Chapter 6 :

Portraits

THE BUILDER : *Ben Wade*

1883 - 1958

Ben Wade, ex-navvy, staunch Catholic and would-be Country Party member for the state seat of Barwon, was addressing a rowdy mob of fettlers who were working on the Boggabilla railway line. He was having a hard job convincing these traditional Labor supporters to vote for him. A heckler from the back of the crowd called out, "Do you believe in birth control, Mr Wade?". Ben thought for a while and then shouted back, "Well, I haven't given it much thought, but now I've met you, I think I do!"

Although the men in the Boggabilla camp did not vote for Mr Wade when polling day came in June 1932, he received such a large vote in the Inverell district that he was able to take his place in State Parliament, and continued as a member for the next eight years.

Certainly, Benjamin Martin Wade was not a typical Country Party member. His background could have put him securely in the Labor Party camp. He was born in 1883 at Tenterden, where his parents, William and Ann, had a farm. His father may also have worked as a blacksmith at Wandsworth, but in 1894 the family moved to a tin mine at Topper's Mountain. When young Ben was not attending school in Tingha, Stannifer or Inverell, he was experiencing rough bush life and learning mining from his father.

Ben must have done well at the Inverell District School, because he became a pupil teacher, but later turned to surveying at Narrabri with the Lands Department. Then, when the Moree-Inverell railway line was being built during 1900-01, he found employment as a navvy, at 8 shillings a day. Finally he settled on carpentry as a trade, and went to Sydney to do his training.

From 1905 Ben worked as a building contractor in Inverell and continued in this business for the rest of his life. Starting with a pushbike, carrying tools in a sugar bag, he progressed to a motor-bike, and then, when he had an apprentice, a motor-bike with a side-car. Despite suffering from diabetes from an early age, Ben always worked 16 hours a day, and had enough energy to cycle to jobs the other side of Warialda.

By 1915 Ben Wade was employing 17 men and 30 by 1923, by which time he had decided to follow the American pattern of "taking in all the related callings". He would start by selecting a good stand of cypress pine, and set up a sawmill nearby. The men camped on the job, and the timber was then carted by B.M. Wade vehicles into the factory in Byron Street, where some became weatherboards, beams and flooring boards, while other timber went to the joinery to be made into doors, windows and fittings. Eventually he had five timber mills from Yetman to the Gibraltar Range. Sawmills in the softwood forests of the Gibraltar Range produced a wide range of timber, such as tallowwood, cedar and hoop pine, some of which was shipped out through Grafton.

Bricks were manufactured first at Goonoowigall, from the old Nott brickpit, then in 1929 the works was moved to a new pit in Ring Street. Ben Wade's firm, under the long-standing management of Fred Buxton, also employed plumbers and tinsmiths, who built tanks, baths and windmills. In this way every aspect of the industry was under Wade's control. From 1911 the head office and factory was on the corner of Byron and Wood streets. The building included an office for architect Fred Madigan.

The firm of B.M. Wade dominated building in Inverell for over 40 years, being responsible for such major projects as the Hotel Inverell, the Sacred Heart presbytery, all the homes on the Clinton soldier settler scheme and the Arrawatta estate, Campbell Brothers, the Inverell Butter factory, F. and E. Thomas' cordial factory, the *Inverell Times* building, the nurses' quarters, the Macintyre Shire headquarters and the O'Connor bridge. An early job was the shifting of all the buildings and the gates of the Inverell showground from the old site to the new.

Undaunted by any project, Ben tried to get the Inverell Council to build a pipeline from the Gwydir River for a town water supply, and even went so far as to survey the route himself. On both occasions when this was suggested, however, it was regarded as too expensive and did not go ahead.

Outside Inverell, Wade made his name by building station homesteads for pastoralist families such as the Manchees of Biniguy, the Walkers of Coolatai and the Mackays of Gunyerwarildi. As well he successfully tendered for the Imperial Hotel in Moree, Whyte's boot factory and the primary school in Glen Innes, the Narrabri Hospital and the complete Moree Aboriginal Station.

These activities employed a large number of men. In 1935 Ben Wade was employing up to 200 men, most of whom had been working for him for 20 to 25 years. At this time, when there was still much unemployment, Ben Wade went into bridge-building, employing a gang of at least 25 men working in quick rotation. He was disappointed to miss out on the tender for the Inverell district hospital, but supplied all the materials anyway.

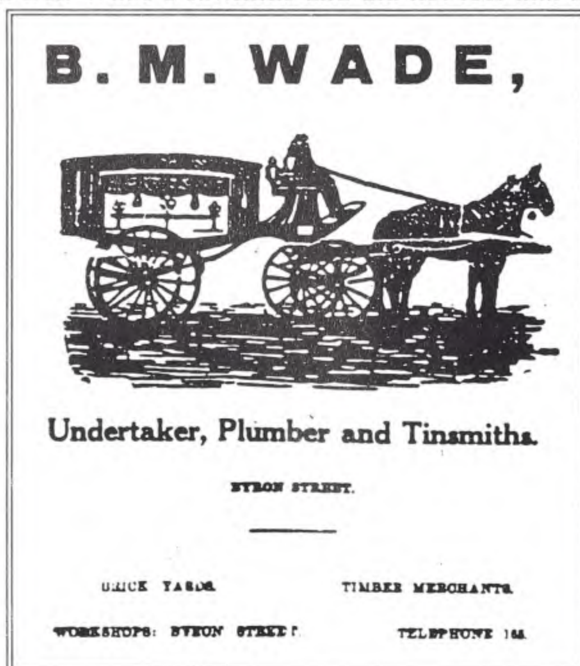
Building, however, was only one aspect of B.M. Wade's business interests. Undertaking was a companion business to carpentry, and this was carried out for many years until Wade sold out to the opposition, Cadman Thorley. With his friends

F. and E. Thomas he went into a rabbit freezing works which operated whenever prices were favourable. They also had tin mining interests, and Wade became a major shareholder in the Thomas cordial factory (later "Snowclad"). In the 1920s the firm started manufacturing icecream.

Like so many men who make money in business, Ben Wade always had an interest in the land, and in 1926 he bought a property at Yetman and another at Bedwell Downs on the Macintyre River. When the Depression came, the building industry was an early casualty. Wade was reluctant to disband his team and see his men face an uncertain future, so offered them land on his properties to share-farm for tobacco. Although the families who moved onto these farms had to start from scratch, building themselves bush huts and clearing the scrub and prickly pear, they ultimately prospered because the land was so suitable for tobacco production. (*see also* Chapter 2) Wade received one-third of the proceeds, which amounted to a very large sum in good seasons, and he became a vocal advocate for the industry, particularly when the federal government kept threatening to remove the protective tariffs. He ultimately became chairman of a royal commission which inquired extensively into all aspects of the industry and which eventually led to the tobacco market being put on a more secure footing.

Children who were brought up at Bedwell Downs remember "B.M." with affection. Although he was severe on apprentices who weren't working hard enough in the tobacco fields, and many of the sharefarmers were in trepidation when they heard him approaching, he was not above playing games with their children under the kitchen table.

Former employees and their families have mixed reactions when asked about Ben Wade. Many of them benefited from kindness and financial help in times of need. Others felt that he was tight-fisted. Some suffered considerable injury, and even death, in Ben Wade's sawmills and did not feel that they were adequately compensated. On the other hand, sawmilling was always known as a dangerous occupation, and men frequently did not use the safety apparatus that was available. His "gruff" manner and blunt remarks did not endear him to everyone. Certainly, he had no patience with slackers, but did not discriminate on grounds of religion or political affiliation when choosing workers. Many people, among them Jimmy Cooper, Clive McLachlan, Tommy Buxton and Fred Cook were happy to work for B.M. Wade for decades.



Long before this time, Ben Wade had become involved with the business of government. He was first elected to the Inverell Municipal Council in 1921, when he immediately berated the council for their haphazard method of road and street making, which depended, not on a plan, but on the complaints of ratepayers. He was also vocal about the inefficiency of having several small councils operating in the area, and was successful in getting a poll on amalgamation at the end of 1921, but little interest was shown and the proposal was soundly defeated. The idea was again rejected when Wade suggested it in 1931, but was ultimately accepted in part in 1940 and in full in 1979. In council, Ben Wade was never afraid to speak his mind, and would not be bound by customary views. He served four terms in local government, and was mayor for the last three years of his life. During 1958 he finally saw his dream of an Olympic pool for Inverell become reality.

As a young man Ben Wade, like everyone during World War I, became involved in the conscription controversy. He sided with Billy Hughes, and unlike many of his fellow Roman Catholic churchgoers was in favour of conscription. No doubt this made him many enemies, but as he was such a big employer, people kept their opinions to themselves. From the very beginning of the New State agitation in 1920 Ben was a vocal supporter at meetings, and perhaps this is why he became involved with the group which later became the Country Party. By 1930 he was ready to contest a state election, standing for the Barwon seat. He was a late starter and untried, but was endorsed by the Country Party and was well known because of his building work throughout the Inverell and Moree districts. However Moree was staunchly Labor, and despite considerable support in Inverell, B.M. Wade was defeated by 502 votes by Labor's W.J. Ratcliffe.

The Labor Party, both in federal and state politics, was deeply divided about how to respond to the massive problems presented by the Depression. Jack Lang, the N.S.W. state premier, was ultimately dismissed for his unconventional methods, and fresh elections were called in 1932. Locally, the Labor Party fielded two candidates, one pro-Lang and the other pro-Scullin. The Labor disarray played into Wade's hands, and he campaigned energetically. Although Moree and Warialda continued to vote Labor, the Ashford, Delungra and Inverell districts voted this time for Ben Wade, and he became part of the Stevens government in Sydney.

For the next eight years, Ben Wade lived a dual life. When parliament was sitting he would leave Inverell on Monday afternoon and drive through to Armidale or Uralla to catch the night train to Sydney to attend parliament. At the end of the week he would return to Glen Innes by train, catch the bus to Inverell and walk to the family home in Clive Street. He came home every week to see his family and run his business. On Sunday morning he would go down to the shop, where up to 30 men would be waiting to receive their instructions for the week. He spent Sunday afternoon with his wife Claire and his family of six children and a stepdaughter. (Tragically his first wife, Bertha, had died of a heart condition.)

Ben was so busy during these years that people remember him speaking to someone on the phone while giving instructions to his foreman and at the same time asking questions of a customer.

The *Inverell Times*, under the heading "Big Ben at Home!" commented on the incongruity of Ben Wade's lifestyle:

Many portly, austere and affluent members of the Legislative Assembly would have been horrified had they driven their shining limousines down Otho Street this morning and sighted the honorable member for Barwon on his knees in the sticky mud helping one of his labourers to bore an obstinate water connection tunnel.

As well B.M. had to attend many functions in the electorate, and often escorted government ministers on tours through the country areas. He usually drove them himself, saying that he greatly preferred country roads, however rough, declaring that the advantage with a tree or a stump was that if you did not run into it, it would not run into you. His love of fast driving did not help his relationship with Michael Bruxner, leader of the Country Party. In 1937, while Minister for Transport, Bruxner proposed a 30 miles per hour speed limit through built-up areas. The vote was not taken on party lines, so Wade, described by Bruxner's biographer as "the Country Party's odd man out" voted against it and continued to lead the attack on speed limits even after the bill became law.

Ben Wade as he is remembered in later life, in the early 1950s. Photographer Freeman's.

This was not by any means the only time Wade roused the wrath of those on both sides of parliament. Both the United Australia Party (with whom the Country Party was in coalition) and the Labor Party were angered by his "sweeping attacks on workers' compensation and on accountants, both of which he regarded as a drain on the community". Like many other people, he felt that during the Depression years wage awards should be scrapped so that more people could have jobs.

In 1933 an inquiry instituted by the Department of Labour and Industry into the tobacco industry was used by the Minister, Dunningham, to accuse Wade in parliament of exploiting his sharefarmers by having them live in places that were not fit for pigs. This was clearly unjust, because the report was critical of *other* landowners. Bitter words were exchanged, because Wade was trying to get the government to give an advance to all sharefarmers until their crops came in (as he always did for those on his own properties). The accusation of exploitation does not hold water anyway, as the families who lived at Bedwell Downs regard Ben Wade as little less than a hero for the way he provided face-saving and often quite profitable work for them during these hard years.

Predictably, Wade's outspokenness eventually got him into trouble. After the 1938 election he again made Michael Bruxner angry because he vocalised the thoughts of many members of his party - that the pact with the United Australia Party should not automatically be renewed because the Country Party members were not being taken into the government's confidence. Not for the first time, he antagonised the party "heavies" by leading members to cross the floor.

In the 1940 election, Wade was compelled to stand, not for Barwon, but for the Federal seat of Gwydir which included the Narrabri district where he was not well known, and he was defeated. In the by-election that followed, the Country Party lost his old seat of Barwon to Labor's S.R. Heferen.

Ben must have been disappointed with Sydney politics, because he once said "I went into parliament thinking that I could change the world, but when I got there I found that I was just one man". However, defeat in 1940 did not make him give up, and he fought several other election campaigns as an independent. He nearly got his revenge in 1950. A redistribution of electoral boundaries put the Inverell district into Michael Bruxner's Tenterfield electorate. The Oakwood

and Ashford Country party branches, unimpressed with the prospect of being represented by someone from the tablelands, asked Wade to stand for endorsement. This created a difficulty for the electoral council. They could have allowed both candidates to stand, but eventually decided not to endorse Wade, who was known in the party as "a man with a perpetual chip on his shoulder". Locally, however, Wade was still very popular, so he stood as an independent and polled 63% of the Inverell district's vote, although this was inadequate to unseat "Micky" Bruxner.

Many people who live in Inverell today can remember clearly where they were when they heard that Benjamin Wade had died. It was a Saturday afternoon in December 1958, and he died suddenly at the age of 75. While commenting that Ben Wade was "a controversial figure" and "exacting in his business dealings", the *Inverell Times* described his two outstanding attributes: "One was his willingness to give advice to the many who sought it; the other was his generosity." Whatever people thought of Ben Wade as a person, they knew that his death marked the end of an era. "He **was** Inverell", people say. John Murray reflects the feeling shared by many people: "Inverell started to die when Ben Wade died".

THE MINER : *James Symes*

researched by Jim Symes

Many miners have dreams of wealth and visions of how to get it. Few ever succeed. James Symes, however, decided to do something about the perennial problem of inadequate water on the Tingha field. The Moredun water scheme stood as a monument to his determination for almost 40 years, and even in ruin it is an impressive relic of the days when earthmoving was done by pick and shovel, horse and dray.

James was born in New Zealand in 1874. The family lived at Blue Spur, Otago, where 370km of water races wound around the hills to bring water to the gold miners. James' mother died when he was only six years old, giving birth to her twelfth child. Like most of his family, James left school at 14 to become a miner. However, he continued to teach himself and all his life retained a love for learning.

James went into mining with his brothers, but was also a commission agent, auctioneer and acted as town clerk for a time. He visited Victoria in 1897 and immediately became involved with gold dredging, which was then in its infancy, and with constructing water races. When he became enmeshed in a wrangle with the Water Board over water, he began to look out for another opportunity.

In 1912 an advertisement appeared in a Melbourne newspaper for a general manager for Tingha Consolidated Mines, so James promptly applied and got the job. He found himself responsible to the Melbourne company to operate and maintain six hydraulic sluicing plants.

At this time 32 dredges were operating in the Tingha area and lack of water was a frequent problem. Tin prices were very variable. The company needed more payable tin, so James took up some more leases which continued to produce tin until 1950.

In the middle of all this, World War I broke out. James decided to enlist. He was told that he would probably be made a captain, but his solicitor, who knew his client's determination, told him: "That wouldn't be a good idea, because within a week you would be making a revolution". As it turned out, James was rejected on medical grounds.

James had been told that the Tingha mining field was finished, but believed that it could last a further 50 years if there was an adequate water supply, so devised a scheme to bring water from Moredun Creek east of Tingha via water races. For two years he tried to get money in Australia, until his company authorised him to go to London to raise funds, so he left in November 1916. The London shareholders rejected the proposal, but Symes was able to contact other investors.

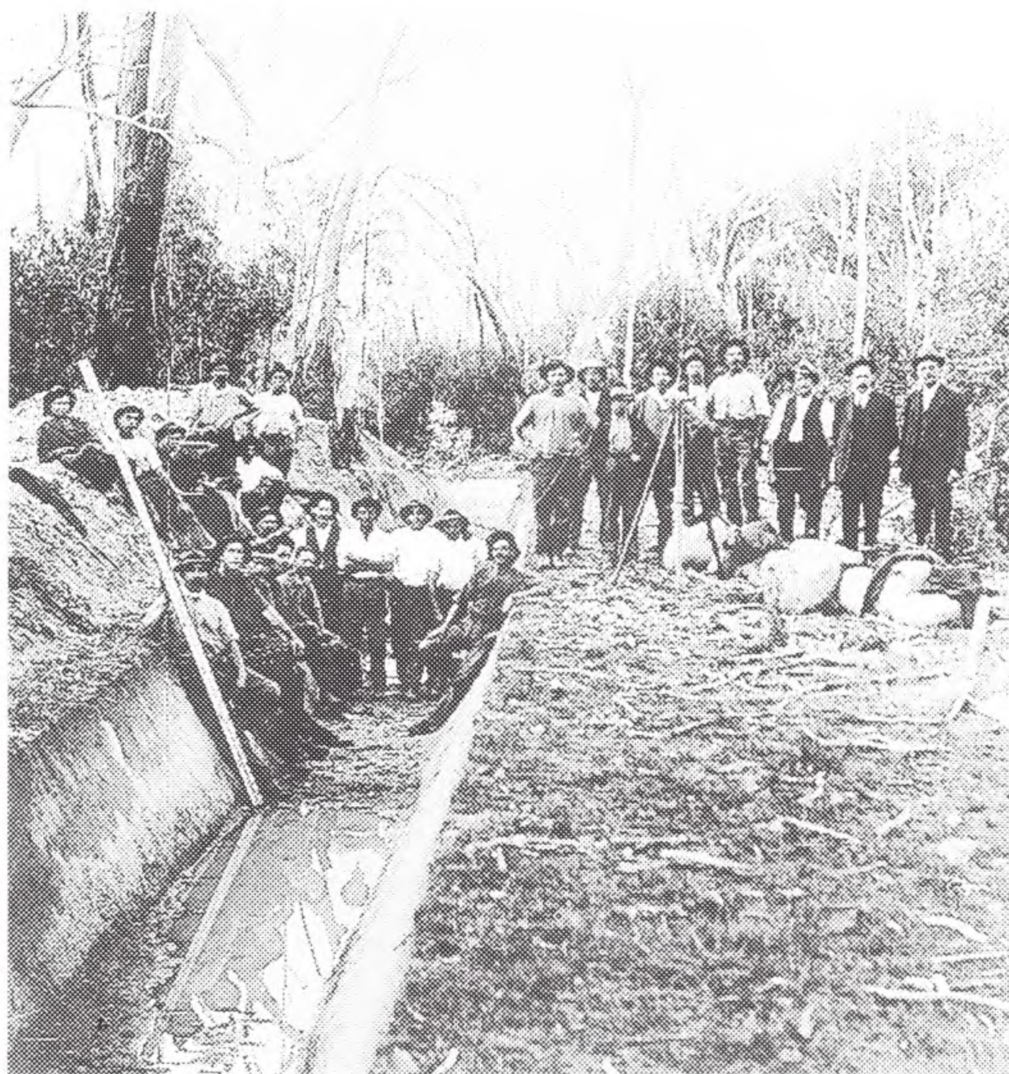
By the time James returned to Tingha the company was in financial difficulties, so instead of wages, he accepted their machinery and leases. Engineers sent from London reported favourably on his water scheme. Tin prices recovered remarkably in 1918, and James was able to get funding from London, combine it with a loan from the state government and start work on the races in January 1921. No doubt the serious 1919-20 drought had underlined the need for the scheme.

During all these years of waiting James was often criticised as a madman, and had a battle to keep the scheme alive. He encountered passive resistance, ridicule and "crooks and blackmailers" (who threatened to report him for not doing enough work on his leases unless they were promised shares).

James' basic idea was to construct dams on Moredun Creek and bring the water to Tingha by a series of races (open water channels), which together would be 27km long. Their depth would average 1.85m, with a tapering width of 2.15m at the top to 1.5m below. To do this required considerable engineering skill, because the water had to be brought by gravity from the Moredun valley across the watershed into the Cope's Creek valley with a gradual downwards slope. Moredun Creek has a much greater catchment than Cope's Creek. The estimated cost would be £50-70 000 (equal to the value of Tingha's entire tin production in 1915).

By April 1921 30-40 men were employed on the construction of the race with horses, drays and hand tools. Boulders were broken up by "firesetting" (burning timber on the granite), or if this failed explosives were placed in the cracks. At times it was necessary to use pipes to cross rocky sections.

The men at work on the race must have been a very independent group, because they disagreed with the



Workers on the Moredun water race during its construction. James Symes and the engineer are on the right. Photo Mining Museum

government proclaiming a public holiday for Anzac Day, and decided to go to work, donating their day's pay to the Soldiers' Fund. They had their own ceremony on King's Mountain.

During this time James must have been very busy supervising the construction work and the dredges as well. People remember him driving in a sulky, dressed in a suit, bowler hat and gold watch and chain with a bulldog beside him. At the age of 36 he married a local girl, Olive Glover, whose father had been overseer on "The Grove" station for many years. They had four children. The family lived in Sapphire Street, Tingha, where the houses had been moved in from the Howell mine after its closure. Next to the house James had a foundry.

James Symes was, however, far more than a mining manager and a family man. He was very civic-minded and from the time of his arrival in Tingha became involved in almost every aspect of its community life. He was asked to speak on just about every formal and ceremonial occasion. He became known as "the father of Tingha". When he purchased the private town in 1930, he literally owned Tingha.

James was a member of the Tingha Hospital Committee. Noticing how large the fuel bill was, he approached the local wood cutters and carters, (about 300 men worked to supply the dredges with fuel), and they readily agreed to provide the hospital with free wood as had been done for some years at Bendigo. The first hospital wood parade was held in March 1913, and the idea spread to many northern towns, where it continued as an institution for over 40 years. On another occasion he organised 200 men, some with horses and drays, to clean up the local cemetery.

Mr Symes also had wider interests. In March 1916 he convened a special meeting in the court house to form a branch of the Red Cross. From its beginning in 1920, he did everything he could to further the New State Movement. James was always interested in the law, so gladly accepted a position as Tingha's coroner in 1924. When the Tingha joss house was being demolished, it was James Symes (a supporter of all the churches) who bought its bell for the Church of England.

Developing an interest in journalism, he purchased the weekly newspaper, the

James Symes in his sulky beside his house in Tingha. Photo F. Symes

Tingha Advocate in 1915, and continued to run it as a public service, whether or not it made money, until forced to close in the middle of the Depression in 1932. At first he employed the previous owner George Gream as editor, then Frederick Windsor. A later editor was Pat Bollard, but during the Depression James wrote the editorials himself, and they, more than anything else, reveal his character and beliefs.

In October 1931 he wrote about "The Joy of Work": "Already there are signs that many of the workers are arousing themselves to the fact that they are missing something that is vitally important and we are optimistic enough to believe that they will recover the lost secret of true happiness - working to the best of one's ability".

On another occasion he was trying to stir up some community spirit: "Man's modern idol is said to be gold and everything is said to be measured by its cost. Yet we find that the really great things of life are priceless. The grandest motives that actuate us - Love, Sacrifice and Loyalty - can neither be bought nor sold."

Not surprisingly, James Symes was encouraged to enter local government, and spent two terms on the Guyra Shire Council. During 1916 he was approached to stand for state parliament. He did not, however, believe in party politics, and decided to stand as an independent, declaring: "Party politics, I feel, are destructive, not only of national welfare, but also of good feeling between man and man. Unity is strength, and parties are a weakness". In the end, he did not stand, busying himself with fund-raising for his water scheme.

While the first water race was being constructed, a new company was formed in London in 1924, the Tingha Hydraulic Tin Mines Ltd with a share capital of £200 000. It was now possible to proceed with building two dams on Moredun Creek, one to hold 600 million litres and the other 1750 million. Thomas Trembath was the contractor for the dams and 60-70 men were employed.

The basis of the dams was logs of wood about 30cm in diameter, placed pig sty fashion and spiked together. Rocks were packed in by hand, and a layer of clay 4m thick was placed behind the rock. Finally, earth fill was used. The labourers stayed in tents and stringybark huts during the week and returned home by horse and sulky or push bike on Friday afternoon.

Finally, in February 1926, the water was turned on. It took 24 hours to reach Tingha. By the time the water arrived the race was delivering 11 000 litres a minute, which could keep three plants operating with three nozzles each. Water pressure was achieved by storing 24 hours' worth of water then using it for eight hours. Of course the open races needed to be maintained regularly, and kept free of rabbit burrows, reeds and water

The remains of the larger Moredun dam are still impressive, despite being breached. Photographer K. Wiedemann.

poachers. Jim Symes (junior) recalls the days spent locating problems, often on foot. He had to cut out fallen trees after pulling out the debris around them while wading in waist deep water. Large rocks would be shot out with explosives, yabby burrows had to be dug out and sealed and water weed needed to be removed. The water was stopped for two weeks over Christmas so that the race could be thoroughly cleaned out.

When the scheme was virtually finished James with his wife and family left Tingha for Sydney. From there he made trips to Tingha to advise the company. The reason for the move may have been concern for his children. His daughter Olive had died in 1924 of enteritis, which was endemic in Tingha in those days. His son Jim had been in hospital at the same time. In the event, the family did not return to Tingha until 1929.

There is no question about the transformation that the abundant water made to Tingha's mining operations, but nothing could protect the industry from price falls which began in 1928, the slump continuing for four years. In 1929 the company decided to cease operations, so James bought their leases, machinery and assets. His son says that this has always been the pattern in mining: "The companies get formed and make a big splash, then go broke and the pieces are picked up by the James Symes's and Ernie Cox's of the world".

The Depression years were difficult for everyone, and James had to abandon his dream of extending the water race to provide water for fruit-growing in the Gilgai area.

Like many others, he let his plants out to tributers. (Tribute is a system by which miners form a syndicate, have the use of the mining plant and lease, and work the ground on their own account. In turn the owner maintains the plant, and in this case the water race, and receives a percentage of the profits.)

Tin prices recovered in 1933, and the water scheme was "an immense help to fossickers and dredges". In 1937 James formed a partnership with his son Jim called Tingha Hydraulic Tin Mines. This company met with success throughout the World War II period. Afterwards Jim extended the water race to a ridge overlooking Sutherland's Water west of Tingha and two plants started dredging there. The water was used for mining until 1957. The scheme was destroyed when the dams broke in November 1966.

James Symes died at the Tingha Hospital on August 16th, 1952. He was survived by his wife and sons - Jim, who had a successful career as a mining manager both in the Inverell district and elsewhere, Robert, a doctor, and Fred, who built up a large Inverell bus company.

Among the letters received by his family was one from Dr George Reid: "He was the leading citizen in Tingha for many years and did not always receive the credit and support he should have got. He was a man of very decided opinions and showed great courage in asserting them" David Drummond wrote: "Few places the size of Tingha have the good fortune to have a citizen of his talent and experience".

THE DOCTORS : *Cookson, Whish and Whish*

1927 - 1997

Douglas Cookson was assisting an older Inverell doctor in a long operation. An urgent message came for the doctor to see someone in Oliver Street, but he responded, "They'll have to get someone else - I can't get there for two hours".

"Nurse", his colleague intervened, "tell them he'll be there in 10 minutes".

"Impossible", said Dr Cookson.

"You see," the older doctor explained, "If you tell them you'll be there in 10 minutes they'll wait two hours. But if you tell them two hours they won't wait 10 minutes!"

Dr Cookson never forgot this advice, but found it difficult to put into practice. Always punctual, he hated to keep patients waiting. He was always available day and night, either in his surgery, at his house or in their homes. He represents the large number of dedicated family doctors who have served Inverell during the 20th century.

Doctors in the 1920s, 30s and 40s were hardly even able to go away on holidays. They tended to work singly, and if they went away for longer than a week, they would expect their practices to decline. A week's annual holiday was all that could be spared. The government provided no fee for service. Dr Cookson charged 10s 6d a call, and would come whether or not the person had the money, although some doctors refused to come unless this was the case. People usually paid when they could, or sometimes paid in kind (the families of the Lebanese hawkers often used to bring a tied up fowl for payment), but every year large amounts had to be written off as "bad debts".

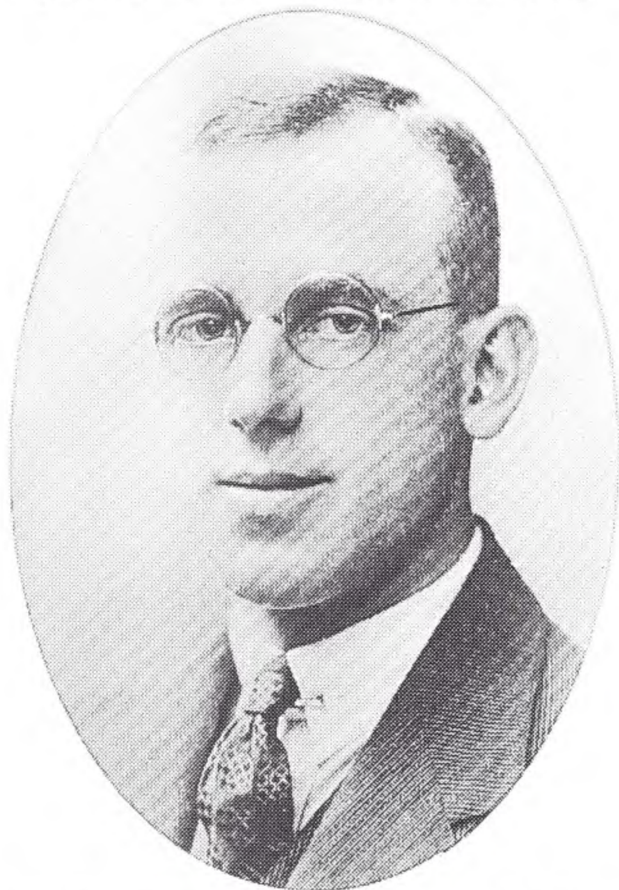
Being a doctor during the first three-quarters of the 20th century was a way of life, not just a job. Children brought up in medical homes very often took on their father's calling, despite the hard work and long hours. This connection often stretches through many generations, as it has in the Cookson-Whish family. The family's link with Inverell stretches from 1927 to the present. The Doctors Cookson and Whish have cared for four generations of many Inverell families.

Born in 1896, Douglas Cookson grew up in a doctor's family in Temora, southern NSW. His mother, Bertha, was a hospital matron before her marriage, and afterwards cared for patients in part of her own home. His father, Reginald, had come to Australia as a young man as a ship's doctor.

In order to attend high school Douglas had to board in Sydney while enrolled at Sydney Boys' High. Here he did so well that he was awarded a scholarship ("exhibition") to study medicine

at Sydney University. He spent the war years at university, being prevented from joining up by his poor eyesight.

By 1922 Dr Cookson was medical superintendent of the Royal North Shore Hospital, a position he kept for five years. During these years the hospital was expanding rapidly. However,



Dr Douglas Cookson, 1920s, photo P. Whish

when he applied for a coveted position as hospital honorary, Douglas was unsuccessful and decided to go to practise in the country for five years.

He knew that he would have to buy a practice and asked the medical association for a suitable vacancy. Inverell was recommended, so Dr Cookson purchased the long-established practice of Dr R.M. Kinross, who had worked in Inverell from 1892 to 1924, followed by Dr Wood. The surgery was in a long thin building beside the Inverell Hotel. Downstairs was the surgery and waiting room as well as a kitchen and dining room, and upstairs a flat. Inverell doctors tended to work in rooms in the main streets rather than from their own homes.

It was to this flat that Douglas brought his bride in mid 1927. Peggy also came from a medical family. Her mother had been the matron of Berrima Hospital and her father, Herbert Throsby, was a Macquarie Street specialist and an honorary doctor of the Royal North Shore Hospital. Brought up in a large house in North Sydney with two maids, Peggy found it hard to get used to life in faraway Inverell, living above the surgery. Byron Street outside was not sealed, and the dust used to get into everything. At the back the flat overlooked the hotel's fowl yard. She knew nobody and had to wait to be invited to afternoon tea parties to meet the society women with whom, as a doctor's wife, she was expected to mix. Soon she was befriended by Mrs Zelma Manning and began to feel happier in the town.

When the Depression came doctors had difficulties like everybody else, because people could not afford to pay but still needed treatment. Peggy became expert at turning the collars and cuffs of her husband's shirts and treating his suits so that they did not look shiny. Douglas always wore a suit to work and put a white coat over the top. They moved into rented houses on Ross Hill and finally in 1934 built a home. Although Dr Cookson would have been quite content to live in the flat, his family eventually comprised five daughters.

As the Cookson girls grew old enough to attend Ross Hill School, their father joined the P. and C. and became president for many years. During this period it was decided to form the pupils into houses, one of which was named Cookson.

The antiquated conditions at the Inverell Hospital bothered the hospital board, of whom Dr Cookson was a member, and he was active in the process of acquiring a new hospital. He was always very concerned about the working and living conditions

Peggy Throsby (later Cookson), 1920s. Photo P. Whish

of nurses, and later helped to get them a decent nurses' home.

In 1928, largely because of the efforts of David Drummond, a teachers' college was established at Armidale. However, during the Depression it was very short of students, so a group

of people decided to push for it to be used to start a university. They invited Douglas Cookson to become a member of the Provisional Council. Dr Cookson was presumably asked because, unlike many other members of this council, he had attended university. He was also the only one whose field was science, and most importantly, he was to represent the university on the western side of New England. Everyone knew that it would require an immense amount of effort and fund-raising to get the authorities in Sydney to agree to establishing Australia's first unversity outside a capital city.

Over the years from 1934 when he was part of a deputation which spoke to the minister, Douglas Cookson travelled to Armidale for many meetings. He and his family became particular friends with Dr Edgar Booth. They were already friends with Mrs T.R. Forster whose husband eventually purchased "Booloominbah" from the White Estate to form the nucleus of the university.

Dr Cookson was an inaugural member of the Advisory Council of the New England University Council, which met in November 1938. He was also a member of the first Council and his involvement continued until the university became autonomous in 1955.

The connection with higher education did not, however, go to Douglas' head. In private he and his family deplored those people from New England who tended to look down on Inverell and behaved in a "stiff and starched" way. At home they called them Armadillos from Barmidale!

When World War II came Douglas Cookson again thought of joining the army. Arthur Varley was getting together men from Inverell, and wanted Cookson as medical officer, but the officials in Sydney decided to appoint a single man, so Cookson was spared four years as a Japanese prisoner. He joined up anyway, the only Inverell doctor who did, but never left Australia because he fell ill with a lung abscess and almost died. At the time he was in the 1st Field Ambulance, in camp at Rutherford. Although his father-in-law spent some time looking after his practice, by the time he was well and got back to work in Inverell all the patients had gone elsewhere, which was a great disappointment.

However, the practice was built up again and Dr Cookson became known for his good clinical judgment and his friendly manner. When he referred people to Sydney it was frequently to friends and relatives.

What was to be a short stay in Inverell ended up as the rest of Douglas Cookson's life. When he became older he was appointed Government Medical Officer from 1960 to 1973. This involved not only routine examinations, but also post mortems and attendances in court. This intrigued Douglas, who read widely in forensic medicine. He began to spend "holidays" at the morgue in Sydney attending courses.

Dr Cookson became concerned about the isolation of country doctors, so was instrumental in establishing the Northern Districts Medical Association and the Federation of Country Local Associations. He was a foundation member and later fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

Dr Cookson continued to work as a doctor until a fortnight before his death in 1973, at the age of 76. He had never considered retirement, or even a reduction in his work load.

In a tribute at Inverell Rotary in 1968 George Chalmers said of Douglas Cookson: "His word is his bond and his integrity towards the hospital is beyond question ... He is the family-doctor type with a psychological style that certain patients swear by." To his daughter he was a paradox - "a man who was not shockable but very offendable, one who closed doors to people and organisations as quickly as he generously opened them to others. He could be the amusing, laughing, generous centre of our world and without warning become thoughtful, distant and even grumpy".

Douglas Cookson's interest in education led him to encourage his five daughters to seek tertiary training. He was a great supporter of education for girls at a time when many others were not. His second daughter Philippa had been interested in medicine since childhood, when she shared a bedroom with many of her father's medical books. As a teenager she often helped out in the surgery when the receptionist Miss Edith Farrand (who worked for Dr Cookson for 39 years) was on holiday. She went to school at the New England Girls School in Armidale, which she found thoroughly enjoyable, but left having done no Physics and with "appalling" Maths, so first year medicine at Sydney University was a struggle.

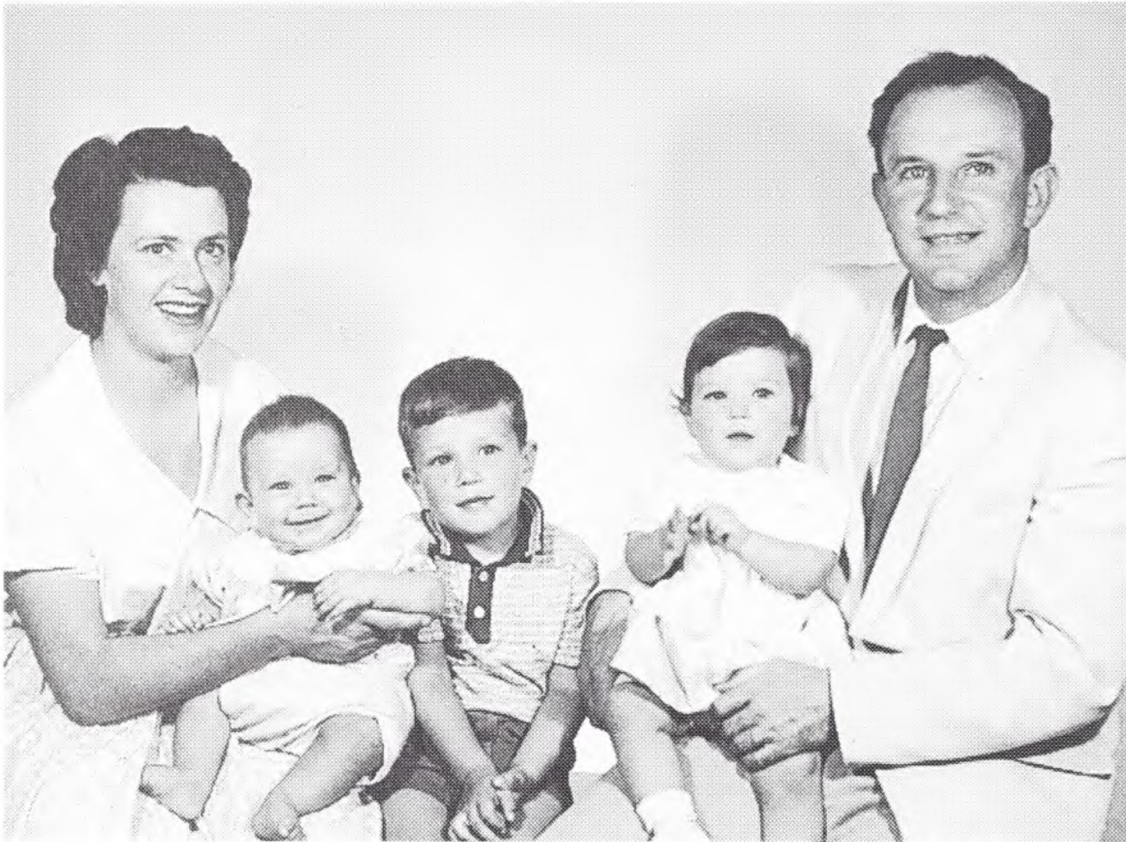
By this time (1950) 50 women were doing the medical course in Philippa's year, but there were still barriers. When she became a resident at Royal Prince Alfred all the women (but not the men) were asked to sign a form to say that they would not marry during their residency. Philippa refused to sign (and got away with it!). She was already engaged to Dr Keith Whish and the wedding date had been set.

One of Philippa's sisters, Elizabeth, also chose a medical career as a nurse and married Dr John Beveridge.

Keith had also been born into a doctor's family, his father being Dr George Whish of Young. Keith's great uncle had also been a doctor, and on his grandmother's side he was descended from a surgeon-general of the East India Company.

After their marriage Keith and Philippa went for a trip to England, intending to settle into practice with Keith's father when they returned. However a family friend and mentor suggested that because Keith was full of ideas and changes it might not be a good idea to work with his father, because he would always be "Dr Whish's little boy". Dr Cookson suggested that they come to Inverell, so in 1958 Keith went into practice with both Dr Cookson and Dr Charles Holmes.

For eight years he travelled between their two surgeries until he suggested that a new medical centre be built. This was a



Philippa and Keith Whish with Charles, David and Alice 1961. Photo P. Whish.

strange idea to Dr Cookson, but after they settled in during 1966 he became very proud of the new set-up.

Once in Inverell, Keith soon became concerned about the enormous health problems of the Aboriginal people, still living in shanties at Sheep Station Gully. He encouraged them to come to the surgery, but when they were too shy, used a room at home for consultations. Realising that many of the children had not been immunised, he persuaded Mrs Celia Connors to bring some in for their needles. He was amazed to find a queue of 15 outside the surgery!

However, it was obvious that something had to be done about the living conditions. Keith decided to do whatever was necessary to obtain a house in town for at least one family. (*see* Chapter 8). Keith's interest in the Aborigines made him enemies, however, and he continued to experience hostility when he tried to get more Aboriginal people houses in Inverell. He was concerned because the Aboriginal children did not make the transition to high school. They tended to stay on at Goonoowigall Public until old enough to leave. The parents were happy with this, but Keith felt that it was important that they go to high school and that this could not be achieved until the small school was closed, which he worked towards. Afterwards he did all he could to get the Aboriginal parents to enrol their children at high school.

Keith (and Philippa too, although at this stage she was busy with four children) could see that there was little point in dealing with people's physical problems if you did nothing about the conditions of life that were causing the problems.

Soon he noticed another disadvantaged, and largely forgotten group in the community, the old people. Many of them lived alone in boarding houses and hotel rooms, and had no place where they could meet.

Keith wrote to the Council about this and Mayor Don Miles called a public meeting in April 1962, which resulted in the Inverell Senior Citizens' Welfare Association, with Dr Whish as President. The Association speedily got a clubhouse going, where meals were served at lunchtime. In 1964 this became a Meals on Wheels service for the housebound. By 1966 the club had 100 members.

The overgrown banks of the Macintyre River was another community problem which Keith Whish and others recognised, and in 1970 they decided to do something to improve them. The Inverell Parklands Development Committee was inaugurated, thousands of native trees were planted and the council was encouraged to mow these areas. Many of the trees died in dry seasons, but the council has continued to develop and care for the riverbanks, so what was an eyesore in the 70s is now a beauty feature.

At the same period, Philippa developed an interest in local history and became prominent in the Inverell Historical Society and the National Trust for many years.

During the sixties Philippa Whish saw patients on a part-time basis, and many women appreciated having a woman doctor with whom to relate. She was the first woman to be in an Inverell medical practice. Then in 1974 a Community Health Centre was established in Campbell Street, and Philippa became its first director in 1975. Here at last was an opportunity to work in preventative medicine. However, she experienced a good deal of hostility from the Inverell medical fraternity when she decided to take the job. She was branded as "red" for moving into community medicine, and was physically threatened.

Despite this, Philippa was now in a position to do many positive things. She became interested in the housing of the Tingha Aborigines, and worked to get them into homes in town. She became concerned about Aboriginal mortality rates when she was doing a coronary prevention program and publicised the situation to a shocked Inverell. Studies were

made into Aboriginal pregnancies and nutritional anaemia in Aboriginal children. She conducted a very detailed survey on the ageing and their needs. Most of the recommendations were eventually put in place, but many services (such as having a community health podiatrist) have since been withdrawn.

A particular concern was disabled children, many of whom were not getting help soon enough. Philippa arranged for her brother-in-law, an orthopaedic specialist, to come to Inverell with a team on a regular basis. She also became aware of how lonely and difficult life was for the mothers of these children, and introduced both an early intervention program and respite care. For those needing help at the other end of life, Philippa and the local Community Health team were able to initiate a Rehabilitation Unit at the District Hospital.

In order to alleviate the isolation and loneliness experienced by many young mothers, Philippa and the Community Health Centre had the idea of establishing a neighbourhood centre where occasional and emergency child care would be offered and where mothers could meet. A house was equipped in Rivers Street and opened in 1981. Eventually this centre was replaced by the purpose-built Catherine Campbell Centre for day care.

In order to increase the awareness of community services especially amongst the aged and children, Philippa stood for and was elected to the Inverell Shire Council in 1983. By 1986 she was involved in Community Health, Aboriginal Health and Rehabilitation, and felt that it was necessary to limit her range of interests. Ultimately she gave up her position in Community Health in 1989 and in 1991 retired completely.

Meanwhile, Keith's interests had taken a different turn. In 1968, impressed with its potential for vine-growing, he purchased a block of red soil near Gilgai and decided to establish a vineyard there. In the process he discovered that Inverell had been the centre of a thriving wine industry until the last vineyard (Bukkulla) closed during the second world war. The Gilgai Red vineyard has achieved success as both a tourist venture and a wine producer. Interestingly, one of Keith and Philippa's sons, Charles, became an expert wine-maker, while another, David, became a doctor (and, true to family form, married one). David and Merrilee practised in Inverell for five years.

In recent years Keith has reduced his work load, but still sees patients and enjoys caring for the elderly at McLean. His particular interest is in the computerisation of medical records.

During the almost 40 years since they began work in Inverell Keith and Philippa have seen tremendous changes in public health. Tonsils and appendices are no longer taken out frequently, as they were until the 1960s. Doctors are better at diagnosing complaints. No case of tetanus has appeared since the 50s. Peptic ulcer surgery, once so common, is now unheard-of. Gastro-enteritis is far less prevalent.

Until the 60s doctors used to serve on the hospital board, and spent many hours struggling with the problems of maintaining standards, raising funds and improving buildings in days when much of the hospital's income came from the Inverell community. Now a doctors' representative attends board meetings but cannot vote, a slight that some feel keenly.

Community attitudes to doctors have changed too. In 1942, the busiest and most difficult year of World War II, a farmer's wife died in the Inverell Hospital because she was given the wrong injection. Although both the sister on duty and Dr Cookson could have had their careers ruined by such an error, the husband decided not to sue, and Coroner James Symes, while taking the case very seriously, also took into account the tremendous strain that all the medical staff had been under.

Regardless of how busy doctors are in country towns at the end of the 20th century, such a slip would not be excused. Indeed, the fear of litigation is keeping doctors away from general practice in the country and creating greater burdens for those who remain.

The doctors of today, while still giving sacrificial service, regret that they are unable to spend as much time giving advice and guidance to their patients as they would like to. "We work in a sheltered workshop", says Philippa Whish.

Something else has changed too. Many professional people, such as doctors, teachers and solicitors, no longer have the concept of "civic duty" that motivated their predecessors in voluntary work and community leadership.

Fewer doctors now work in Inverell, increasing the workload for those who remain. The number of general practitioners has dropped from 17 to 10 in 30 years, while the population has remained the same, and grown older. Attracting younger colleagues is a problem for Inverell's doctors. Young doctors, most of whom come from the city, are unwilling to practise in the country, far from professional development, jobs for their spouses and their customary lifestyle. It remains to be seen whether government intervention will solve this problem before our doctors retire.

THE IMMIGRANTS: *Harry And Artemis Fardouly*

from Kythera to Tingha to Inverell

Modern customers eating their ice-cream sundaes on little glass dishes in Byron Street's Regent cafe are reliving the experiences of their grandparents in a cafe which has changed little in 60 years. Behind the counter are Con and Dorothy Fardouly whose father Harry redecorated his shop, installing decorative lighting and up-to-date furnishings in 1935.

Harry Fardouly had a flair for business, and during the 1920s he correctly worked out that Byron Street was going to take over from Otho Street in importance. He therefore left the other Greek cafe owners in Otho Street and branched out on his own.

Harry's father, Constantine Fardoulis, came to Australia in 1901. The island of Kythera in Greece, where he was born, was far too small and barren for all the young people reared there, so generations of them migrated. Constantine had a wife and four children, but he had to leave them behind, sending money for their support, until he could afford their fares.

After spending periods in Gunnedah, Manilla and Bingara, Constantine discovered Tingha, which was in its boom years. Here was adequate scope for someone prepared to work hard in a refreshment business, which was what he established in Ruby Street in 1907 (in the same location as the present cafe).

By 1908 he brought one son to Australia, with the rest following in 1912 and his wife and daughters soon afterwards. The separation had been a long one. As it turned out, Constantine did not spend the rest of his life in Australia. Leaving his children here, he and his wife went back to Greece in 1914. Returning to his first love of life at sea, he began a business ferrying vegetables from the islands to Athens. However, when the ship was wrecked he returned to Australia from 1919 to 1921. In that year he sold his shop in Tingha and returned to Greece where he remained until his death.

Meanwhile Constantine's youngest son Harry (Haralambos), who was always known as Fardouly, came to Inverell where the established firm of S. Peters and Co. had a thriving business in Otho Street. Members of the Peters family had been living in Inverell since at least 1914, and were selling confectionery (made on the premises), fruit and wine, and restaurant meals as well. Theo and Peter Psaros (who came from Kythera in 1912) were also associated with this business, with several other Greek men, who were given work in the restaurant while they learnt the language and established themselves in Australia. Soon the new refreshment, icecream, was being made in the big churn behind the shop.

Some time during the 1920s, Harry decided to open his own "Alhambra cafe" in Byron Street in part of the building occupied by Burge Bros' big store. As well he bought a building further down the street which housed Fowler and Burgess' auction mart for many years. He was also able to buy half of Phoenix Chambers in Otho Street and the shop next to the Australian Hotel. Harry was doing well enough to be married, and he soon found a bride from the Lismore Greek community, Artemis Crithary, who had not long emigrated from the island of Kythera.

Regent Cafe 1937, with Tony Papathomas (cook), Harry Fardouly and Vida Garrett (mother's help) with children Dorothy, Con and Helen.

Harry and Artemis were married in a Greek Orthodox ceremony in 1929 and set up home in Otho Street next to the old school ground. This provided an extended yard for their family as they arrived one by one - four girls and a boy, who was named, according to custom, after his grandfather. Harry's responsibilities were substantial in Australia, but he also helped to support Australian relatives and sent money back to Greece on a regular basis. One relation he introduced to Inverell was brother-in-law Jack Fatseas. Jack operated the shop opposite Inverell High School for many years.

By 1942 the Inverell Greek community numbered 35-40, and they strove to keep alive their religion and customs. They were chiefly involved in the hospitality industry, running five cafes between them - the Australia, Monterey (both opened in 1936), Regent, Empire and Black and Green. Christenings were particular causes for celebration, with several children being consecrated at once by a Greek Orthodox priest brought to Inverell specially for the occasion.

Like many of the women, Mrs Fardouly could only speak Greek at this time, so her children learnt Greek at home and English at school. They were always aware that they were different, and would be made fun of if they spoke their own language.

Even though they were born in Australia, Con and Dorothy still feel themselves to be Greek - "I think in Greek", says Con. "People are more accepting of Greeks now", remarks Dorothy.

Harry Fardouly was never able to return to Greece - even for a visit. One planned trip was interrupted by the war, and afterwards he became very sick and died in 1956 after years of illness.

The cafe was kept running by his wife and their children after school. Yet Harry and Artemis were determined that the children should receive a good education, and all completed the Leaving Certificate. Artemis held the family and business together very efficiently. She lived on in Inverell until her death in 1989.

THE RADIO STATION : *2NZ*

"Chews into your heart"

2NZ announcer in the 50s and 60s, Terry Harkins, found a soft spot in the hearts of Inverell people. One reason was his sense of humour. When playing the popular "I'll walk beside you" he used to say "Just like the Inverell-Moree train" (referring to how slow it was!) Apparently the NSW Railway authorities made their disapproval known. So great was Terry's following that when Terry was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, the public donated over $8000 for him and his family.

Local radio announcers became celebrities right from the start, when commercial radio, 2LV, began in Inverell with a 100 watt transmitter on 30 March, 1936. The new station had as manager and chief announcer Stuart Beattie, who had made a career in Sydney radio after losing a leg in World War I. He also had a trained baritone voice, and used it to entertain radio audiences.

The company behind the venture was Northern Broadcasters, an offshoot of Northern Newspapers, which owned the newspapers of Inverell, Glen Innes and Armidale. Clearly, they saw radio as a business opportunity rather than as a competitor. At the opening, people spoke of how wonderfully radio would break down the isolation of country people.

Three of the owners were closely associated with Inverell. H.T. Knapton was editor of the *Inverell Times*, E.C. Sommerlad had worked in Inverell as a young journalist and was now a member of parliament and D.H. Drummond had gone into parliament while a farmer near Inverell. The company was owned and controlled by country interests.

In the earliest years broadcasting was not continuous. Each session began with chimes, which were sounded manually in the studio. The morning session went from 7-9am, "luncheon" from 12-2pm and the evening programme lasted from 6-10pm. News was heard only at 9.30pm. Much of the programme consisted of record-playing, but at night serials and plays were broadcast as well as live local music.

At the beginning of 1937 the radio station underwent a change. A merger occurred between the company that had been granted a licence for 2NZ at Narrabri and Station 2LV. A bigger transmitter would be erected and the station would be known as 2NZ, with a target audience of Northern New South Wales. The operating company still included Knapton, Sommerlad and Drummond.

A new transmitter, which operated on 1000 watts was built at Little Plain. For a studio, the station moved into Jack's new building in Otho Street, which was then known as Broadcasting House. The operating frequency was altered to 1170 kilocycles. From the transmitter at 770 metres the station could reach a wide area of northern NSW and southern Queensland.

From 1938, when the power was increased to 2000 watts, 2NZ joined 2GZ (Central New South Wales, owned by the same company) as the most powerful commercial broadcaster in the state. Sydney radio stations operated with a power of 750-1000 watts.

2NZ's broadcasts began on 28th January, 1937. The scale of advertising rates shows that the peak listening time was from 7-10pm. Apparently fewer people were listening at tea time because it was much cheaper to advertise then, and cheaper still during the daytime hours. Without any method of tape recording, the advertising was done "live" as were many other programmes. Outside broadcasts were made on such occasions as the Anzac Service, balls and the CWA conference. Special events, such as the Melbourne Cup, were relayed through other stations, as was the BBC news.

One of 2NZ's musicians was Eric Beattie, who later used his musical talents while in captivity during World War II, organising the Changi concert party that did so much to cheer up other prisoners of war.

By mid 1937 the 2NZ Dramatic Players were already performing plays on Sunday nights. Speaking about one of these sessions, the manager John Murray said that he had never heard a Sydney programme of a higher standard.

From the beginning, Radio 2NZ became involved in charity promotions. A Radio Movie Ball was held in 1938 at the town hall, with proceeds to the ambulance, and these were also held after the war.

Clubs were also associated with the radio station from the early years. The Country Service Club, which had a section for women and one for children was an instant success. Mrs Peggy Cookson remembers:

It was organised by Nancy Lynn the women's radio announcer, an awfully nice woman. We used to go to the radio station ... All the women had code names like Winnie the Pooh and Gadfly, and used to chat on air. My daughter Philippa's name was Chatterbox. The names were used because this would make it easier for the club to cross class barriers. Nancy Lynn was very keen on that. The club existed for purely social reasons, so that women could express their opinions.

When it was time to celebrate 2NZ's fifth birthday in 1941, 2000 people came to the Inverell showground to participate in a programme of community singing, a talent quest (one competition was for the best singer of the Aeroplane Jelly song), a display by the members of the 2NZ Model Aeroplane Club, footracing, novelties and horse events. A large cake decorated in the colours of the Country Service Club was cut. A concert and presentation of cheques to Inverell charities was held in the town hall at night. The whole day was free, and drinks and sweets for the children were provided. Mayor Coggan said that now 2NZ was one of the largest stations in Australia, and that letters were being received from great distances away. Thirteen people were employed, and in the last 12 months £1000 had been raised for charity. The station was the only one in the north to participate in all the Macquarie

Network relays. It was also the company's policy to showcase Inverell and district.

The women who ran these clubs and conducted the women's sessions became enormously popular. They worked very hard on and off the air, and gave much of their own time to organise functions. These were particularly important during the war, in order to raise funds for war charities and keep up morale. Other well-known women's announcers were Joyce Trickett (who kept her connection with Inverell in later years as an eisteddfod judge) and Barbara Vernon.

A big technical improvement came in 1951, when a new transmitter was opened at Long Plain. Under long-standing technician Os Bartle, the signal could be as clearly and strongly heard in North Queensland as it could be in Inverell.

In 1953 2NZ began to broadcast the 2UE National News from Sydney, and a year later Terry Harkins joined the staff. He rapidly became 2NZ's favourite announcer. For over 17 years he was the breakfast compere, and his audience came from as far as New Zealand and all the eastern Australian states.

Terry's popularity was attributed to his cheerful voice and

Cutting the cake at 2NZ's birthday party in 1941. Members of the Country Service Club are participating (the older woman recruited the most members for the club). Also shown - Brownie Philippa Cookson (Whish) announcer Joyce Trickett, manager Jack Twyford (in the suit) and announcer Ron Scott. Photo 2NZ, Photographer Parry's studio.

The 2NZ Country Service Club and the Junior Service Club eventually had 8000 members, ranging from Bundaberg to Tamworth and most capital cities. (*see* Chapter 3)

During the 50s the focus changed from service clubs to dramatic clubs, with 2NZ sponsoring both a junior and an adult club. They performed both radio plays and plays in the Town Hall. (*see* Chapter 4). Both the 2NZ Girls Choir and the Boys Choir performed on air and as well competed in the eisteddfod.

disposition, which caused him to be nicknamed "Happy Hark". He was also famous for his charity stunts. These included competing in elephant races, entering a lions' cage during a performance and broadcasting from the top of a pole. His April Fools' Day tricks were legendary. On one occasion, complete with sound effects, he solemnly informed his audience that a mob of sheep had escaped and were in Otho Street. Many helpful locals jumped on their horses, brought their dogs and

came searching for the sheep while Terry watched from the safety of the upstairs window of the studio. Some years later, people fell for a similar gag when they were told that black swans had taken up residence on the Inverell swimming pool and many came to see the rare event.

Many activities took place "live" in the studio. The Children's Session which continued into the 60s went live to air after school, with games, quizzes and stunts of various kinds. Greg Kachel, who is the present manager of the station, remembers winning a competition and being presented with a packet of biscuits and a tin of Sunshine powdered milk. Records (usually out of date!) were also given away. The show was so popular that children had to put their names on a list months in advance.

Religion was always an important part of programming. Every week (extending into the 60s) 2NZ used to broadcast the morning service at one local church. As well, the ministers took turns to broadcast a short "epilogue" before the station closed for the night.

During the early 60s the radio station had 24 employees, including six announcers. Under the watchful eye of Jack Twyford (manager 1940-67), who insisted on high standards of speech and complete confidentiality, they would be trained, then encouraged to move on to further their careers.

The outside broadcast unit would cover events like the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (playing in the town hall), football matches, items of local news, opinions from shoppers, school sports and boxing bouts.

Other speakers and artists were taped indoors, such as Arthur and Jewel Blanch, who launched their careers with the recording of "I want to ride on Jumbo" at 2NZ.

With the coming of television in the sixties and the removal of the radio station to its own building in Byron Street in 1971, most of the "live" activities involving large numbers of the public disappeared, except the Battle of the Sounds (a band competition) which was held in the town hall.

However, community involvement continued, in areas where radio could make a unique contribution because of its immediacy and its on-the-spot location. This happened in particular during the floods of 1955, when 2NZ made a wonderful contribution to helping the people of all the flooded towns in the North West. During the 1991 flood and clean-up 2NZ played a vital role, even though its own building was flooded.

From the 60s radio appeals proliferated, starting with an appeal for the air ambulance in 1969. A spectacular success was the radiothon to provide money for the Inverell Sports Council which raised $11 307. In 1980 an appeal for the Homes for the Aged resulted in $14 443 being donated by the ever-generous Inverell public. The peak of radio appeals came in 1993, when, together with the service clubs, 2NZ was able to raise over $32 000 for hospital equipment.

The advertising rates during 1971 indicate a big shift in the habits of 2NZ's listeners. Since the coming of television, the afternoon from 2-5pm and the evening from 7pm had waned in importance, and advertising was then at its cheapest. The most popular time was from 5.30am to 9am of the working week.

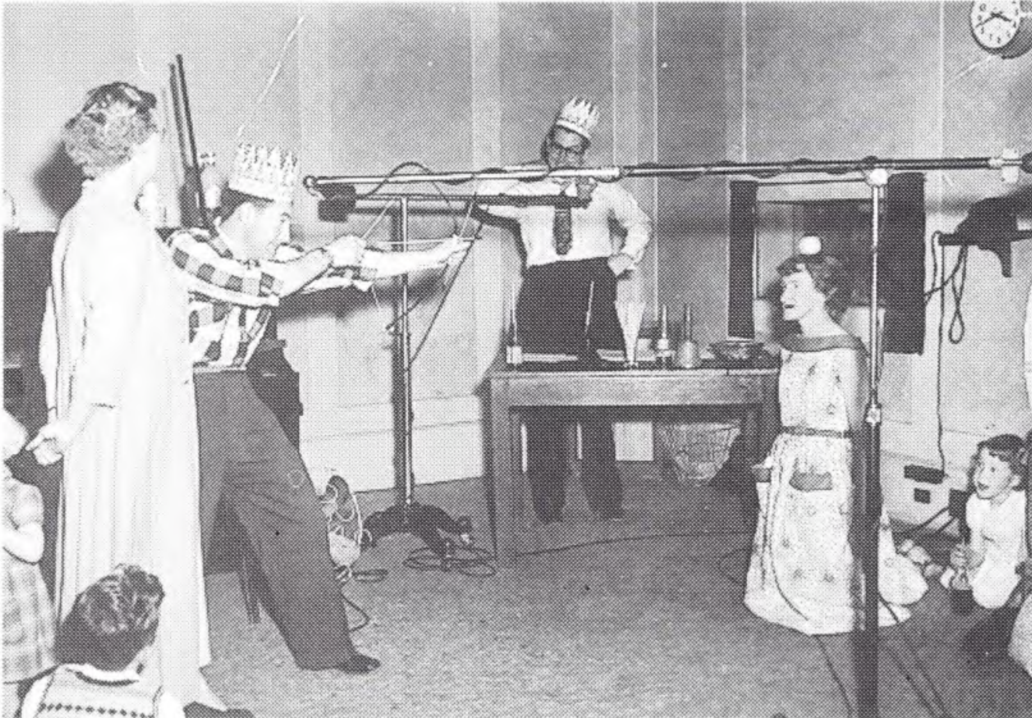
A very long running programme which began in 1968 (and is still going) is Community Diary, when the radio station gives free publicity to voluntary organisations to promote their activities. This was a flow on from the older Village Well programme which featured personals, gossip and coming events. The CWA have been able to run their own segment of news for six decades.

Community initiatives of the 70s were the Tower to Town Fun Run and a breakfast held during festival week, at the first of which 900 people were served. The radio station also sponsored racing and trotting meetings.

In recent years radio 2NZ has received national recognition on several occasions. Many times it has won Best Sports Event Coverage at the Rawards, the commercial radio awards night, for the Grafton to Inverell cycle race. In 1991 the coverage of the February flood scored a Best News Event for country radio and in the same year Greg Kachel won Best Sports Commentator in a country station. Other individuals have won awards in recent years, but such people tend to move on to bigger centres.

Radio 2NZ has had only four managers during six decades, and under the leadership of Greg Kachel, 2NZ's reputation as a

The Radio Ball in 1961, held in the Town Hall. A chance to demonstrate rock n' roll. Photographer Inverell Times.



'Krazy Kapers' being performed live in the 2NZ studio, featuring Terry Harkins (back) and John Melouney, 1956. Photographer Inv. Times.

community-minded radio station is secure.

A new era for local radio began on 11 August, 1997, when 2NZ's FM service GEM-FM began transmission from Tabletop Mountain, offering a wider range of music.

In the 1990s, radio is one of many competing options for the transmission of information and entertainment. Sixty years ago, the arrival of radio was revolutionary. It provided instant news and emergency information, music at the flick of a switch and serials which soon had a mass following.

Radio announcers became known as personalities, because the medium brought them live to so many homes. They became *friends* in a real sense for the lonely, bored and isolated, the young and the old, the town and the country dweller and everyone who could afford a set.

THE BIKE RACE : *The Grafton to Inverell*

Kings of the Mountain

Cycling was a largely neglected, low profile sport in Australia during the post-war years, and some would argue that it still is.

But Inverell was always a cycling centre, with a strong tradition of cycling going back to the tin mining days. And Inverell cyclists, facing hills in every direction leaving Inverell, were (and are) fond of a challenge.

No sooner had the long-awaited new road from Inverell to Grafton been completed at the end of 1960 than cyclist Harold Strahley had an idea which seemed so audacious as to be foolish. Why not run a one-day cycle race *up* the Gibraltar Range from Grafton, ending in Inverell? Sure - it would be tough, maybe the toughest in the world, with 107km of gravel remaining, but Inverell riders were used to dirt roads.

The Big Hill would be the hardest test, climbing as it does 970m during 17km. Of course it wouldn't be the only hill either. Once the riders went through Glen Innes they would have to climb the Waterloo Range, to 1155m. And it would be a long race - 228km, testing psychological and physical endurance.

The Inverell Amateur Cycle Club took up the challenge, and in a few months were able to put up trophies valued at over £600. They advertised the race widely, and were pleased when the first one, in September 1961, attracted 35 riders, including Australian champions and an Olympian, Alan Grindall. Grindall, who was riding from scratch, went on to win the race, taking 7 hours and 40 minutes

Officials said that the race was very well organised, but it was not without hitches. Only half of the riders finished, many being forced out by damage incurred on the unsealed portion. Some found the gravel on the mountain so difficult that they chose to walk and carry their cycles. Traffic jams hindered the riders for most of the way westward. By the time they eventually reached Inverell, 3000 people had packed the finish line, to see Grindall win and to cheer local Jack Griffin, who came 9th.

Jack Griffin

The many spectators who had never seen the finish of a long road race were amazed to see the riders sprint into Inverell. Instead of collapsing in exhaustion, they were able to ride victory laps and give speeches on the rostrum. Organisers were elated about the success of their first attempt, but disappointed to find not a word about the race in the Sydney press.

The Grafton to Inverell became a first week in September ritual for the cycle club. Every year the organisation became slicker. Service clubs helped with traffic control. 2NZ ran a mile-by-mile coverage of the race from commentators who were with the riders.

Behind all the organisation was Jack Griffin, race director for 30 years.

Times improved, as did the road, until in 1968 young Tasmanian Kevin Morgan set the incredible time of 6 hours and 23 minutes. Yet he was only two lengths ahead of a ten-man pack who sprinted with him over the final 600 metres.

One of the most memorable Grafton to Inverell races was that of 1985, when Englishman Paul Curran pulled away at the finish from a 4 man bunch to win in 6 hours and 49 seconds. His record stands.

The crowd's sympathy was always with the local riders, and for members of the Inverell Amateur Wheelers it became the goal of a lifetime to finish the Grafton to Inverell. Two Inverell boys won the race, Leon Cook in 1965 and Don Strahley in 1970. The most persistent and consistent local rider is Ian Manton, who has finished the race 16 times.

Don Strahley, local winner of the 1970 Grafton to Inverell. Photographer Inverell Times.

One man who won the Grafton to Inverell, Kevin Nichols, had his interest in cycling awakened as a little boy living in a house beside the Gwydir Highway in Grafton. Every year he would become very excited when the cyclists went by on the long trip to Inverell. When he grew up he became a champion, and won a gold medal at the Los Angeles Olympics.

Many changes have been made over the years. The most significant was the introduction in 1979 of a massed start. Before this, riders were handicapped and those riding from scratch - the best riders - started last. Sprints were held along the way, and the King of the Mountain competition became a prestigious prize.

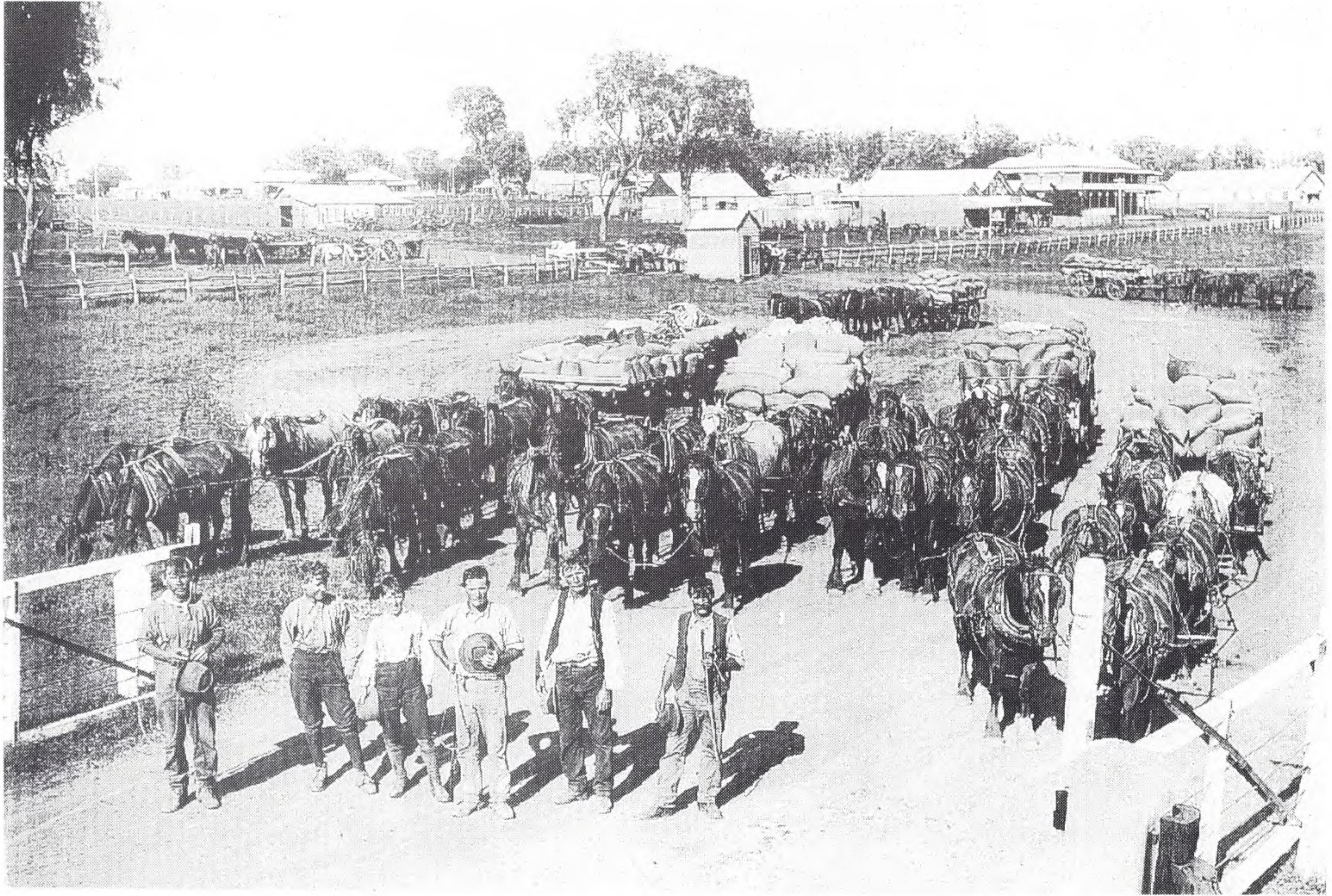
International riders were attracted to the race from 1971 onwards, the first full scale international field occurring in 1984. Sponsors have varied, but the support of the local media and NEN TV (Prime) have done a great deal to popularise and publicise the race.

Weather conditions are very important in determining times. The race begins in the humidity of the coastal plains, when it is often over 30 degrees and uncomfortably hot, continues up the mountain which may be foggy, on to the tablelands, where the riders usually strike a head wind.

The weather conditions often cause large numbers of withdrawals (on one occasion only 16 finished). One race ran into a hailstorm, covering riders with welts, but still they rode on. International riders may be distracted by seeing kangaroos.

However, those who finish the Grafton to Inverell often regard it as the greatest achievement of their lives.

Although fewer international riders have competed in the 90s, the race has a Category One rating and is the toughest Australian one day race. Inverell is proud to be host to the riders and their crews.



Four teamsters (whips in hand) and two boys pose for a professional photographer in the Delungra railway yard after having their loads weighed in about 1918. In the background can be seen much of Delungra. The two-storey building is the hotel. Three of the men are Alex Makim (left), Cecil Ewen (second from right) and Richard Fleming (right). Photo Lloyd Fleming.