 years. It also demonstrates vegetation and fire history over that period which assists in determining the evolution of the Australian environment.

Lake George is 68 km long north south and 19 km east west and about 700m above sea level. The Great Dividing Range forms the eastern flank and the Cullarin Range, with escarpments to 200 metres, rises steeply from the western shore. When Lake George is full it is the largest fresh water lake in Australia. Its level at capacity is between 4.5 metres and 7 metres although there is evidence of the water reaching 37 metres.

Regular lake levels have been recorded since 1885 while sporadic reports of the lake were made from 1820. When Governor Macquarie first saw the lake in that year it was a huge body of water but when Terence Aubrey Murray took up his holding at Collector, in 1828, lake levels were starting to recede. In 1846 the lakebed was described as being as dry and flat as a bowling green but in 1852 it started to refill and remained full for the next fourteen years. There were reports of severe floods in 1870 and by 1874 the lake level was the highest recorded although there was plenty of evidence that it had been much higher before records commenced. Variations in lake levels have been shown to be the result of seasonal changes, evaporation and variable inflows from rivers and run-off.

There are two heavily forested areas in the district. The larger is the Tallaganda State Forest which starts about 10kms south of Bungendore and runs some 50km south. It straddles the Great Dividing Range and water collected on the western slopes flows into gullies and creeks which feed into the Molonglo River. The highest point is Mt Lowden at 1,346 m. The other, the Tinderry Range Nature Reserve, also part of the Great Dividing Range, lies to the east of the Burra locality and is notable for its huge granite monoliths which dominate the two Tinderry peaks. Both forests are the habitat of a large range of native flora and fauna.

The Molonglo Plains lie south east of Lake George and are bordered by the Molonglo Range in the west and the Turallo and Butmaroo Ranges in the east. Some 460 million years ago, when the area was an inland sea, sedimentary layers of sandstone, limestone, siltstone and shales were laid down. When the first European settlers arrived they found the Molonglo River was a chain of waterholes and the plains treeless with rich and fertile soils covered with fine grass. Much of the area was swampy. The Molonglo River is fed by Primrose Valley and Yandyguinula creeks.

3.0 The Moolinggoolah, The Mulwaree & Their Neighbours

Evidence suggests that Aboriginal people have been living in south eastern Australia for more than 20,000 years, although it is unknown if there was always permanent occupation during that time due to climatic changes.

Reports about Aboriginal tribes and clans, their languages and way of life, were brief and infrequent during the first half of the 19th century and consequently information which has been published over the years, such as that which is included in this study, is open to different interpretations and should not be taken as conclusive.

At the end of the 18th century, when Europeans arrived in Australia, it is alleged that the main tribes in the Lake George and Molonglo Plains area were the Moolinggoolah and the Mulwaree. Lake George was called Weereewaa (also Weeraawa etc) and they shared parts of the district with other tribes or clans. To the south of Lake George and east of Bungendore the Moolinggoolah and the Mulwaree shared the area with the Kamberri and the Parramarragoo. Similarly, south east of Queanbeyan the Mulwaree allowed some occupation by the Kamberri and the Moolinggoolah.

The tribes spoke different languages which in many instances were dialects of neighbouring languages which meant they could communicate with their neighbours. It is believed that the initial language of the tribes around Weereewaa was Gundungurra from the Parramarragoo people to the east and Ngunawal, the language of the Wallaballoo, developed from this. Stewart Mowle, at Yarralumla, recorded twenty seven Ngunawal words during the 1840s but only one other record was made of the language some 60 years later in 1904. Ngarigo was spoken by the Moolinggoolah who lived in the district south east of Lake George, the Kamberri spoke Walgalu and the Mulwaree language was Gundungurra. These neighbouring groups were also linked by customs, ceremonies and kinship networks, although the Weereewaa people had a savage disposition which was known to other more distant tribes.²

The number of Aboriginals who lived in the area around the early 1800s is unknown but it would appear to be about 500. They lived in family groups of about 20 and within those groups there were clans with each clan being responsible for a tract of country. Marriage within the clan was forbidden.

Even though food sources weren't as abundant as on the coast there was a wide variety such as kangaroos, wallabies, emus, possums, fish, birds, vegetables and fruits. Possums, kangaroos and wallabies were sought after for their skins. It is likely that the Lake George and Molonglo Valley tribes were invited to participate in bogong moth hunts which took place in the higher ranges each spring.

² Jackson-Nakano, Ann *The Kamberri* p4

Joseph Wild, an employee of Charles Throsby, first heard about a great lake, Weereewaa, and a large river, the Murrumbidgee, from the Gundungarra tribe who lived on and about the Goulburn plains to the north. Wild was one of a party, financed by Throsby, which set off from Sutton Forest in 1818. The party included James Meehan, Hamilton Hume and, among others, two Aboriginals, Cookoogong and Taree. There was a dispute and Throsby and Wild headed towards the coast while Meehan, Hume and the two Aboriginals decided to head towards the Shoalhaven River and apparently glimpsed what is now known as Lake Bathurst but did not continue in the direction of Weereewaa.

Throsby financed Wild in another attempt to find the great lake and even though Aboriginals were meant to be included in the party it appears that none were. This and the previous aborted attempt may have been due to the aggressive reputation of some Lake George tribes.

At last the small party arrived at the eastern edge of the lake but Wild turned homewards almost immediately carrying out little investigation. Wild wrote to Throsby that ‘he was sorry to leave it behind without examination; the party being small he did ‘not wish to disobey your Instructions, in case an accident might happen’. He also noted that ‘the Fires of the Natives appeared numerous’, a remark which may have indicated his nervousness being in unfamiliar territory without any Aboriginal friends or guides³.

Wild’s brief description of Lake George indicated evidence of Aboriginal habitation and it was believed that the lake was shared by a number of tribes or groups. Many of the exploration parties, which proceeded to the Southern Tablelands from Sydney, commented on the lack of Aboriginal sightings, inferring that no-one lived in these vast areas. It is true that the area was not heavily populated but the case was more that warning smoke signals had been sent in advance and the shy Aboriginals had cautiously gone into hiding. The tribes were small, quite widely scattered, very mobile and moved about according to seasons. They frequented the rivers and forests where food was plentiful while the explorers preferred the open plains.

Before the arrival of Europeans the Aboriginal groups thought to have shared the lake were the Parramarragoo, the Mulwaree, the Cookmai, the Pajong, the Wallabalooa, the Moolingoolah (Molonglo Plains group) and the Kamberi⁴.

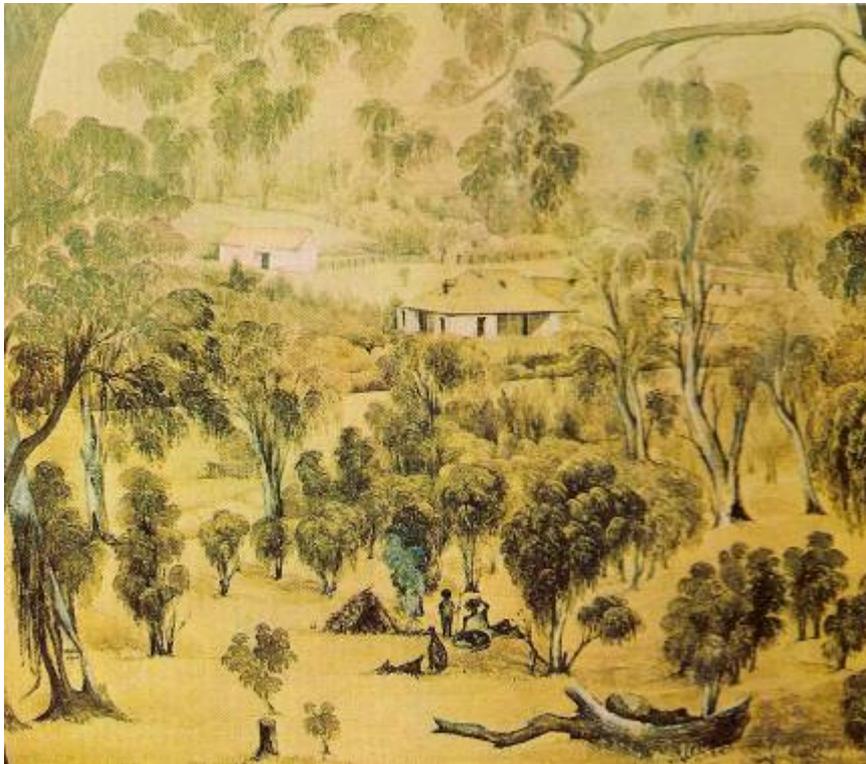
In October 1820 Throsby again set out with Wild, James Vaughan and the Aboriginals, Cookoogong and Taree, searching for the legendary river but were again unsuccessful, possibly because Cookoogong and Taree were unfamiliar with the territory. It wasn’t until 1823 that Brigadier-Major Ovens and Captain Currie were able to locate and trace the northern section of the Murrumbidgee.

³ Ibid p8

⁴ Ibid p10

The Lake George tribes were known to war regularly amongst themselves but would band together to avenge crimes against their members, particularly the taking of women by white settlers. Tragic cycles of hostilities between the original residents and the newcomers resulted in some murders and rumours of cannibalism. There are no records of massacres and some of sympathies for the dispossessed Aboriginals, acknowledging that they were being driven from their hunting grounds, thus being deprived of food and clothing, although no action was taken to address their predicament.

Dispossession was not their only problem, exotic diseases such as venereal disease, small pox, influenza and measles were being passed on by settlers and decimating whole Aboriginal families.



Manar, Braidwood 1846
Detail of a painting by Henry Zouch ⁵
of Ashby, Bungendore

As the 19th century progressed and settlers took over the region for farming the survivors were pushed further away from their tribal lands and members of previously hostile clans merged. In 1865 it was reported that there were about 73 of the Canberra tribe but by 1873 only one was left, being Queen Nellie, who died in 1894⁶. This is now disputed with evidence suggesting that descendants from those original tribes are still found in adjoining districts.

Currently some descendants of the Weereewaa tribes are working to reinstate their local identity.

⁵ Griffiths, G Nesta *Some Southern Homes of NSW* jacket illustration

⁶ Flood, Josephine *The Moth Hunters* p37

4.0 The Colony Expands

Within thirty years of founding the colony, New South Wales was bursting at the seams. The east coast meant that there was nowhere to go in that direction, the rugged topography hindered easy expansion to the west and consequently explorers were sent north and south. Settlement had quickly crept down to the Southern Highlands but more good quality, well watered pastures were required which prompted Charles Throsby, already resident at Moss Vale, to assemble a party to find an overland route to Jervis Bay.

Throsby set out in 1818 with well-known explorer Hamilton Hume, James Meehan, a surveyor, Joseph Wild, a clever and knowledgeable bushman in the employ of Throsby, and two Aboriginal guides, Cookoogong and Taree. The going was tough and after three weeks they had only ventured as far as Marulan. The party decided to split with Throsby and Wild continuing to head for Jervis Bay and Hume, Meehan and the two Aboriginals heading in a south westerly direction. Throsby and Wild did find a route to Jervis Bay while Hume's party came across Lake Bathurst before turning north for home.

In 1820 Throsby was given the task of constructing a road to the Goulburn Plains with Joseph Wild as overseer. Wild was on friendly terms with the local Aboriginals and learnt from them the existence of a vast lake they called Weereewaa and a big river, the Murrumbidgee. Throsby's interest was rekindled and he sent Wild off with a small party to search for both.

Wild first saw what is now known as Lake George on 19 August 1820. It was an exciting discovery and Wild, who was illiterate, dictated a complimentary report of the lake and the surrounding countryside to his fellow traveller, Sylvester Hall. He did not continue on to find the river but returned via Lake Bathurst and the Goulburn Plains, which he reported as 'very capital land'⁷.

Within the next few months Throsby convinced Governor Macquarie to visit the newly discovered lake. The vice-regal party set out from Sydney in October travelling by carriage, as befitted the office, undeterred by the rugged, roadless countryside, fording creeks and rivers and battling through bogs. They arrived at Lake Bathurst on 23 October and pushed on to Lake George reaching its shores on 27 October where the Governor spent the night in a proper bed.

At the same time Throsby, Wild and James Vaughan headed out past the lake searching for the elusive Murrumbidgee River, hoping to reach it in time to convince the Governor to continue his journey. This was not to be but Macquarie then despatched Throsby, Wild, Vaughan and Charles Throsby Smith (Throsby's nephew) to continue the search. On 8 December 1820 they reached the confluence of the Molonglo and Queanbeyan rivers before returning to Lake George across the Molonglo Plains.

⁷ Lea-Scarlett, Errol *Queanbeyan District & People* p3



Lake George from the North East – Joseph Lycett c1825
National Library of Australia

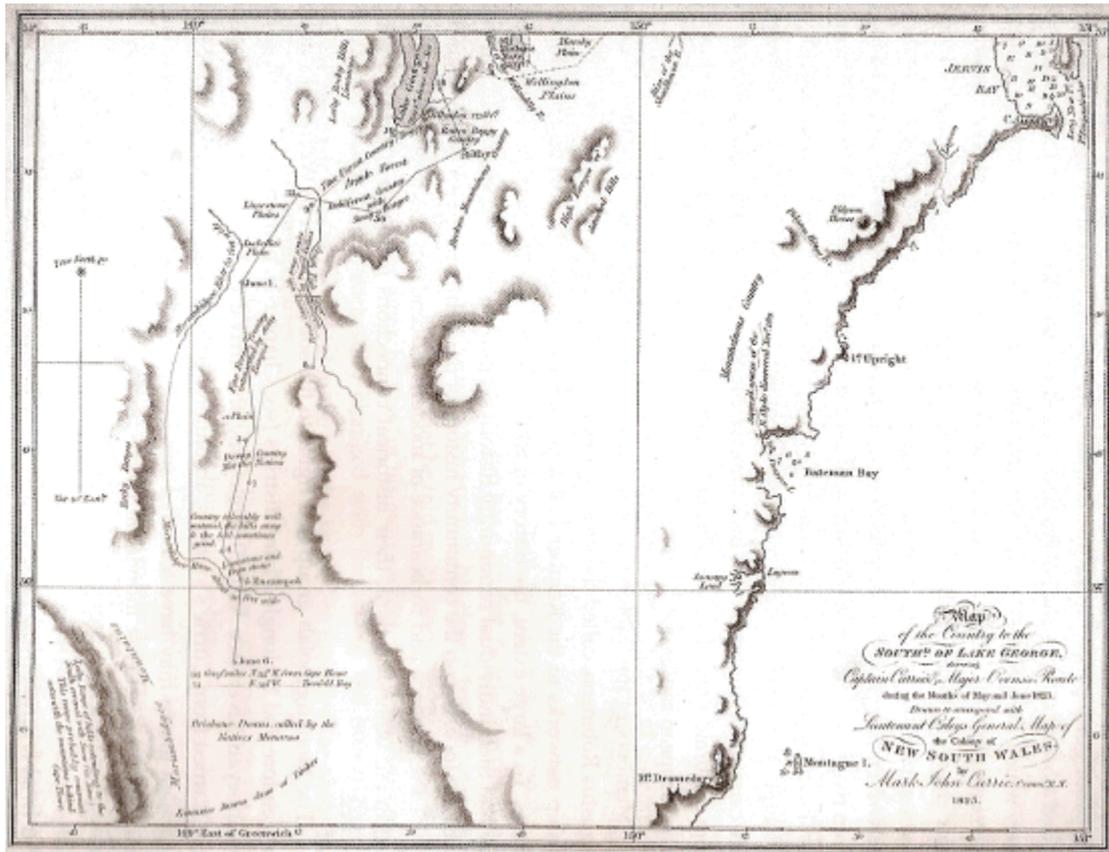
The ever determined Throsby set off again three months later, travelling well south of Lake George across the sites which are now Bungendore and Queanbeyan and finally coming to the fast flowing waters of the Murrumbidgee. He was unable to follow it too far owing to a lack of provisions and poor weather but his aim had been achieved.

An expedition, mounted in 1822 by three young colonial born men, set out to travel east from the Limestone Plains to Jervis Bay. On their trip they investigated the Molonglo Plains, which they claimed ‘a most beautiful Plain ... the finest plain we ever saw ... a stock run for both Summer and Winter, not a Tree on them’⁸.

The last exploration, before settlers flocked to the area, was carried out by Captain Mark Currie, Brigade-Major John Ovens and Joseph Wild. Wild had previously proved himself indispensable owing to his bushcraft and knowledge and familiarity with the Aboriginals. The party set out from Throsby’s farm at Moss Vale in May 1823 and reached the eastern shore of Lake George on 28 May. They trekked south east and south west crossing the South Fish (Queanbeyan) River two days later. Their route took them southward until they reached the open, treeless Monaro plains.

Reports of these grazing opportunities rapidly spread and settlers sent their overseers, shepherds and stock to claim the new pastures.

⁸ Ibid. p5



Captain Currie's map 1825 showing their route to the Monaro past Lake George
National Library of Australia

5.0 Squatters & Squatting

The inhabitants of the fledgling colony were excited to hear about new grazing lands and impatient to rush out with their flocks and herds to occupy them. On the other hand the government found they did not have the resources and men to administrate these areas nor to ensure law and order was enforced.

In 1826 Governor Darling created an area known as the ‘limits of location’ which settlers were permitted to occupy. Of course many took no notice of the government and went as far as they could to find suitable grazing lands especially with the effect of the severe droughts of 1827 and 1828. At this time the Molonglo Plains was occupied by Richard Brooks, of the Brooks of Denham Court, near Liverpool, whose teenage son took his herd from Bungandow (Bungendore) as far south as Gegedzerick (near Berridale) in 1827.

In 1824 Owen Bowen, an ex convict, was the first person to successfully apply for land on the Molonglo Plains. The same year William Balcombe received a grant of two thousand acres (800 ha) ‘at Menanglo or Marley Plains about 18 miles south west of Lake George’⁹. Balcombe had taken up the grant for his son and within a few years had erected a stockyard, dairy, servants huts and it appears that his son had to content himself with only a hut as well. In 1828, owing to the prolonged drought, Major Antill sent his cattle from Picton to the Molonglo Plains, a distance of 100 miles (166 kms), the closest place which had sufficient grass even though he had made no application for the area¹⁰.

Those who did not ensure they had properly selected their farm were at risk of being evicted by someone who had obtained a grant. In 1828, at Thurrallilly on the Molonglo River, hardworking John Cullen, widow and father to several orphan children, was evicted from his little farm where he had built a cottage, stable, dairy, piggery and stockyards, by Robert Crawford, because of some clerical error registering Cullen’s grant. This was not an isolated incident.

The NSW Census of 1828 recorded that there were 126 persons living at twenty different places in the County Murray, although the boundaries had not been officially defined. At Captain Richard Brook’s Bungandow (Bungendore) property eighteen people were employed, and Bowen and Balcombe on the Molonglo River had another thirty.

After a succession of disappointing applications Captain Murray and his two sons set out to investigate the land around Lake George in early 1828. The application for 1,280 acres (512 ha) was quickly granted to the young Terence Murray on condition that he was supplied with 1,000 pounds of capital to stock the place. Captain Murray promised to provide sheep, cattle and horses to that value for the run and by the end of the year Terence was recorded as a resident settler a few kilometres north of Lake George.

⁹ Ibid. p12

¹⁰ Ibid. p9

In 1829, when the County of Murray had been surveyed and gazetted, the original boundaries of the limits of location were extended into what was known as ‘the nineteen counties’. This did not deter pastoralists from venturing outside the new limits desperate to find grazing lands for their drought affected stock.

The wool boom of the 1830s encouraged more settlers to come to the Colony and news of unlimited rich grazing lands, available free of charge, meant that the exodus could not be halted. By 1831 Governor Darling had virtually abolished the system of grants to deserving people or as compensation and introduced a sale by auction of crown lands for the sum of five shillings an acre. Senior officers were allowed a 300 pound remission on any land purchase which really amounted to a land grant of 1200 acres (480 ha). Under this system Captain Francis Rossi, a Corsican, who arrived in Australia in 1825 and had been granted 2,560 acre (1,024 ha) near Goulburn, was given more land on the Yandygunullah Creek, now known as Rossi.

The population of the County increased to over 500 by 1833 and trebled to 1728 in 1836. By then the number of women had risen to 250 and the closest town was Goulburn. At the same time proper houses were being built to replace rough huts and more stations were being occupied by the owner or the owner’s family, following recognition that the practice of absentee landowners was proving unsuccessful.

Regulations, introduced in 1836, resulted in squatters, who were occupying lands outside the limits of location, having to pay an annual licence fee of ten pounds per annum. There were no limits on stock numbers or the amount of land. To police these regulations Land Commissioners were appointed for each district. By 1839 another Act set up the Border Police and to finance these men the squatter had to pay a levy on each animal on their run.

By 1840 the County of Murray had virtually no crown land left and the thirty holdings had decreased to about 12 substantial properties following amalgamations of original grants. The owners were known as squatters and most employed a large number of people such as stockmen, shepherds, labourers, domestic servants, gardeners as well as blacksmiths, carpenters and persons of any skill who could assist to make the estate self sufficient. Substantial stone houses were built and decorated with furnishings imported from England and Europe.

6.0 Convicts

Convicts and ex convicts played an important part in the pastoral expansion of Australia. While some emancipated men became successful squatters it seems most convict servants remained firmly at the working class level, many living a solitary, unmarried life. The 1828 Census recorded that of the 126 persons living in County Murray, 73 were convicts and by 1836 50% of the population were convicts, that is 864. This created an uneasy situation between those who were free and those who weren't. Many people, such as Terence Murray, thought it a cruel regime and agitated to have the practice ceased.

The first authorised occupant in the district was Owen Bowen, an emancipated convict, who took up land in the Molonglo Valley. Bowen had arrived in Sydney in 1811 and with his ticket to freedom he was also given a licence for one thousand acres (400 ha) at Marlow (Molonglo) Plains in 1824. After unsuccessfully applying for another grant, at neighbouring Carrowillah (Carwoola), he still managed to increase his holdings, including an outstation in the Jingeras, to run 1,000 head of cattle. At his death in 1840 his estate was valued at 7,000 pounds, a fortune at the time. Owen Bowen is buried in the family vault at St Thomas's cemetery, Carwoola.

In contrast to the successful Bowen, William Westwood, known as Jackey Jackey, was a convict working on Gidleigh station until his escape to embark on a bushranger's life. Jackey Jackey became the notorious Bungendore Bushranger finishing his short life on the gallows of Norfolk Island.

Convicts built the first roads constructing access to the estates where they were assigned. Their labour was used to clear the bush and transform it into land suitable for agriculture and pastoralism. They were the shepherds and stock keepers enduring lonely isolated existences with many having little regard for their responsibilities. They lived a rough and undisciplined life often neglected by their absentee employers.

Transportation of convicts to New South Wales ceased around 1840 resulting in squatters having to look elsewhere for labour. This coincided with a growing realization that even though free men were costlier they worked harder and were more reliable.

At a number of the older stations there is evidence of convicts and their work. At Winderadeen the stone homestead and outbuildings were constructed with convict labour. The convicts' accommodation block, built of stone with gothic arch windows, now a garage, and a large stone lined channel stretching from near Collector to Lake George are also still intact. Convicts were known to have worked at Gidleigh and it is believed they constructed the stone stables and possibly a small two room cottage which still exists. At Palerang, on the Boro-Mulloon Coach Road, there is a two storey stone building thought to have been a dairy or a barn, built by convicts. This is possibly the oldest building in the district c1830.

7.0 Early Pastoral Holdings

In general terms the western portion of the Palerang Shire comprises three pastoral districts; Lake George and surrounding country, the Molonglo Valley and the Burra and Urila Valleys.

During the 1840s decade there was a marked increase in the number of cattle and horses but many landowners were set back by the economic downturn of 1843 and 1844. The price of Australian wool fell to 6d a pound on the London market and sheep held such little value for their fleeces they were boiled down for tallow. The wool market quickly recovered although quite a few primary producers were forced to sell, often to their financially more stable neighbours. The size of stations around Lake George, Bungendore and in the Molonglo Valley increased while the number of owners decreased.

The families of the old runs in the Molonglo Valley, Lake George and adjacent districts are inextricably intertwined through marriages and pastoral holdings, creating a complicated tapestry of generations moving into and out of each other's lives and homes. They were part of some of the pastoral dynasties, prominent for more than a century in the development of rural Australia.

7.1 The Molonglo Valley

In June 1824 Owen Bowen, who had obtained his freedom after arrival in Sydney in 1811, came to the Molonglo River and with a ticket of occupation for 1000 acres (400 ha) and established a small farm. Bowen's neighbours were Henry Colden Antill and William Balcombe.

Antill came to Australia in 1809 and took up a property near Picton but during the drought of 1828 had to find other land to feed his stock and sent them south to the Molonglo Valley. He named his estate Primrose Valley and his family continued ownership until the property was sold in 1862 to Thomas Rutledge to become part of Carwoola.

Balcombe had an interesting and dangerous past owing to a friendship with Napoleon Bonaparte while the Emperor was in exile. Balcombe was sent to New South Wales and held the position of Colonial Treasurer from 1823 until his death in 1829. During that time he was given a grant of some two thousand acres (800 ha) on the Molonglo Plains which he called the Briars, after his home on St Helena, and took it up on behalf of his two sons. The property was sold to Thomas Shanahan in 1843.

William Rutledge commenced his pastoral investments in 1836 with the purchase of a 2,560 acre (1,024 ha) station originally taken up by Henry Gilbert Smith in 1828. The next year Rutledge took over Woodlands which had been granted to Edward John Eyre, who during the 1830s became the celebrated explorer. He called the amalgamated properties Clonbroney.



A portion of Surveyor Dixon's Map of the Colony of NSW published in 1846 showing County Murray and the earliest holdings, roads and tracks National Library of Australia

William's brother, Thomas, came out from England in 1841 to manage the substantial 25,000 acre (10,000 ha) property and William moved to Port Phillip. Thomas later bought the estate from his brother. When Owen Bowen died in 1840 his estate was passed to his son but Rutledge bought Carwoola in 1865. Thomas Rutledge was the one responsible for creating a rural enterprise that, in 1866, was reported to be 'the model farm par excellence in News South Wales'¹¹. Thomas built the two storey Carwoola homestead, which was commenced in 1849, prior to his marriage, and extended to grand proportions in 1874.

Phillip Parker King, son of governor Philip Gidley King, took up land near Bungendore about 1833 and named his new property Gidleigh, after his home in Devonshire. Illness forced the Kings to sell to Thomas Rutledge in 1855 who purchased it as an outstation and twenty years later handed it over to his son William Forster Rutledge. Plans were drawn up for a new homestead in 1882, designed by William Wardell. The property has only recently been out of Rutledge ownership following its sale in 2006.



Gidleigh, Lake George – Watercolour by PG King c1840
National Archives of Australia

Foxlow is south of Carwoola, on the Molonglo River, in a sheltered fertile valley. Initially the land was taken up by HC Antill who relinquished the grant to J Hoskins after whom the village of Hoskinstown was named. Thomas Rutledge bought Foxlow from Hoskins and another property, Janefield, adding to his already vast holdings. By 1870 Rutledge had purchased or leased 55,000 acres (22,000 ha) in the district and some reports suggest that this had grown to 90,000 acres (36,450 ha) by 1877¹².

At the time of The Robertson Land Act 1861 much of the Molonglo Plains was already freehold but areas around Hoskinstown and the out-lying paddocks of Carwoola and Gidleigh were still leasehold.

¹¹ Cantlon, Maurice *Homesteads of Southern New South Wales 1830 – 1900* p96

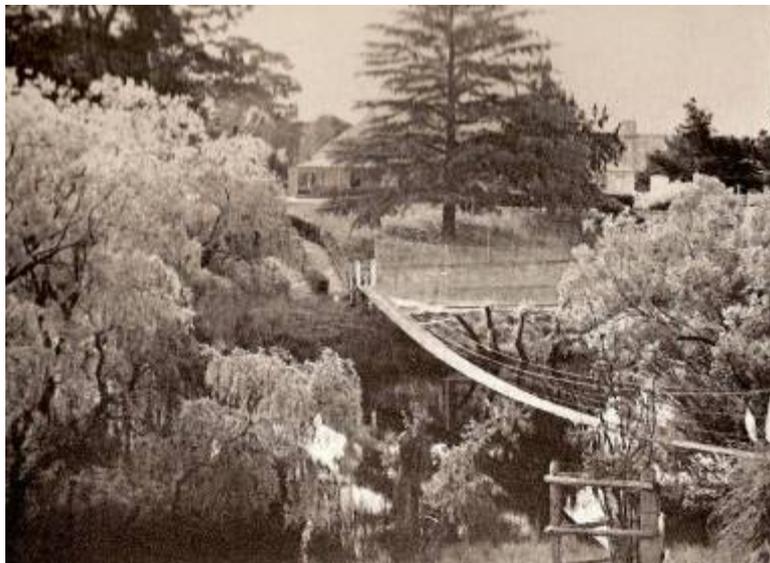
¹² Barrow Graeme *Unlocking Histories Secrets* p72

7.2 Lake George

The first land grant in the area was allocated to James Cooper, in 1825, who is said to have built a small cottage on his property where his nephew lived to manage the station. He named the place Willeroo and quickly took up another parcel of land adjoining.

The census of 1828 confirmed that Francis Kenny with his wife and child had been resident on the shores of Lake George for a number of years and with a relative, John Kenny, had a well established run with cleared and cultivated land, a large number of stock and ten convict servants.

During the same years a number of other men were promised land around the lake. John Thompson, Major Rhode and James Atkinson successfully obtained grants although all of these were to relinquish their holdings, by 1835, to other prospective farmers such as William Lithgow.



Suspension footbridge at Winderadeen
with the convict built homestead in the background¹³

Captain T Murray was probably the most prominent land owner around Lake George. He acquired a grant of land at Collector (Colegdar) where, in 1828, he sent his son Terence Aubrey Murray to manage his herds and flocks. Terence built himself an L shaped stone house with verandahs running north and west¹⁴. The house looked over a lagoon onto the land his father had secured as a grant and was called Ajamatong. Young Terence was only nineteen and his new life, with virtually only the company of convict servants, was a long way from his privileged youth. All the same Captain Murray had little capital and couldn't risk the failure of this new farm at Lake George and for that reason he had given his son position of manager.

¹³ Griffiths, G Nesta *Some Southern Homesteads of NSW* p 38

¹⁴ House extant in Collector village

Captain Murray died in 1837 and left his Lake George properties to his son Terence. By this time the huge body of water at Lake George had disappeared and Terence was constructing a new homestead Winderadeen, closer to Lake George than Collector. When the stone house was finished it comprised twelve rooms, a separate kitchen and numerous outbuildings. However Murray did not take up residence at Winderradeen having entered into an arrangement to be part owner of Yarralumla, on the Limestone Plains, and deciding to reside there instead. After the death of his first wife Murray did move over to Winderradeen where he married his second wife, Agnes Edwards.

The story of Terence Aubrey Murray and his family initially presents as one of ease and luxury but similar, to other property owners, it was beset by financial setbacks, infant and early deaths, the vicissitudes of the weather and economic downturns.

Around the shores of Lake George are several other early properties. In 1825 Richard Brooks was the first settler in the Bungendore district when he bought 4000 acres (1600 ha) originally calling his place Bungandow which is now known as Turalla. The terms were 10% deposit with the balance due in three years. It is certain that Brooks already had his cattle there a year before and in 1826 he applied for a further 4000 acres adjoining. Richard Brooks died young, in 1833 after being gored by a bull, and left the Turalla portion of his Bungendore estate to his daughter Charlotte who married Henry Powell. The couple moved into the stone homestead which had been started in the 1830s.

Another of Brook's daughters, Maria, inherited the neighbouring Ashby property from her father. Maria married Henry Zouch, a local police magistrate and records show they were living at Ashby in 1837. Zouch sold the estate to John Dwyer in 1860. Dwyer had held the licence for the Harp Inn from 1838 which was believed to have been originally located near Ashby on the Tarago Bungendore Road. He divided Ashby into smaller parcels but died before the process was finalised. Following his death in 1882 the subdivision was completed and sold as 65 small farms.

Around Bungendore stretched the Molonglo Plains and the fertile land was quickly taken up by Thomas Braidwood Wilson at Janefield 1831, William Scott at Mulloon 1833, Admiral Phillip Parker King at Gidleigh 1833 and John Hosking at Foxlow 1835.

Possibly the first reference to Currandooley was in 1827 when Captain Joseph Thompson sent his animals to the south east end of Lake George in an area named Great Creek but known by the Aboriginals as 'Currandoolee'.

Currandooley is on the eastern shores of Lake George and was originally taken up by William Lithgow in 1825. Lithgow increased his holding by buying up parts of his neighbours and consolidated the lot into the property known as Currandooley.

After Lithgow's death in 1866 the property was sold to Pat Hill Osborne who lived with his wife and young children in the house on Deep Creek. After several storms and floods, which forced the family to flee to higher ground, Osborne sent them to England while he arranged construction of a new homestead in the style of a French chateau. The house was completed in 1873.



Currandooley 1908
National Library of Australia

About 1880 when Charlotte and Henry Powell's son, Nathaniel, married Katherine Gordon from Manar, near Braidwood, Mr Osborne inquired where they were to live and hearing that they were planning to build a house in the Sand Hills, an isolated part of Turalla, he offered them part of Currandooley. They called their property Werriwa and built a four room house with stone from the property.

In 1906 their son, Deuchar Gordon, contracted an architect, MB Halligan of Sydney, to add some main rooms and front hallway. This was followed by further additions carried out for James Gordon, firstly in 1918, which included extra rooms, storeroom, dairy, and staff quarters, and again in 1927 when a large verandah with adjacent rooms and a bathroom and dressing room for the main bedroom were added. This was the traditional way many homesteads grew from small cottages to substantial residences. All the buildings were constructed of stone which was not quarried but came from a rocky outcrop in a paddock only a few kilometres from the homestead.

7.3 Burra & Urila Valleys

The area comprising the Burra and Urila districts developed differently to Lake George and the Molonglo Valley. The ruggedness of the country and the isolation resulted in only the hardest pioneers settling and endeavouring to carve out an existence. Burra also had a reputation for cattle stealing and reports told of rustlers amassing hundreds of head of cattle and hiding them in the rugged Tinderry Range.

In 1833 Stewart Mowle wrote in his diary that Charles Campbell's flocks were grazing the area at the Creek Station, London Bridge and the Waterholes¹⁵. Campbell wasn't the sole occupant for long, in 1835 Joseph Kenyon established a cattle station in the Burra Valley and built a hut there. Campbell and Kenyon were both unauthorised squatters but the same year Campbell managed to force Kenyon out by applying to purchase Kenyon Station. Kenyon moved to the Monaro. Campbell continued to buy up blocks which had creek and river frontage while William Hutchinson competed to buy the same land. Campbell became financially stretched and Hutchinson was successful in buying the best of the Burra Creek land.

Campbell had a practice of leasing some of his land to senior shepherds and overseers for cultivation and to run their own stock. They became tenant farmers and one such person was John Gibbs, overseer of Mt Campbell station from 1838, who developed the property into the social centre for the early district.

When the first free elections were held, in 1856, Charles Campbell was the only person with a Burra address who appeared on the electoral roll as a freeholder. There were five leaseholders; Donald Cameron, Peter Taylor, William Blewitt, Robert Cameron and Thomas Dunne. The Burra area had a much smaller number of eligible voters than any of the adjoining districts indicating it was sparsely settled. The majority of the land was still held by Campbell who occupied Mt Campbell, Burra and Waterholes stations.

It is believed that the first stock to graze in the Urila Valley belonged to Major Antill of Primrose Valley and also possibly to John Hughes and John Hoskings who, as a partnership, owned Foxlow. All these grants crossed over the Queanbeyan River from the Carwoola area.

The first free selector in the valley was Peter Naylor who moved there with his wife and seven children in 1863 and built a stone and pise homestead with the distinction of being the first iron roofed house in the district. The people living at Urila associated mostly with those at Primrose Valley, the area being so isolated with roads little better than rough tracks.

William Blewitt finally secured a lease on a block of land between Campbell's Lobby block and the Waterholes in 1841. The property was named Lobb's Hole. Blewitt was a successful farmer and bought a block at Rob Roy where the Rob Roy Inn was as well as owning several properties in Queanbeyan.

¹⁵Barrow Graeme *Unlocking Histories Secrets* p5

8.0 Establishment of Towns, Villages & Communities

8.1 Bungendore

Bungendore became a settlement as a result of its location at the junction of roads between Goulburn and Braidwood, east down to the coast, south to Queanbeyan and on to the Monaro. In 1836 a mail run was established which passed through the district. Surveyor Larmer was sent out in 1837 and he found four families already living in the area of the designated township, all apparently conducting illegal businesses. His recommended grid street layout was gazetted by the government at the end of that year.

The same year Luke Hyland's inn, The Currency Lass, was licensed at Long Swamp near Palerang, previously Hazeldell, on the road which became the Boro Mulloon coach road. In 1838 John Dwyer was granted a licence for the Harp in the village of Bungendore. A post office was established in 1840 and by 1841 there were four wooden buildings and thirty six people living at Bungendore, twenty four of those lived at the Harp. By 1846 there were more buildings, seven, but less residents, only thirty three. The Sir Barleycorn Inn was operating and St Phillips church was being constructed¹⁶.

The district around Bungendore had attracted a number of Irish men, such as John Dwyer, son of Michael Dwyer the Wicklow Chieftain¹⁷, who in turn encouraged their families and friends back in Ireland to make Bungendore their new home. The town struggled to become anything more than a staging post on the way to Queanbeyan. The inns managed to keep going and the original Harp, with a name change to the Lake George Hotel, has kept its licence for 169 years. The hotel has now reverted to its original name, The Harp Inn. Other businesses felt the effects of proximity to Queanbeyan which grew as the service centre for the district.

Solomon Moses, who had previously had stores on the Monaro, moved to Bungendore to open the Victoria Stores in 1851. The business faltered with only a few hundred people in the district to support it and just as Moses was selling up a flood inundated the premises ruining his stock. He then opened a new store, the Beehive, which saw a couple of competitors come and go but was never a great success. Moses last resort was to open a hotel attached to his store in 1859 but this did not improve his fortunes and before he could be sold up Moses was drowned in Deep Creek in 1860. By 1861 the population had stalled at less than 200.

All the same by 1871 the community spirit was strong enough to support two churches, a public school, four stores, two hotels and a flour mill. The next decade saw more improvements such as stone court house, a weatherboard post office, a permanent public school and a bridge over the Turallo Creek. More stone and brick buildings were being erected.

¹⁶ Lea-Scarlett, Errol *Queanbeyan District & People* p231

¹⁷ Michael Dwyer was sent to Australia as a political prisoner and when released became Chief of Police at Liverpool