



THE PICK OF THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

Pick Volume 3 Summaries

VOLUME 3 SUMMARIES

3.0 – The Bats of Millfield (Elizabeth A. Roberts)

This article discusses micro bats that which once inhabited the old Millfield Bridge. Outlining the habitats and lifecycle, the article then discusses the threatened nature of the micro bat and what steps have been taken in the area to encourage protection.

3.1 – They came from Sawyer's Gully (Dawn Edwards)

This article outlines the fascinating life of Alice Betteridge (born 1901), who lost her sight and hearing at the age of two after she contracted meningitis. It follows her story as she becomes a talented and beloved student of the NSW Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind in Sydney. In later years Alice won prizes for her knitting, and in 1939 she married Will Chapman who was also deaf and blind. Alice met Helen Keller and comparisons were made between the two for their progress and achievements, though Alice never became a public figure and passed away in 1966.

3.2 – Keevers, The Builders of Cuneens Bridge (Elizabeth A. Roberts)

The timber bridge across the north Arm of Wollombi Brook just north of the township of Wollombi is called Cuneens Bridge. The bridge was built by three, possible four, of the Keevers brothers, who had a range of construction experiences. The bridge was named after the person who owned the land beside the bridge and it stood for 109 years.

3.3 – Patrick Cuneen of Cuneens Bridge Fame (Elizabeth A. Roberts)

This article outlines the life of Patrick Cuneen, who was the man after which Cuneens Bridge was named. He left Ireland and arrived in Australia in 1841. He worked as a labourer, then became a tailor and in 1854 purchased his lot in Wollombi. It appears he resided there for at least 15 years. He passed away in Sydney in 1879 at the age of 68.

3.4 – John McDougall (Gillian James)



This article refers to a report from the Maitland Mercury in 1844. An ex-convict, John McDougall became a substantial land-holder in the first days of Wollombi's settlement and was the owner of The Sir George Gipps. In the related article, the festivities held at the establishment are discussed with amusement.

3.5 – Bushwalkers on the Great North Road (Greg Powell)

This article discusses the bushwalking experiences of Greg Powell in some of the Convict Trail's historic areas with the Kotara Scout Group. They ventured through Ten Mile Hollow and Devine's Hill, counting 35 drains under the road. It outlines his experiences and some of the key people he met on the track that uncovered greater knowledge of the sites and their names. The article also discusses the Ghost House on Mangrove Creek, and elaborates on the tougher walks and camping spots.

3.6 – The Reverend Mr Sharpe (Robert Burns)

The Reverend Mr Charles Sharpe was an Anglican Minister who arrived in the colony in the late 1820s and was minister to the people in the Lower Hawkesbury. His modest chapel was located at Wisemans Ferry and Reverend Sharpe would struggle up a mountain side to reach the church. It is believed that a surveyor, White or Finch, felt sympathy for the Reverend and built him a road for access between his home and the church, though it is not noted on official documents.

3.7 – Thomas Budd (Elizabeth A. Roberts)

In the early 1820s, bushrangers were a problem in the colony. Thomas Budd, along with other retired veteran pensioners, was brought out to form the Veteran Corps of Mounted Police. Following their service, the soldiers and their family would reside on designated land for seven years that they must cultivate. This experiment was destined to fail, as these soldiers had no farming experience and most were past their physical prime.

3.8 – The Early Days of Wat Buddha Dhamma at Ten Mile Hollow (Rob Cuneen)

This article outlines the history of Wat Buddha Dhamma, the Buddhist retreat centre in the Dharug National Park at Ten Mile Hollow. Founded in 1978 as a community of permanent settlers supporting the monastics, it has transformed over the years and is now staffed by volunteers who stay shorter lengths of time. The background of the founding Buddhist monk Phra Khantipalo and his student Ilse Ledermann is discussed in the article, followed by their search for a site for the retreat and the following years.

3.9 – Andrew Murray (Ralph Hawkins)

This article outlines the life of Andrew Murray. He started his life in England where he gained experience in horticulture. He came out to the colony by choice in 1817, to assist in the transfer and potting of plants at John Macarthur's Elizabeth Farm. After arrival in Sydney, Murray married and began working in Government roles. This article details his experiences at Pennant Hills, Wollombi, Carter's Barracks, Pulpit Hill, Bathurst, Ultimo and Parramatta. Murray died in 1858, three months after writing his Will, which is also outlined in the article.



3.10 – Those are the Breaks (Del Bridge)

This article outlines the experience of the author in moving in with her grandparents in Sawyer's Gully after her father died. The article recounts her experiences with snakes in the area, and the methods her grandmother employed for enticing them out and killing them with a double barrel shotgun.

3.11 – A week on the Line – (it felt like a week) (Mel Jurd)

This article recounts an experience of Telephone Linesmen on the Great North Road looking for a break in the landline on New Years Eve. The men were inebriated and set out along the road. They stopped at Hungry Flat to refresh themselves with the water in the creek. At one point, one of the party members was knocked clean off the back of the truck after being struck by a branch. The men later caught freshwater crayfish for a meal then napped before continuing on their search. On completion of the job, the men went back and continued to drink, having had an interesting day!

3.12 – McFarland is buried here (Elizabeth A. Roberts)

This article discusses the theories behind a headstone at Maroota that reads McFarland is buried here 19/1/1871. The identity of this person is debated but this article suggests it could be an unknown person travelling through the area that died and was buried at the road side when found. The RTA suggest it was a surveyor who ran out of water. This article further discusses these beliefs and the reasoning behind them.

3.13 – The Blaxlands and the Wollombi (Carl Hoipo)

This article outlines a history of the Blaxland family in Wollombi. John Blaxland arrived in the colony in 1807 with goods to sell. He was granted land, and may have been the first white settler in Wollombi. The article outlines key routes and expeditions taken in the area by Blaxland and others. In 1834 he hosted Wollombi's first tourist, the Austrian Baron Charles von Hugel. Other members of the Blaxland family continued to live on the property until the 1920s.

3.14 – William Grey (Gray) 1800 – 1879 (Joan Robinson)

In 2000 the ancestors of William Gray identified their great-grandfather, and were able to match his grave to the big round rocks grave site at Murrays Run. His death certificate states that he had been missing for four days, and died from sunstroke, leaving behind no relatives. However, in reality he was married with fifteen children. This article goes on to outline their lives in the Colony and stories of people known to William.

3.15 – My Part in the Story of the Great North Road (Ian Webb)

This article outlines the experiences of Ian Webb, particularly in exploring the Great North Road, and noting down the works he found, beginning in the 1960s. It outlines the finds, as well as request for funds, protection and interpretive works that have been conducted. It also offers insight into what should be considered for the future of the Convict Trail and what measures should be taken.

