

# "THE EARLY DAYS"

BY W. J. GOOLD



1

The first residents of what is now Mayfield West were John Lawrie Platt, his family and his assigned servants. Platt was an ex-officer of the British Army, who <sup>on</sup> August 21<sup>st</sup> 1821 received a grant of 2000 acres of land, which was described as being on the Hunter River at Newcastle.

This grant extended from what is now Mayfield West, and a portion of Warialah, to the Ironbark Creek. Platt occupied his grant in 1823, being the first settler in the Newcastle District.

He erected his homestead (which he named Ironbark) on the north-eastern portion of his grant - the nearest to Newcastle, and here with the aid of his assigned servants, he cleared a small portion of about forty acres, which he planted with wheat.

He also erected a windmill on the high ground near the waterpoint, it was one of the old-fashioned type of windmills fitted with "Dutch" arms.

Platt's mill was the first erected on the Hunter River, and some of the early settlers of the Hunter River (among whom was J. Rowland) sent their wheat and maize here to be ground.

But Platt's attempt at the cultivation of wheat proved a failure, due to the soil being unsuitable.

And he met with a far greater misfortune, when on December 9<sup>th</sup> 1831 his home was destroyed by fire and two of his young sons were burnt to death.

A new homestead was then erected on the road to Maitland at what is now Sandgate, <sup>but</sup> by 1836, both Platt and his wife were dead.

The old mill stood for many years, and gave to that area the title of the "Mill Paddock", so well known to old residents as the old for

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pienies and outings.

Platt's Channel was also named after John James Platt, whose executor later sold the whole of his land to Australian Agricultural Company.

The old veteran's ill starved and frayed attempt to establish himself as a settler in a new country, was referred to by other settlers along the Hunter River as "Platt's Folly", a title which eventually was the name used all the land along the river from the 'Mull Paddock' to Port Waratah, was called 'The Folly'.

One of the first to purchase land on the Folly was Charles Dempson who in 1848 secured three allotments, and upon one of 36 acres on the river front, he erected a substantial homestead. He named his residence 'Waratah House', from the fact that in the bush at the rear of his allotment the Waratah flower grew, and this is stated to have been the most northerly spot in which that particular flora existed.

Dempson was an official of the Revenue Custom House under Mr Charles Bolton, the Collector of Customs, who also had purchased several allotments of land at the 'Folly', portion of which was locally known as Bolton's Brush.

In 1854, Dempson disposed of his property to Mr Thomas Tourle, a wealthy Squatter who had made a fortune on his station, 'Bellata' in the New England district. He was a son-in-law of the Reverend Charles Morse, in many years Captain of Orons. Tourle made considerable additions to 'Waratah House'; laid out the grounds, planted vineyard, orchard, etc. He resided at 'Waratah House' until his death in 1899 at the age of 93 years. He is described by old residents as being a fine old gentleman, who lived the life of a typical English Squire.

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During 1847 a Mr Kerchner travelled through the Colony arranging with the principal landowners to bring out experienced vine dressers from Germany, under the Government bounty.

One of these was Peter Crebert (born Kuderach, Germany 1824), who arrived in Newcastle in 1849, under contract to O' James Mitchell. In 1853, Crebert purchased a five acre block of land at the Folly from Charles Bolton for £16.15.0, and two years later he added a further five acres for which he paid £100!

On his land Crebert cultivated a vineyard and orchard, and in 1859 he made the first wine produced in Newcastle. Crebert's 'Folly' Gardens became well known in later years, and on Sundays and holidays, Newcastle folk used to drive out to the Folly, to walk through the gardens and purchase fruits and wine.

In fact in those days most of the land in this portion of the Folly was utilized for orchards, vineyards, and dairy farms. Names of some of the occupants had come to mind are Bull, Williams, Myers, Horgan, (Robert) Buckley, Gray, Russell, Crosthwaite, Robertson, Tubbs, Robertson, Lambie, etc.

Some of these pioneers have left their names there in the streets of today - Crebert Street, Bull Street, Williams Street

In 1857, the Great Northern Railway was opened from Newcastle to East Maitland, and the first railway station out of Newcastle was named 'Waratah', after Waratah House, then the only substantial building in the district.

This gave the title of Waratah to all the surrounding district, and the northern side of the railway line became known as Waratah, although for many years the old title of the Folly was used by many.

Then when the Waratah Coal Mining Company in 1863 constructed a coal line from their tunnels

General Appointment and Discharge

To the river for the shipment of their coal, this became Port Waratah.

During 1867 the Company cleared an area of land here and the Wallaroo and Moonie Copper Mining Company of South Australia, erected a smelting works.

This brought about a little settlement on the flats nearby, known as Kalsina Flat.

The first school at the 'Folly' was conducted by Mrs Towle, in a small wooden building at the end of Crebert's vineyard. Then a building built of slabs was erected on a two acre block on the hill (or what became the corner of Crebert and Ingham Streets) - this was the Folly Public School opened in 1874, which has over the years had borne the titles of 'The Folly', 'Port Waratah', 'Mayfield', and 'Mayfield East'. The firm of the first three principals here, James Kellogg, John Gillespie, and Donald Robertson, covered a span of thirty five years.

At the rear of the school was a reserve which in those days bore the high sounding title of the Newcastle Botanical Gardens, of which a Mr Ireland was the caretaker.

Then opposite the school was the residence of Mr Ingham, a well known Newcastle draper, and his name was bestowed on a street running down to Mainland Road.

In 1870, Peter Crebert purchased an area of land east of Ingham Street, which he had cleared and another vineyard planted, but this did not prove so successful as his other property, and eventually it was disposed of to Mr Charles Upford Managing Director of the Sydney Soap and Candle Company.

On this land (and on additional eleven acres) the largest and most modern equipped Soap manufacturing plant in the Southern Hemisphere was erected. It cost some £50,000 to build, and the machinery installed cost another £3,000.

The Company made elaborate arrangements for the opening ceremony on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1886.

The Newcastle Steamship Company's steamer 'Sydney'

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was chartered to make a special trip leaving Sydney at 8.45 am with large number of Sydney and Melbourne visitors. A fleet of some forty buses, taxicabs, and other vehicles were lined up in Bond Street to convey the visitors to the works. 450 guests sat down to a banquet after the ceremony.

These works provided employment for a number of <sup>persons</sup> employees, many of whom became residents of what is now Mayfield East. The Southern side of Hasland Road was all heavily timbered, and used as bullock paddocks, and slaughter houses by Newcastle butchers.

On the northern side of the road, William Thomas Brain owned a large area of land which extended through to Bull Street, also Simon Kemp of Newcastle owned another large area here, portion of which in 1860 he donated to the Church of England for a church, school, and parsonage. On this land St Andrew's Church was erected at a cost of £200; it was capable of seating 150 persons, and was opened for Divine worship by the Bishop of Newcastle on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1861. At the conclusion of the ceremony all present were entertained at Mr. Toulie's residence "Warral Huthe", where a large pavilion had been erected.

Some years later it was decided to use portion of the Church land for a cemetery, but some of the residents objected, and argued that a burial ground would interfere with future land sales for residential purposes.

They also claimed that Mr. Kemp's gift stipulated that the land should be used for a church, school, and parsonage. The objections were overruled by the Church authorities, and so a portion of this land became the last resting place of many of the pioneers of the District.

George Chant was the pastor of St Andrew's for many years, and Mr. Kelly, the monumental mason cut many of the head stones.

It was the erection of this Church, <sup>that</sup> provided an ETC in the Street (Church Street).

On Newland Road near the corner of Church Street there was a large two story house occupied by Mr Jackson, a Newcastle bank manager, and from there to Toul's Hotel there was nothing but trees, bushes, and thick etc.

The hotel was opened by Benjamin Toul's under the title of the "Warwick Hotel", and is now the site of Amos' modern "Mayfield Hotel".

The road running from Toul's Hotel to the railway station was named Hanbury Street, from the fact that it led to the several Townships of Hanbury. (now Warwick)

Thomas Grove in 1862, when he subdivided his land, and formed a small colliery Township, he named it after his birthplace in England, Hanbury. - a title it retained for some time, although the railway station was named Warwick.

On the northern side of the railway station, there was an old hotel, aptly named the "Railway Hotel", and conducted for many years by the Lee family, and around there there was a small settlement.

Then in Hanbury Street there was another old house, which appeared in title of the "Our Robert Peel Hotel" - and this brings us to the name of James Anderson.

Anderson was a miner, who later became an hotel-keeper at Merri, then from there he took over the license of an hotel at the corner of Hunter and Newcastle Streets Newcastle, which was called the "Crystal Palace Hotel". After holding this license for eleven years Anderson sold out, and purchased one acre of land in Hanbury St which included the old Our Robert Peel Hotel. Here Anderson transformed his land into a picturesque pleasure ground, with gardens, a miniature zoo and aviary, running tracks, large playing area, and dancing pavilion, during the day the ground was surrounded by a 12 ft galvanized iron fence. This was named the Crystal Palace Gardens, and became a popular rendezvous for picnics, sports, band concerts, flower shows etc.

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Proceeding along the Newcastle Road westward, the first stand a substantially built stone house had, once was the residence of Mr C. Thomas, manager of the Smelting works, and later of Mr Nicholls and Dralls families.

Just past here there once stood an old relic of the early days, known as the 'Iron House' - it was in the early days a road side inn, a stopping place for Sam Smith's and Morris Magrey's coaches, en route to and from Newcastle.

Old Times tell us that the 'Iron House' was at one time the finishing post for horse races along the road on the western side of the Newcastle Road, the Roman Catholic denomination owned a large area of land which extended from the road to the top of the hill.

It was here that on December 3rd 1885, His Eminence Cardinal Moran laid the foundation stone of the Monastery of St Alphonus, which was to cost £12,000 to erect. The Revd Father Vaughan was the first Principal.

The elevated land extending practically from the Monastery to Church Street, ~~contained~~ contained the homes of many of the prominent business people of Newcastle such as the Arnolds, Wiggins, Frank Witherspoon, Langwell, Green, Windeyes, Dehaley, Chisholm.

It was also in Highfield Street that the Wesleyan Church was opened in 1840, with the Rev. Gardner as minister.

It was the custom in the early days for land owners, prior to sub-division to bestow distinguishing titles upon their estates - such as Houghton-le-Spring, 'Monsieur Carmouth', 'New Battle', etc - they certainly took sweet upon sale notices, but were soon forgotten. But when John Dehaley sub-divided for sale a large area of his land he named it after his daughter, May. Hence we have to day the

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title of Mayfield. Little did the old gentleman  
realise that in the years to come, the name he bestowed  
would cover the largest and most populous suburb  
in Greater Newcastle, and an area ~~within~~ <sup>within</sup> which  
are the greatest industrial plants in the Commonwealth.