

# THE PICK OF THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

## Pick Volume 2:0

### Bucketty Paul Budde

The small hamlet of Bucketty in the Lower Hunter Valley is, in many ways, unique. The land was formed 260 million years ago and the surrounding bushland contains some of the country's most significant Aboriginal sites, including Mt Yengo. In the early 1800s pioneers settled in Murrays Run and one of the most significant roads of the colony, the 220km long Great North Road between Sydney and Newcastle, was built using convict labour.

The current community of Bucketty (180 people) was only established in 1972, but it has already put itself on the map. It was in Bucketty that the Convict Trail Project was conceived.

The European settlers who arrived in the area around 1800 have made their mark on Bucketty as it is today. The first settlers, the Murrays, Milsons and Blaxlands, arrived driving cattle from Milson's Point in Sydney, via what is now the Freeway to Newcastle, over the Hawkesbury River to the Lower Hunter Valley. Murrays Run is one of the oldest early settlements in the Hunter Valley/Central Coast and the Sternbeck family, who still live in the area, are direct descendants of the early pioneers.

The section of the Great North Road built in the Bucketty area contains some of the most important national convict monuments in the country: bridges, retaining walls, quarries, culverts and original parts of the road. Some 700 convicts worked on this road, for the most part in chains, and an important stockade known as Dennis's Dog Kennel, situated at the spring in Bucketty, was at that time designated to be turned into a settlement; however this plan was revoked in 1889. So Bucketty was never established on the original site the road builders had planned it. In fact it took close to 150 years before a true settlement arrived in that area.

Two records of earlier inhabitants of Bucketty relate to The Knight's Arm and Bucketty's gold rush.

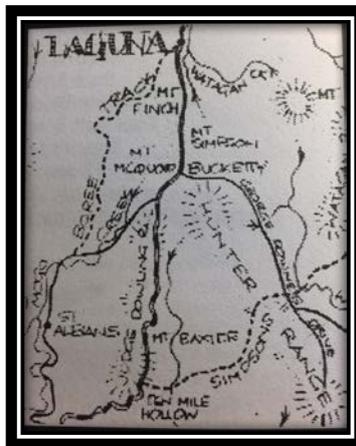


## **Knight's Arm**

Over the years large parts of Murrays Run was brought by the Sternbeck family. They owned the land between the Letter A and Bucketty Arm. From here, all the land to where Murrays Run links up with the Great North Road was owned by the McKay family and later sold to Len Nichols. Around 1870 the Sternbecks sold the small Bucketty Arm valley to the Knight family, and on modern maps Bucketty Arm is shown as Knights Arm. The Knight family is believed to be the first and only settlers who actually built a house in Bucketty (on the Murrays Run side of the valley) before the subdivision on 1972. The first mention of the name Bucketty (yes, spelled with one 't') comes from the Maitland Mercury and is dated 17 December 1870.

'On Tuesday last, James Knight, jnr., of Bucketty, (about 17 miles from Wollombi), was charged at the court-house with stealing a bullock, one of a mob of fat cattle driven by B. Tierney about a week since. From the evidence it appears that the hide and beef was found at Knight's residence. He was fully committed for trial. It is rather singular that Knight was one of the principal witnesses against Graft, who was convicted at Maitland about twelve months since on a charge of cattle-stealing.'

Bucketty also appears in the Post Office Directory of 1875-1877 p405). It lists John Knight as its only resident. Apart from a house in Bucketty Arm, they might also have built a hut in the Bucketty Paddocks. The Bucketty Paddocks covered an area of approximately 400 acres. Before George Downes Drive was built, the Paddocks included Mt McQuiod. There are still remnants of an old paddock fence on the Budde property.



Tom and Ben Knight grew wheat in these paddocks. Bullocks transported it from there to Mangrove Mountain. There were also 'gallows' in the paddock. Slaughtered cattle were suspended from these to make them easier to cut.

Three of 'Old Ike' Knight's children are buried in unmarked graves at the bottom of Bucketty Arm. There is also a grave in the Bucketty paddocks between the planned house site and the cattle yards. Another unmarked grave on Murrays Run relates to a person named Maloney – we know nothing about this person but there still exists a small bridge called 'Maloney's Bridge'.



When the Knight family moved to Yengo, Jim Sternbeck bought the property. While on horseback and with the assistance of his dogs, Les Sternbeck caught a dingo in the paddock in the 1930s when he was searching for cattle.

Around 1964 the Bucketty Paddock was sold by Jim Sternbeck's grandson Hal Nichols to Edgar Collins from Kulnura (he lived with his family in Floreat Farm opposite Collins Lane). Ed made significant land improvements in the paddocks. He fenced the entire area during the many weekends the family spent in Bucketty. Clover was sown and, to the surprise of many agricultural experts, lush meadows appeared. The family created gardens and planted trees that, while overgrown, are still there.

The plan was to build a house and electricity was brought to the paddocks by helicopter, establishing a link with the aviation beacon on the top of Mt McQuoid. Ed also built the dam in the Paddock. However, development was halted when Gosford Council instigated its plan for the Mangrove Dam Catchment area, since the Council indicated it would resume the land. The property was sold in 1969 to real estate agent Don Lamont. He built a small shed and a sewerage tank, the remains of which are still visible. The paddocks were leased to the Bowen family in Gosford for cattle grazing. This family also own the Big Yengo cattle property in the Boree.

Don Lamont put up a sign on the gate at the entrance of this property – 'High Valley'. A few years later these paddocks became part of the Mangrove Dam Catchment Area. The Department of Aviation operates, since the mid 1960s, radio beacons in the paddock. Occasionally, 'cowboys' are brought in by the Ranger to round up wild cattle that are still roaming the paddocks. The last time this was done was in 1994.

### **Bucketty's gold rush**

The only other 'Bucketty' person dates from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time there were rumours of gold being found in Bucketty. It is unknown how well founded these were but a man called Charles Ramon-Khan was making a living out of digging for gold in the paddocks. He lived in a hut or a tent that he erected in the paddocks for some time during this 'gold-rush'. He was seen digging for gold by Matthew Sternbeck at the top of Bucketty Creek, which starts near the cattle yards in the paddock. The holes he made during his digging were a hazard when the farmers rode through the paddocks, and some angry words were exchanged between Ramon-Khan and the Sternbecks! Charles married Mathilda Knight in 1903 at St Mark's church in Laguna.

For more information on Bucketty see:

[www.budde.com.au/bucketty](http://www.budde.com.au/bucketty)

