

AMATEUR GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE HUNTER VALLEY

# SANDY HOLLOW - MERRIWA - BYLONG EXCURSION

Friday 29 to Sunday 31 October 2010



## AMATEUR GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE HUNTER VALLEY

# SANDY HOLLOW EXCURSION NOTES

These Notes are intended to provide background to some of the locations and their associated incidents which will be visited, seen or referred to during the Sandy Hollow Excursion.

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### COVER PHOTOS

1. Columnar basalt - Battery Hill
2. 'Terragong' Station
3. Bylong canyons from Nullo Mountain
4. Cave art – Livery Stable
5. Governors Rock & Coulsons Creek
6. 'Poggy' Station
7. Wybong Creek
8. Lone pine @ junction Dingo Ck & Goulburn River

### BUSHRANGERS and OUTLAWS

These notes are extracted from the account of bushranging and outlaw incidents along the Bicentennial National Trail by Winston Pratt.

#### The Governor Brothers

Jimmy Governor, his brother Joe, and his partially sighted and lame mate Jacky Underwood were aboriginal fencing contractors who were fencing on the Mawbey property at Breelong, about 17 km south-east of Gilgandra. Jimmy is reported to have been quite well educated and a good worker. He was employed as police tracker for over a year. Jimmy had a 17 year old European wife, Ethel Mary Jane Page from Gulgong, and an infant son, Sidney Golding Louis.

Ethel, who provided unpaid domestic help for the Mawbeys, had been the subject of intense and sustained racial vilification by 44 year old Mrs Sarah Mawbey, her eldest daughter Grace (16), and Helen Kurz (21) a school teacher from the local school who was staying with the Mawbeys.

There had been some dispute both with John Mawbey about his high rate of condemning their fence posts, and also with Mrs Mawbey for her overcharging for rations and supplies which the Governors obtained from the Mawbeys. Some weeks later Joey, Jacky, and an old man called Jack Porter and the brothers' young nephew, Peter came to the camp to help Jimmy. As the contracted rations were only sufficient for Ethel and Jimmy, feeding the extra help was very difficult. John Mawbey then used the condemned posts without compensation, although he later agreed to a much discounted rate, and this increased the tensions.

On the evening of 20 July 1900 supplies began to run out and Ethel and Jimmy had a heated row after which Jimmy went to see John Mawbey who was staying with his men in his former residence, the old Breelong Inn which was on the property. Then he and Jacky, armed with a nulla nulla (club) and a tomahawk, went to John's new house at about 10 pm to get an apology from Mrs Mawbey for humiliating his wife. It is probable, but not certain, that they were accompanied by Joey and possibly Ethel who were not physically involved in the incident which followed.

Mrs Mawbey and Helen Kurz, angered by the late visit and Jimmy's questions about their comments to his wife, returned a barrage of further racial insults and abuse. Jimmy and Jacky burst inside and hacked and clubbed the women to death. Three of the Mawbey children, Grace, Percy (14) who tried to defend his mother, and Hilda May (11) were also killed and Sarah Mawbey's sister, Elsie Clarke (18), severely wounded. Four other children in the house hid or fled and were not physically injured. The attackers returned to their camp and then fled with Joey, Jack Porter, Peter, Ethel and the baby. Page | 2

Jimmy decided that Ethel, the baby, Porter and Peter should separate from them. Ethel and baby were caught by police the next day on the Dubbo Road and Porter and Peter were caught by Mawbey's party. Jacky was also sent away but was picked up near Leadville.

After these horrific murders the brothers were now certain to be hanged so they became avengers, seeking to settle old scores with those who they felt had mistreated or humiliated them.

The 100 days manhunt for the brothers was the largest ever in NSW and involved more than 200 police and 2000 volunteers (not all at the same time) over a 4 month period from July to October 1900, and covered a tortuous route of almost 5000 km often through some of the most rugged terrain in the state. They had no preparation, had no supplies or adequate clothing and had to 'live off the land' by stealing from farm houses and sheds when opportunities arose. They were on foot, often bare foot, and occasionally on stolen horses. With the police hot on their trail, to stay at large for so long and over such a vast area was an amazing feat of human endurance and bushcraft.

Three days later, near Ulan Alex McKay was killed and his wife wounded by the pair on 23 July 1900 and then they went to Moolarben to the home of Bert Byers, as there was a very strong animosity between Jimmy and Bert for some unknown reason. Bert had already joined the hunt and was not at home.

The next day they went to O'Brien's 'Poggy Station', between Merriwa and Wollar, and murdered a soon to give birth Mrs Elizabeth O'Brien, her young son and severely wounded Mrs Bennett, a midwife. The brothers then headed south up Barigan Creek to settle an old score with a Thomas Hughes after which they intended to go up to the Nullo Mountain area and disappear, living as traditional aboriginals. Mr Hughes had left, being aware of Jimmy's plan to settle old grudges, so the brothers turned back and made for the Fitzpatrick home, about 3 km north of Wollar, again with the intention of settling an old score. On Saturday 27 July at Wollar they murdered 80 year old Mr Kieran Fitzpatrick, making a total of 9 murders in 8 days.

On 13 October, after having crossed or recrossed the Liverpool Ranges or Gloucester Tops 3 times, at Big Flat on the Forbes River about 15 km north of Yarras, Bert Byers, Robert Woods and a lad named Scrivener lay in ambush in a farm house. Late in the afternoon as the brothers cautiously approached the house they were startled by a noise from the house and ran away. Both Byers and Woods fired, Byers hitting Jimmy in the mouth smashing out five teeth and severely cutting his lip and tongue and Woods bullet passing through Jimmy's buttock. Jimmy fell and, as Woods and Byers rushed out of the house firing, Joe fired back, covering Jimmy until he could regain his feet. They reached the cover of the bush and escaped while Byers and Woods gave up the chase as it was getting dark.

Four days later, 3 km from Yarras, the brothers were again involved in an ambush and gunfight while crossing the Hastings River and they were separated as they fled. They both headed south independently, Jimmy raided John 'Bulga' Wallis' bee hives at Bulga for honey and was later tracked along the road towards Bobin, 30 km north of Wingham. Here Jimmy hid in the bush near Bobin Creek until Friday 26 October when he stole the lunch of a local farmer, John Wallace, while Wallace was working. On finding his lunch stolen Wallace galloped off, but returned late at night on foot with seven men armed with shotguns, including Tom Green and several members of the Moore family. They surrounded Jimmy's campfire and at first light when Jimmy woke and stood up, Green called for Jimmy to surrender but Jimmy, realizing he was surrounded, grabbed his rifle and darted across the creek while Green fired followed by Wallace, six shots in all. Jimmy scrambled up the steep bank of the creek with the others in hot pursuit and ran into some thick bush with the chasers firing at him. Jimmy collapsed into the thick bracken fern peppered with buckshot. His pursuers, who were just metres away lost sight of him and took several minutes to find his unconscious form. They grabbed his rifle before giving him porridge and milk and three cups of tea. Beside his earlier wounds he now had 45 shotgun pellets in his back and buttocks and he told his captors that he had lived on only water and honey for the past 14 days. Later in the day he was transported into Wingham in a spring cart.

Joey meanwhile had separated and decided to try and join up with some aboriginals at 'St Clair Station' north of Singleton (now flooded by Lake St Clair). In very rugged terrain at Glen Rock on the Fall Brook a few kilometres north of St Clare, Joey was taken by surprise at his camp and shot dead with a single shot to the back of the head by John Wilkinson on 30 October 1900. His body could only be recovered by horseback and was taken to Carrowbrook where it was transferred to a cart and then taken to Singleton. The body was then photographed and placed on show on the billiard table of the Caledonia Hotel, Singleton. The saddle pack in which the body was brought from Glen Rock to Carrowbrook is on display in the Singleton Historic Museum.

Between them, the trio had committed 9 murders and about 70 other crimes. They had a reward of 1,000 pounds on their head.

Joey is buried in unconsecrated ground outside Wittingham Cemetery a few kilometers east of Singleton. Jacky was hanged at Dubbo Gaol on 14 January 1901 and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Old Dubbo Cemetery, while Jimmy was hanged at Darlinhurst Gaol on the 18 January 1901. Ethel Governor remarried, had 10 children and died at Newington State Hospital in 1945.

### **Fred Ward – alias 'Thunderbolt'**

Frederick was born in 1836 at Wilberforce, NSW, the youngest son of Michael Ward, a convict, and Sophia Ward, a free immigrant who came to Australia to be with Michael and to petition for a ticket-of-leave for her husband, a quest in which she was successful. Sophia had 11 children, and was aged 47 when Frederick was born. During the 1840's the family moved to Maitland.

At about the age of 12 Frederick was employed as a farm hand in the Walcha district and by the age of 17 Fred was employed as a horsebreaker and groom with two of his older brothers at 'Tocal Station', north of Maitland. Fred's brother George was drowned in 1854 whilst driving a mob of Tocal cattle across the flooded Hunter River to the Maitland saleyards.

In 1856 Fred was involved together with some of his relatives in the theft of 15 horses from 'Tocal' (perhaps revenge for his brother's death) and 60 horses from nearby 'Bellevue'. He was caught and convicted of 'possession of stolen horses' and sentenced to 10 years hard labour on the infamous Cockatoo Island prison where conditions were at least as brutal as those on Norfolk Island. Fred would have met two other notorious bushrangers, John Piesley and Frank 'Darkie' Gardiner (alias Clarke or Christie), who were also incarcerated at Cockatoo Island in the years prior to 1860.

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In June 1860 Fred was granted a ticket-of-leave and went to work for Mrs Garbutt (most likely his older sister, Sarah) at 'Cooyal Station' near Mudgee. Here Fred met an attractive and intelligent 26 year old widow called Mary Ann Baker (nee Bugg). In the late 1860's Sarah Garbutt had remarried and she and her husband moved to the Hernani area near Ebor.

Mary Ann, a part aboriginal, was born on 7 May 1834 at Stroud but was removed at age 5 to Sydney for a 'civilised' education. She returned to the family farm at Monkerai (near Stroud) in 1845 and on 1 June 1848, at age 14, married Edmund Baker, and then moved to 'Cooyal Station'. After her husband died, Mary Ann returned to her family near Stroud and in late 1860 Fred followed her to Stroud. Although there is no official record, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that they were married in the Stroud Anglican Church (Mary Ann was working in the Stroud Anglican School at the time).

Being on 'ticket-of-leave' Fred was required to report to the Mudgee police on a regular basis. In September 1861 he reported late for muster and was arrested for non attendance and also for being in possession of a horse which he could not prove was his. He was returned to Cockatoo Island to serve the remainder of his sentence plus a further 4 years for horse theft.

Meanwhile Mary Ann had gained employment at Balmain as a domestic servant, possibly using the alias of 'Louisa Mason'. On 11 September 1863 Fred and another prisoner, Fred Britton, escaped from Cockatoo Island, presumably aided by Mary Ann, by swimming most probably to Balmain. The two men separated and on 21 December that year Fred alone held up the Toll Gate at the junction of the New England Highway and the Wollombi Road at Rutherford near Maitland. It is here that Fred acquired the name 'Thunderbolt' or later 'Captain Thunderbolt'. It was 6 am when Fred began knocking loudly on the Toll Gate house to rouse Mr O'Brien, the gatekeeper. O'Brien called out "who dares to make such a thundering noise?" Fred replied "I am 'Thunderbolt', the noise I made was the thunder, while this is the bolt", pointing a revolver at O'Brien's head and ordering him to 'bail up'.

For the next 6 years Fred, usually with others although sometimes alone, and often aided by Mary Ann who by 1867 had 4 children, went on a bushranging spree of robbery and stock theft with distinct bursts of activity criss-crossing a huge area of northern NSW. This continued with Mary Ann until 1867 and then for a further 3 years until Fred's death in 1870.

Aberdeen was supposedly the home of Robert Mason and his aboriginal wife Louisa Mason, nicknamed 'Yellow Long', a probable contamination of her aboriginal name 'Yellilong'.

Thunderbolt's Mary Ann, the 'Captain's Lady', had her third child in August 1866 and named her Mary Ann Ward. In February 1867, while Mary Ann was ill and expecting again, Thunderbolt took up with a 15 year old orphan boy, Thomas Mason, who was probably a relative of Robert Mason. Thomas' bushranging career was short-lived as he was wounded and captured in a gunfight in

August 1867 in which Thunderbolt and Mary Ann escaped. Mary Ann had had her fourth child, Frederick Wordsworth, a few months before.

Mary Ann was being continually harassed by the police in 1866 and was imprisoned for 'Vagrancy' although aboriginals were exempted from the Vagrancy Act. A public outcry led to her release after serving a short part of her sentence. On 16 January 1867 she was charged with possession of stolen goods and imprisoned. Again sympathisers, including magistrate Edward Denny Day who captured the 'Jewboy Gang', came to her rescue when it was shown that the goods had been legitimately obtained and she was released on 27 February 1867.

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At this point Mary Ann's history becomes confused, and there are two main scenarios. Firstly that she found out that Fred was seeing Louisa Mason and in disgust abandoned him. She changed her name (she had previously used aliases and disguises, particularly as a male, many times), remarried Patrick McNally of Stroud and had 3 children, then remarried John Burrows of Cooyal and moved north where she had another 10 children and died on 2 April 1905. There is some documental evidence for this which, while not conclusive, contains some remarkable coincidences. From this it appears that she had 17 children when counting the four she had to Fred Ward. It is more likely that somebody, inadvertently or deliberately, gave false information for the records or that there has been confusion and speculation in the compilation of the records.

South-west of Aberdeen and about 10 km from Sandy Hollow, at Wybong Creek, Thunderbolt robbed the Muswellbrook to Cassilis Mail in early June 1867.

It is also noted that the bushranger Martin Cash, a convict, was assigned to the Bowman family and worked as a shepherd on their property in the Wybong (originally Wee Bung) Creek area where he again was in trouble with the law for fighting and which led to his eventual career as a bushranger, mostly in Tasmania. His story is fascinating, being the only Australian bushranger to die of old age, a free man after serving out his time at both Port Arthur and Norfolk Island. He is buried in Cornelian Bay Cemetery, Hobart.

The second scenario occurs about 10 km south-west of Sandy Hollow where Mount Dangar Road leaves the Bylong Valley Way on the north to rejoin about 3 km further on. St Mathews Anglican Church is situated on the northern side of Mt Dangar Road, about 2 km from the TO and is clearly visible from the BNT at the entrance to the James Estate vineyard looking north towards Mount Dangar. In the church cemetery, under a prominent kurrajong tree, is the grave of Mrs Maria Bradford, (born 1804, died 1884) who is part of the second Mary Ann scenario. Mary Ann had had her third baby in August 1866 and a fourth in mid 1867. She had not recovered physically and was on the run weeks after her last delivery. On 16 November 1867, Thunderbolt approached Mrs Bradford, a 63 year old widow, on her property at Dingo Creek explaining that his wife was dying in a bush hideout nearby (probably in Thunderbolt's Gully) and asked Mrs Bradford if she could look after her, otherwise he would ask the clergyman who was in the area, Rev White, to attend to her condition and inform the police. He showed her the way and then, being a fugitive, departed while Mrs Bradford took a cart and brought Mary Ann back to the house where she died of pneumonia next morning, shortly after the arrival of Rev White and before the police arrived. (She may have had tuberculosis the same as Fred, for, at least the body at Kentucky Creek thought to be Fred Ward, had terminal tuberculosis and only a few months to live). Soon after the newspapers were reporting the death of Louisa Mason, alias 'Yellow Long'. Her children were apparently fostered out among the local people and her body buried at the junction of Dingo Creek and the Goulburn River, a few hundred metres from the Bylong Valley Way. Her coffin was made from old tea chests by Mr Kirk, the Baerami storekeeper (who, with his wife, is buried alongside Mr & Mrs Bradford). The grave site was completely washed away in the 1955 flood.

Recent research has found that Mrs Bradford's daughter-in-law (another Mrs Bradford) was a District Nurse and, as Mrs Bradford snr's husband had recently died and it is likely that her son and his wife were staying with her, that the Mrs Bradford who assisted Mary Ann was Mrs Bradford Jnr.

Many questions remain the subject of continuing debate. Were Mary Ann Bugg and Louisa Mason the same person? Mary Ann was claimed to have used 'Louisa Mason' at Balmain 4 years before the Louisa Mason of Aberdeen came into the story; or had the name been applied retrospectively? If Mary Ann died at Dingo Creek, what happened to the supposed Mrs Robert (Louisa) Mason of Aberdeen? If Mary Ann was the woman who died in 1905, who was the woman buried at Dingo Creek?

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Thunderbolt had shown great loyalty and devotion towards Mary Ann during their relationship, taking great risks to free her on one instance from captivity. It seems unlikely that he would abandon her when expecting his child and most likely that he would want her cared for at her approaching death.

### **Elizabeth Jessie Hickman – 'The Lady Bushranger'**

Widden Brook Road leaves Bylong Valley Way and heads south to Widden Stud where the road west to Myrtle Grove passes the TO to Emu Creek, the valley south of the Cats Ears and Wedding Cake mountain. It was in this valley that Elizabeth Jessie Hickman 'the Lady Bushranger' eventually had her property and hut. While not a bushranger in the 'bail up' sense, Jessie was an expert cattle duffer wanted by the police. Initially she lived in a cave near Box Ridges on the Nullo Mountain for many years.

Born on 6 September 1890 at Bankstown, Jessie joined the 'Valdares Circus' troop after her parents separated at age eight and went on to become a highly skilled horsewoman. In the era before radio and cinema, the travelling circus and rodeo show was one of the main sources of entertainment, particularly in the country. At age 15, under the name of Miss Kemp, Jessie, then known as Elizabeth Jessie Hunt, was the Australian Champion Woman's Roughrider of 1906. After the Valdares returned to France Jessie transferred to 'Martini's Circus' and eventually fell in love and married Martin Brehemy, the proprietor. Mart was unfortunately killed in a wagon accident near Armidale in 1907 when Jessie was just 17. Mart is buried in a family vault in Waverley Cemetery, Sydney. Jessie took over as ringmaster but eventually went into partnership with the manager, Michael Ryan. However, in a bad fall from a bucking horse, Jessie was seriously injured and Martini's Circus was sold to become 'Wild Australia'.

While the circus was performing at Belltrees Station north-east of Scone, Jessie met Major Edgar Hickman and soon married him at Sofala. Major Hickman was a horse buyer for the British Army in India and accompanied a consignment of horses to India, however the letters and money he sent Jessie went astray and Jessie thought that she'd been abandoned. Jessie soon after had a son to Edgar and found it very difficult to make ends meet, so much so that she took to stealing to survive and was soon in trouble with the police. After further trouble with the law in 1912, Jessie was jailed in Long Bay Gaol for 18 months. Edgar returned in 1913 but was unable to find Jessie as she was now using the name McIntyre, her mother's maiden name.

On her release in 1915 Jessie went to work as housekeeper for John Fitzgerald who was an alcoholic and treated Jessie very badly. He forced her to marry him and in 1920, after several years of domestic violence, Jessie killed him in self defence during a drunken fight at their home in Granville.

To avoid a severe jail sentence, Jessie fled to the remoteness of the Nullo Mountain area and lived alone at her hideaway in a small secluded hollow above the headwaters of the Emu and Turon Creeks, about 9 km east of Wild Horse Range. She knew every inch of this remote and almost inaccessible area including the Livery Stable cave and had friends, some lived at 'Summervale' on the eastern side of the Yodellers Ridge near Coxs Creek while others lived about 6 km to the west in Heffrons Hole, named after Heffron, a robber who was ambushed here and shot by the police.

Jessie survived by duffing cattle and, being an excellent 'bushman' with detailed knowledge of the terrain, was able to escape pursuing police on many occasions. It was at Dunns Swamp, south of the Nullo Mountain, where Jessie Hickman leapt off a 10 m cliff into the water and swam away to avoid capture by the pursuing police.

Eventually she bought a small farm at Emu Creek. However on 24 October 1926 Jessie stole some cattle and this time was arrested in early 1928 and imprisoned at Rylestone pending trial on 28 August 1928. While Jessie was in prison Edgar finally found her and was able to secure her bail. Immediately before her trial, some of the crucial cattle for evidence mysteriously disappeared and the jury acquitted Jessie.

Jessie and Edgar, using the same surname Kemp, as Hickman was now too notorious, moved to Rose Bay in Sydney where Edgar worked as a jeweller and Jessie ran a small riding school. With the onset of the Great Depression, the jewellery business collapsed and, at the same time, Edgar's aging mother in England became ill. Edgar decided to return to England but Jessie decided to stay and the couple parted amicably. Jessie returned to the Emu Creek she loved. Times were tough and Jessie's health was failing and a few years later she was badly injured when bucked from a horse and, spent a night unprotected from the weather. When found, her neighbours took a very ill Jessie to Denman Hospital from where she was rushed to Newcastle Hospital. However she died from her injuries and pneumonia, complicated by a brain tumour. When her body was not claimed she was buried in a pauper's grave in Sandgate Cemetery, Newcastle.

Jessie Hickman became a rather notorious legend in the area as a horsewoman with unsurpassed skill and bushcrafts to match.

### **Harry Redford – The 'Captain Starlight' of the novel 'Robbery Under Arms' (but not the true Captain Starlight)**

Harry Redford, immortalized as 'Captain Starlight' in Rolf Bolderwood's novel 'Robbery Under Arms', and some of his companions, including Ben Marsden, camped in a cave known as 'the Livery Stable' on the Yodellers Ridge in 1875.

Harry Redford was born near Windsor on the Hawkesbury River in 1841. He is thought to have worked as a drover and teamster before making his way north to Queensland in the mid-1860's. He was quite apt at using aliases to conceal his true identity.

In early 1870 Harry and some accomplices stole 1000 head of cattle, from the Bowen Downs Station in central Queensland and drove them down the Barcoo River, Coopers Creek and the Strzelecki Track into South Australia. Included in the mob was a white stud bull, with very distinctive brands, that had been imported from England to the 'Gracemere' property then purchased by 'Bowen Downs'.



Using a false name, Redford sold the white bull of Gracemere to Allan Walke at 'Hill Hill Station' (now 'Carraweena'), on the Strzelecki Creek and the rest of the cattle to the station manager, Mr Mules, at 'Blanchewater Station' for 5000 pounds in June 1870.

The theft of such a large mob of cattle and the feat of droving them successfully over such a distance in such inhospitable terrain was a feat of unsurpassed skill, bushcraft and daring.

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In time Harry was traced, arrested in January 1872, and eventually brought to trial at Roma Courthouse on 11 February 1873. However, in spite of the apparently convincing evidence, the defense counsel managed to sway the jury and Harry was acquitted. Harry continued to steal horses almost from the day he was released and in April 1875 appeared in Roma Court twice in as many days on charges of horse stealing. The evidence was insufficient and again Harry walked away a free man.

In 1875, the 'Duke of Athol', a champion imported stallion insured for 2000 guineas, was stolen from Tom Tindale at Bylong, an area familiar to Harry Redford when he worked through the area about 10 years before on route to Queensland. While one version of the theft is simply that Harry took the horse to Queensland to sell, another is that it was part of an insurance fraud. A cab horse with very similar markings was found in a Sydney livery stable, purchased and taken first to Illford where it had a tooth removed as The Duke had a missing tooth. The horse was then taken to Heffron's Hole and then on to the Livery Stable cave until its tooth extraction healed and it lost the harness marks on its coat. Hence the cave became known as the Livery Stable. The Duke was stolen and the cab horse pushed over a cliff at Coulsons Creek in the Merriwa area, and the carcass burnt, care being taken to leave the feet, the nose with the blaze and jaw with the missing tooth intact. The Duke was painted, put with a draft of horses and taken by remote tracks to Queensland. When the cab horse was found it was identified by the remains as The Duke and the insurance was paid out.

It is uncertain who drew the still visible horse on the Livery Stable cave wall, it was most likely one of the Marsdens or Harry Redford himself. Unfortunately the wall has been cleaned up but originally there were two horses and 'Ben Marsden 1875' drawn on the cave wall.

On his release from Brisbane Gaol for his 1877 stock theft conviction, Harry headed north for the Gulf country where, for almost the next decade, he made an honest living droving cattle. In June 1886 at the Tennant Creek races he entered a horse called 'Brumby Filly' as, according to the rules, a grass fed horse. However the horse had been hand fed and after it won five races and 1800 pounds in prize money and winnings, Harry had enough money to stock his leased property, 'Corella Downs'. Later adverse conditions forced Harry to surrender his lease to 'Brunette Downs' and he spent the remaining 15 years of his life as a drover and stockman on various Northern Territory properties and searching for 'new country' to open up for grazing. In 1901, while attempting to swim across the flooded Corella Creek, Harry drowned and his body was found washed up downstream on the creek bank. His remains now lie in an unmarked grave on the edge of a waterhole close to where he died.

## **The murder at Terragong (extracted from 'Murder at Terragong' by Elvin Andrews**

At dusk on March 24 1840, Henry Dutton's house at Terragong, 6 km north of Merriwa, was held up by 4 hooded bushrangers. A young boy had seen the hold-up and alerted some of the station staff and they moved to cover the front and rear exits of the house. However one of the staff, John Johnson, rushed inside and called on the bushrangers to 'stand', but the bushrangers resisted, Johnson fired wounding a bushranger and, in the ensuing melee, Johnson was mortally shot. The bushrangers decamped with stolen goods and their identities unknown.

The Governor was informed and sent Major Nunn of the Mounted Police to investigate. Meanwhile Lt Sayers Commander of the Northern Division of the Mounted Police at Jerrys Plains had also left to investigate. After about a fortnight Sayers received information that a wounded man, a runaway convict named Giver (aged 21), was held in the Cassilis Lockup. Sayers went to Cassilis where Giver told him the names of the three other men in the incident at Terragong, namely Martin (aged 36), Mason (18) and Walker (24). All were convict shepherds working on outstations on properties in the district.

Each of the suspects blamed each other and their stories were inconsistent so that it took considerable investigation to compile the true sequence of events. During the course of this investigation a further murder, this time of another shepherd, Beverson, was uncovered as was the attempted murder of Giver on four different occasions in several different locations since the Terragong murder.

The complex story of the murder, the subsequent investigation, trial and convictions is narrated in "MURDER AT TERRAGONG - a true story of Convicts, Constables, Troopers and Settlers on the Gammon Plains" by Elvin Andrews and available at the Merriwa Visitors Centre.

## **BAERAMI OIL SHALE MINES**

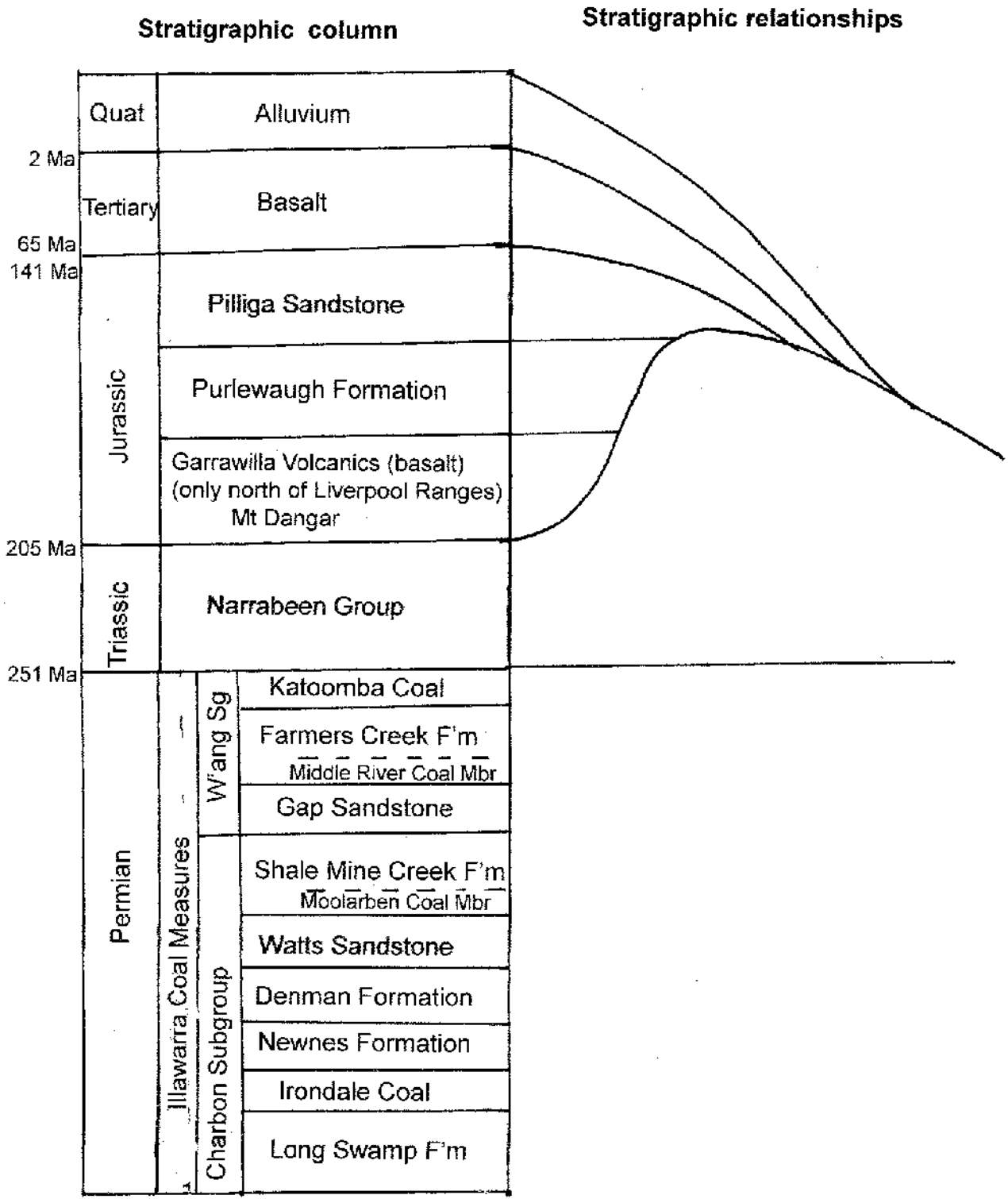
The Baerami oil shale deposit is the largest deposit in the state but is of comparatively low grade. The deposit extends westwards from the Baerami Creek valley through Rubens Gully beneath the ridge to the Widden Brook valley. There are two known horizons, the upper occurs about 30 m below the top of the Illawarra Coal Measures in the Wallerawang Subgroup and was worked at Widden Brook and Rubens Gully while the lower horizon occurs about 75m stratigraphically below in the Charbon Subgroup at the Irondale Coal horizon and was worked in the Putmans Adit, Baerami Creek.

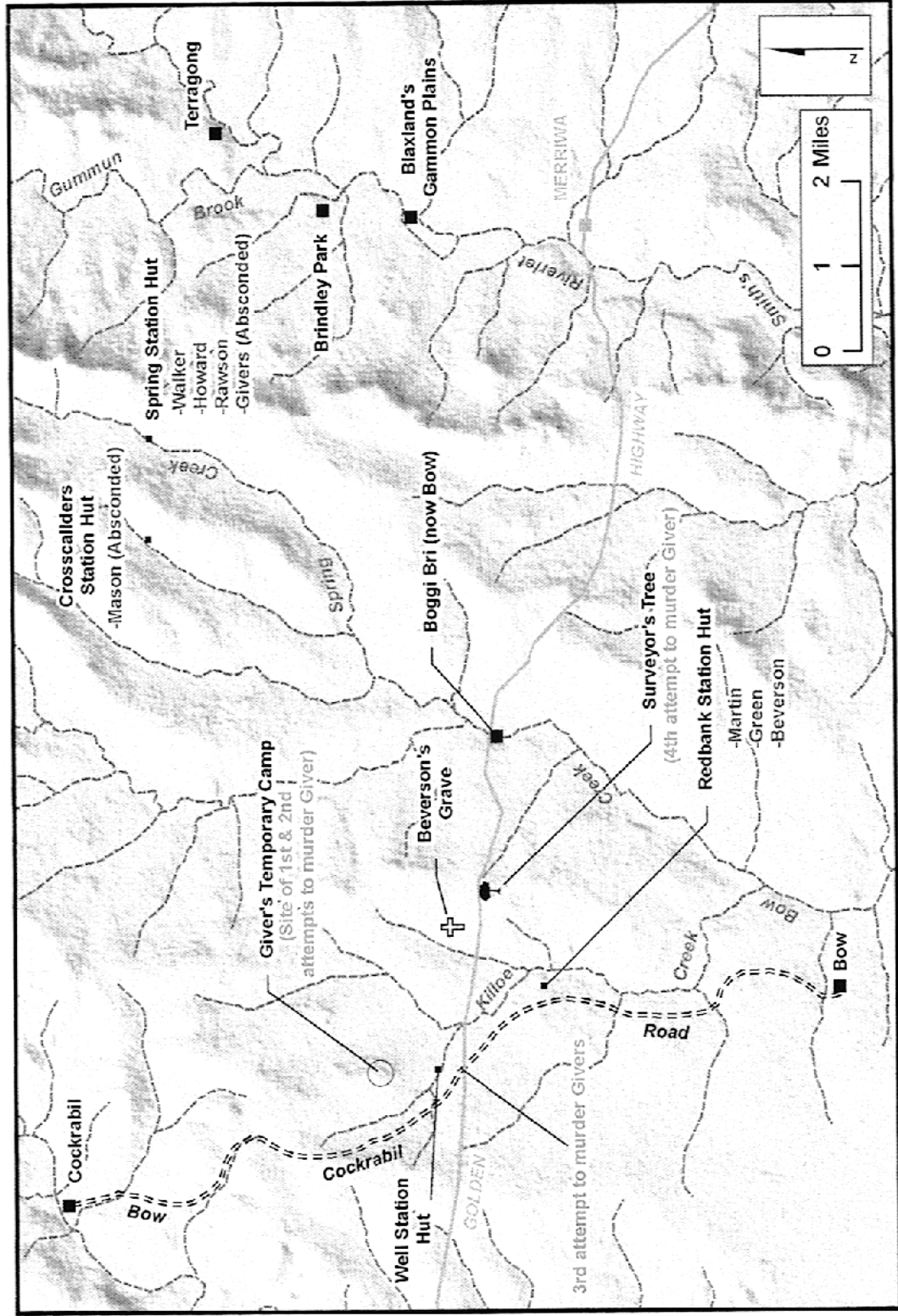
Oil shale is defined as a carbonaceous sediment which has a comparatively low carbon : hydrogen ratio and which produces mainly paraffinic oils on destructive distillation ("retorting"). High grade oil shale is called torbanite (derived from the town in Scotland where it was first mined). Torbanite in hand specimen is light (specific gravity of 1.0 to 1.5), a conchoidal fracture, is black to dark green in colour, has a silky sheen and greasy feel, when struck with a hammer feels rubbery and has a woody sound, it is often laminated and often can be ignited with a match and burns with a thick black oily smoke.

Torbanite forms from essentially algal remains with minor normal coal constituents. It forms in water too deep to support the usual coal producing vegetation. As the coal materials increase it grades from Torbanite to cannel coal and then to dull coal.

The Baerami oil shale deposit was discovered in the late 1890's but the first recorded mining took place in 1918. Intermittent prospecting continued until 1931 when government aid was given to two companies who amalgamated in 1932 and erected a treatment plant at Wollar but this was never used. Minor work was carried out until 1938 and by 1939 fourteen adits had been developed, all but one on the upper seam. During World War II, Shale Oil Products Ltd worked the deposit and produced a small amount of oil in Gotting retorts at Sandy Hollow. However the development of the higher grade resources at Glen Davis and then its ultimate demise also precluded further development at Baerami.

# STRATIGRAPHY of the SANDY HOLLOW – MERRIWA – BYLONG AREA





**MAP 2 – Cockrabil to Terragong**

(Map shows the locations mentioned in the evidence of Lieutenant Sayers and Thomas Giver)