

R D H S

Local & Family History Newsletter

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Mad Hatters' Ball Bylong (1947)

The Madhatters' Ball on Saturday, October 4, in aid of the Church of England, was an outstanding success, everyone proclaiming it the best for years. Visitors travelled from far and wide to be present, and all had a most enjoyable time.

The highlight of the night with the judging of the "mad-hats" – a truly difficult task. However, the judges, Mesdames K and A Single (Wollar) made popular decisions, awarding the prize for the prettiest hat to

Mrs E Dix for her "butterfly on a rose," and that for the most original hat to Mrs Geo Mead, "Spring Model, 20 Guineas." A special prize, donated by the judges, was won by Miss Nola Davis for her campfire model.

In the gents' division, Mr N Daniels' toque of spring flowers won the prize for the prettiest hat, and, indeed, it would have made any fashion minded damsel envious; while Mr Harry Harvey's hat consisted of a hen and clutch of chicks nesting contentedly

in a bit of straw, and was awarded the prize for the most original hat. The special prize, donated by the judges, was won by Mr Jack Smith, with his "Bylong Egg Board," complete with dancing eggs.

Apart from the winning entries, many weird and wonderful models were on exhibition; it was generally agreed that there must be some very artistic milliners in the district (Mudgee Guardian, 3 November 1947, p. 8).

A Freak Rabbit (1914)

Recently a freak rabbit was poisoned at "Growee," near Rylstone. It had extraordinary long teeth, two of which curved out from the bottom jaw. The teeth were about 1 ½ inches long, and almost as thick as a dog's tooth. The teeth from the apex to the top formed a half circle. In the top jaw they were of normal thickness, and curved down through the mouth. If a dissection were made it is likely that they would be found to extend to the region of the throat. What the owners of the curio want to know is, "How did the rabbit eat?" (Mudgee Guardian 24 Dec 1914, p. 17).

D M Clark Obituary (1924)

In the death of Mr D M Clark, which took place at "Rawdon," Rylstone, on the 27th October, at the age of 61, the district has lost one of its most prominent and successful graziers. The late Mr Clark was born at Horsham, Victoria, on 7th May, 1863. His father was a prominent Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, for some years, prior to the payment of members. In his early years Mr Clark was connected with the milling industry. He eventually sold

out his interests and started on the land, and after two years bought the stations known as Suffolk Vale and Breakfast Creek, in the Cowra district. These he improved to their full carrying capacity then sold and bought "Monivae," near Rylstone. He again sold and bought Guntawang, near Mudgee. In 1921 he bought "Rawdon," which is one of the best improved stations in the State, carrying over a sheep to the acre, as well as horses and cattle (The Land, 14 Nov 1924, p. 8).

Old Tong Bong and Dungaree

Things that happened in 1882

(By H Mow)

At that time the Mudgee Railway line construction was in progress, and quite a large camp sprung up near Tong Bong Creek, six miles from Rylstone, just above where Mr Martin Currie's station homestead now stands. At this spot Mr F A Ellis had a hotel and a general store, and Mr M Norris had a butcher's shop, while Mr Henry had a bakery. There was a number of boarding houses all doing good biz. This was the main sporting centre for several miles each side, the people coming to play cricket and other games. About a mile further up the road, Mr Joe Sheardern, a brother of Mr Thomas Sheardern, snr., who now lives in Rylstone, kept a hotel for a time, later selling out to Mr Robert Bailey. Mr Bailey kept the hotel till it closed. He was a great man for pigeon shooting and other sport. A foot race for £10 aside was to take place on the sports ground near Ellis's hotel between Ted Ellis, the hotekeeper's brother and Pat Marr, the son of a railway ganger. A large crowd turned up to witness the event, which resulted in a win for Marr. Amongst those present was Mr Bailey, of the top pub, and Mr W McQuiggan, of Pinnacle Swamp, now living in Rylstone. Each being men of the trigger they arranged to hold a pigeon match at a later date for, I think, £10 aside. To celebrate the event they had a foot race for a small wager,

each man pulled off the silk coat which were worn in those days, removed their paper collars, rolled up their trousers and got on the mark. Joe Goddard, who afterwards became a champion boxer, was starter. The race resulted in a win for Bailey. The pigeon match came off between Bailey and McQuiggin and resulted in Bailey just winning through one of McQuiggin's birds falling out of bounds. McQuiggin in these took some beating. At this time the Mudgee district had some crack foot runners. Leo Casimir (Mudgee), J M Weatherley (Ilford), Tom Duggan (Rylstone), and the navvies' champion, Paddy Hartigan. A match for £40 aside was arranged between Paddy Hartigan and Tom Duggan. This took place on the sports ground near Ellis's Hotel, at Tong Bong. A large crowd turned up from all parts of the district; the railway works stopped for the day; stores and butcher's shop closed; but the pub had to keep open. There being no motor cars in these days, people came in gigs, buggies, spring carts, and large squads of men and the ladies wore bell top hats; drays, drawn by fine big horses, carried a large number of the fair sex from the various railway settlements along the line, and most of the "toff" navvies wore swallow tailed coats with red sashes around the waist, the tails hanging down each side. In

the gathering were many of Mudgee and Rylstone district's oldest residents, such as Thomas Owen, snr., the first keeper of the Globe Hotel, Rylstone, the late William Farrar, snr., father of Mr J W Farrar, formerly of the Rylstone Hotel, Mr Charlie Harper, Mudgee, Denny Doyle, and the late Henry Dewey, snr., of Growee. Tom Malone, the then champion Irish foot runner, was there, and won a silver cup presented by Mr Ellis, the hotelkeeper. The foot race between Hartigan and Duggan resulted in an easy win for Hartigan. The navvies rushed him and carried him on their shoulders to the hotel. A good deal of money changed hands over the event, most of the betting being side wagers and people could be seen with hands full of notes and gold eager to get a wager on their favourite man. Mr Fishbourne, the railway contractor, was present and had a wager on Hartigan. He handed his win over to a man who was sick at the brick yard near the site of Mr Currie's homestead. There was in this gathering that day, Austin Chapman a butcher from Dungaree, who is now Sir Austin Chapman. He was then a popular young man, about 20 years of age. Many of the old hands about at that time will remember "Chaple," as he was called. The last time the writer remembers seeing him to speak to was at Bungendore, in 1896; he was then member for Braidwood. In

a conversation I mentioned the name of Mr Vincent Dowling, of Lue, and then I found out that the man I was talking to was the young butcher of Dungaree in the years gone bye, but at this time the member for Braidwood. If my memory serves me right he married a Miss O'Brien, a daughter of James O'Brien, of Bellevue Station, Braidwood. Further on towards Dungaree Miskell farm was Crossby's big camp settlement. Mr Andy O'Brien who died a few years ago at Cullen Bullen, kept a hotel on top of the hill, and a Mr Harry Gibson kept a general store near by. At old Dungaree where the Ryans now live, John Milligan kept the Dungaree Arms and also a general store, while his daughter kept the post office. A Mr Pearson kept a bakery, and Mr Austin Chapman had a butcher's shop. Dan Gawthorn ran a blacksmith and wheelwright's shop. The Lue

hotel was run by Mr W Warmsley, and later on by John Kurtz, Snr.; J Dunnlopp conducted a general store, and ran carts along the line. Mr Varley also had a general store there. The Dunnlopp family were some years ago living at Lewis Ponds, near Orange. Many of these who took part in the work of building the Mudgee railway came from the gold fields of Wattle Flat, Turon, Hill End, and other places. The sons and daughters of many of these people have made good in many callings. Of late years the writer often came across some of them holding good positions in government departments, while others were in business on their own account. Mr Ellis, who kept the hotel at Tong Bong, is Ellis, the big timber merchant, and was a native of Wattle Flat. His mother died at Wattle Flat about 14 years ago. Tom Duggan, the runner, is a

brother of Mrs Bonner, snr., of Narrango, and was a member of one of the oldest families in the Rylstone district. I believe Mr Duggan now lives in the Moree district. All these sporting events took place just a quarter of a mile from Morton Main railway siding. How time changes things. The district around this spot is teeming with possibilities which will blossom forth if the right people come along to develop the mineral deposits that exist between there and Cudgegong. A light line of railway could be laid from the Mudgee line, about 2 miles on the Lue side of Morton Main siding to Iron Stone Creek for the iron deposits near Cudgegong – a distance of about 10 miles. It is only a matter of time and this will come to pass. The locality I write of will then wake up after its 40 years sleep (Mudgee Guardian, 3 July 1924, p. 6).

Old Rylstone Forty Years Ago Interesting Identities (1936)

Memories of many old Rylstone identities and incidence are recalled by the following reminiscences of one who knew that town and district 35 and 40 years ago: –
“We will look at Rylstone just after the railway was carried on to Mudgee. And speaking of the railway will remind us of some of the old places and tenantshandy to the line. In one small space no fewer than seven old houses had entirely disappeared. There was the Shamrock Hotel, just down from Rylstone Station; old

Micky Hayes' place next door, which did service as a pub, in the days when the bushrangers knocked about the country; Mrs Bidy Fitzpatrick's house, over the river; Hazeltine 's residence, between the gate house and the traffic bridge; old Ah Sue's crib and his fine market garden, opposite Mulholland's place; a house at Horner's gate, and a slab and shingle house a bit up from it, right opposite the stone house occupied by Mr Jim Thompson (owner of the great horse Lochiel) some years ago.

There is scarcely a brick or bits of timber left to indicate that residences ever existed on the spots.

“But where are the people?”

“Jim Hazeltine met his death at Brogan's Creek. In those days Brogan's was a treacherous bit of track, and pilot on a trolley or tricycle went ahead of the mail trains to make sure that the line was clear. Jim was engaged in this work some time, but one night the mail caught him, and he was horribly mangled, and his remains brought into Rylstone

and interred in the cemetery there. Two or three others met a similar fate at that place.

Singing Cobbler

"Micky Hayes will be remembered as the singing cobbler. He was one of the happiest men. Much like the genial Pickwick, he was beloved by all. He reared quite a large and respectable family, not one of whom remains in the district. When business slackened, it was Micky's want to take his dish and tool and go into the bed of the Cudgegong to look for gold. And he was not without success, as there was gold to be had all along the river. Another who used to do fairly well at the game was old Jack Green. Mrs Hayes was a dear old lady, a born nurse, and in those days was always to be found in the sickroom of neighbours. Both have passed away.

"On the other side of the river there was Mrs Fitzpatrick and her three cherry trees. The trees were a great attraction to the lads attending school in those days, and the old lady had her time taken up in clearing the trees of the laddies. Many a boy had been hauled down by a hook attached to the end of a long rod. She had three children, George, Mary and Nellie. The old lady died many years ago, and the children have moved from the old town.

Great Flood

"Then there was the old Chinaman, Sue. His garden with a picture, but the river overflowed on one occasion

and washed him out. The same flood threatened the Hayes, and most of the furniture was removed from the house and stacked in the street. The stream stretched from the gatehouse on the one side to more than halfway up the hill on the other. The Tongbong Creek banked up with the river and cut off all communication with Rawdon, Camboon and those places, and fettlers were on the railway bridge night and day harpooning huge logs as they came down the stream and steering them clear of the bridge pylon. It was feared that the bridge would be washed away. The water on that occasion washed over the bed of the traffic bridge, lower down the river.

"What a number of the old hands who lived just about the station 40 years ago has passed over to the great majority! Micky Hayes and his wife, Mrs B Fitzpatrick, Jack Mulholland, Bob Horner and his wife, Roley Purvis, Tanner, George Hardwick, his father, George Howe, Granny Brown (who was 80 when she passed away), old Clarke (the dear old schoolteacher), old Dr Pericles (who lived in a cottage in Mudgee Street which has since done duty as a store), old Bill Hartley, and Dabee, the Chinaman, who had a shop some 30 years ago.

Old Hands

"The mention of Mr Clarke, a schoolmaster, recalls many old boys – "Big Doodah" and "Little Doodah" Highfield, George Nash, Oz Jackson,

George, Percy and Tom Love, Benny McLeod, Reg Hardwick, Lander Featherstone, Sam Ferguson, Clarry and Welly Taylor, "Weslie" and Alf Fuller, "Pop" Brown, Bob and Fred Horner, Dan Kearney, "Dangler" Pericles, "Copy" Howe, Peter Mulholland, Billy Marton, Ted Johnston, Charlie, Fred and "Button" Wilton, Charlie and Will Matthews, Ted Hawkins, George and Charlie Howe, Will Abbott and many others.

The older hands about Rylstone will remember the fine lot of chaps you were always knocking about together many years ago. There was quite a school of them, and they enjoyed themselves and were unused to those about them. Amongst these were Frank Farrar (Will Farrar's brother), who passed away many years ago, George Fitzpatrick, Ern and Charlie Robbins (the whistlers), Mick Kearney, Charlie Howe, Billy Francis and Sam Coxon. There was a number of rather nice fellows out Camboon and Bylong way who used to "blow in" to Rylstone in those days – the Keeches and Walkers.

"Mr Walker, senior, met a sudden death on the Rylstone racecourse many years ago. There was a race meeting on, and in those days the course was a rather rough affair. As the horses came into the straight, one ran off the course and ran amongst the people. It hit the poor old chap with terrible force, and he died from injuries received" (Mudgee Guardian, 13 August 1936, p. 13).