



THE PICK OF THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

Pick Volume 3.14

William Grey (Gray) 1800 – 1879

Joan Robinson

The Wollombi Brook meanders along through a wide valley from the Watagan Mountains to the Old North Road (Wollombi Road). The Valley is known as Murrays Run. The residents know of the unmarked graves of the Knight children up on the hill, the lady under the tree and the man called William by the big round rocks. William Maloney was a well-known bridge builder and over time it seemed that this must be his grave, but he is buried with his first wife in Mangrove Creek Cemetery.

In 2000, Sue and Neville Gray of Dalby, Queensland began to research Neville's ancestry. Finally came the death certificate of his great-grandfather, William Gray, which gave the following information – *died 29 April 1879 at Murrays Run, aged 79, a farmer from Ireland; resident in Australia for 50 years; missing for 4 days; cause of death, sunstroke; buried by George Sternbeck; no known relatives.* But William was married, to Elizabeth, and she had had fifteen children.

William's family left the area and is of no importance to the historical fabric of the area, but the people who knew them are. He is buried in an idyllic setting beside very big round rocks and a wooded area of tall trees where cattle shelter from the midday sun. Sternbecks still live there and there is a wonderful slab building which George built.

Elizabeth Dore arrived from Ireland in 1823 on the barque *Adventure*. She married Thomas Hewitt, an engineer, in 1839 at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney and they had six children.

From her relationship with William Grey, their first child, William James was born in 1858 at Mother Mar's Creek (Marramarra Creek) and the birth was registered by Percy Simpson of Parramatta. Eight more children were to follow but only the sons were registered. George Dore (Grey), Neville's grandfather, was born in 1863 at the McDonald River (St Albans).

In 1868, William and Elizabeth were married in the house of William Grey at McDonald River. They were noted as widow and widower. The registrar was John Prescud and the witnesses were John Perry and June Bailey.



Charles Grey, their last child, was born in 1872 when William was 72 years of age and Elizabeth was 47. Nurse Ezimann Ufemia McKenzie was the midwife (also present at the birth of George) and John Prescud was the registrar.

After William's death on George Sternbeck's property, Elizabeth moved to Sydney to live with her brother Daniel. She died in 1910 aged 87. Her sons Daniel Hewitt and George Grey were witnesses at her burial and 8 of her 15 children were still living. George and probably his brother William James had gone to Queensland when George was 15 and became farmers, settling finally in Dalby.

The Old Great North Road follows the Judge Dowling Range. Further west, the next north-south ridge is the Bala Range, originally called Blaxland's Track after the explorer John de Marquet Blaxland and then later the Boree Track. Farmers like the Perrys, the Baileys and the Thompsons took their cattle up the Boree in the winter months and people living in the area have fond memories of their fathers talking about the Boree.

On the rocks around the waterholes on the ridges there are many engravings of the initial of the cattle men. William Bailey left his initials and there is also a small engraving of a horse with a tiny WB in the flank.

The old Boree Track followed the ridge lines strictly and the danger must have been if the cattle strayed onto the large outcrop of rock known as Burragurra. Here the whole area is covered with many important aboriginal engravings but it is also surrounded by cliffs. If the cattle automatically followed onto this area they would have had to be turned around with difficulty.

James Perry, son of John Perry (witness to William's wedding) and Henry Agnew, both cattlemen, engraved a tall figure as if to say, "Don't come past me, follow my pointing finger and there is the Boree Track." They engraved their names under the figure.



Follow my pointing finger to the Boree Track (Photo: J. Robinson)

Further around the ridge, the initials H.A. and J.P. are engraved which signifies that these men worked together. Henry engraved his initials and letters with serifs as the people of the convict era wrote. James had a later style of printing – an older and a younger man.

The Perrys and the Baileys have gone but the people today cross Mogo Creek at Perrys Crossing and older people remember the old slab houses of the Perrys and the Baileys and also the one large solid cartwheel at Perrys, made from the trunk of a tree. Logging roads destroyed most of the



original Boree Track except in hilly places which the bulldozers skirted around. The Boree Track shows clearly after bushfires south of Burragurra. The cattle have moved through the scrub in single file for it is deep bridle path.

The cattle and cattle-men have gone, as well as the logging teams, and the mountain area is now Yengo National Park. Was William Grey one of the men who drove the cattle along the Boree Track? Now in Murrays Run, the cattle shelter peacefully over William's grave.



The grave site of William Gray (Photo: J. Robinson)