

Waltzing Matilda a touchy subject

Stop Press

Denis Gregory



AUSTRALIA'S best liked song Waltzing Matilda is known world-wide but it was a sensitive matter with Banjo Paterson and he rarely talked about it.

His stay with the Macphersons at Dagworth Station, now Belfast, in central western Queensland, was something he apparently would rather have forgotten after going there for a short holiday with his fiancé Sarah Riley, who wanted to show off her husband-to-be.

Christina Macpherson, an accomplished musician, was Sarah's best friend and the three went on picnics to the nearby Combo waterhole on the Diamantina River.

There Christina told Banjo about a shearer named Samuel Hoffmeister who had camped at the waterhole after being implicated in a fire that destroyed a shearing shed on the property and when he saw police and the property owner heading his way, he shot himself.

Banjo reckoned he could write a ballad about it, turning the shearer into a swaggie who stole a sheep and jumped into the waterhole and drowned to avoid arrest.

An accomplished musician, Christina Macpherson entertained her guests with her autoharp on the homestead's verandah and one night played a lilting Scottish number called Thou Bonnie Wood o' Craigielea, a tune that had no words.

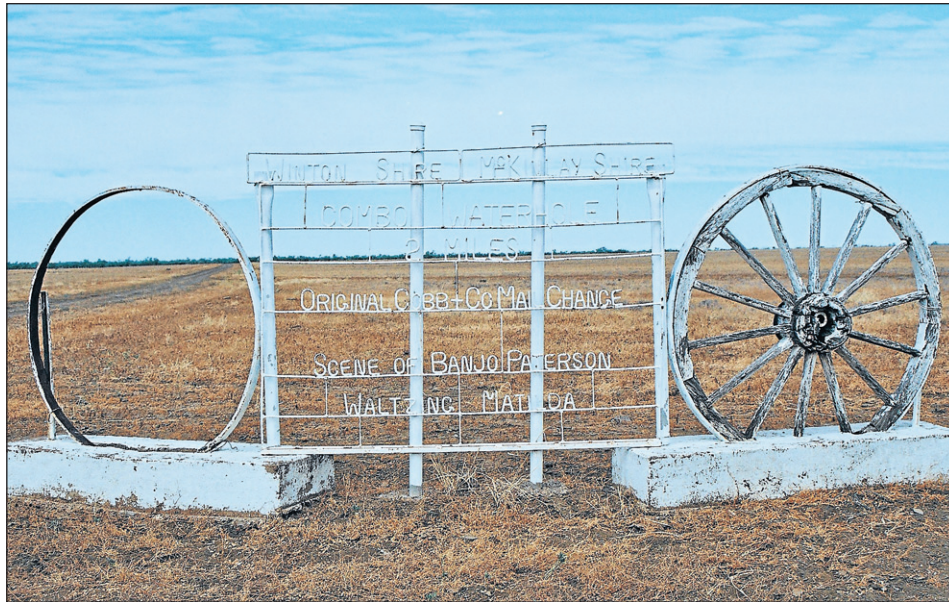
Banjo, who was smitten by Christina, thought he could adapt his swaggie ballad to the tune and the pair after a few more cosy nights at the station came up with Waltzing Matilda, which they debuted on the piano at the North Gregory Hotel in nearby Winton.

What else happened while all this was going on is a little vague but Banjo's engagement to Sarah Riley was broken off and the two never spoke again.

Banjo was acutely embarrassed by the whole incident and Waltzing Matilda was never on his list of favourite works.

But popular as it was, he sold the rights to his publisher for only £5 (\$10) in 1903 and James Inglis, the distributor of Billy Tea, had the lyrics changed to make the swagman 'jolly' so he could use it as an advertising jingle.

Shearers later adopted the song for their rallies but changed some of the words to 'you'll never take me alive, said he' to add more defiance.



The Combo waterhole sign.



Waltzing Matilda's Combo waterhole.



Waiting to be torn down, the newer section of the old base hospital.

Long hospital campaign

THE old Base Hospital sitting there empty, vandalised and falling to bits, is a pretty sad sight so efforts by councillor Glenn Taylor to have something done will hopefully be successful.

But it's interesting to note a campaign back in the early 1960s to have the new section of the hospital built went on for years, seemingly getting nowhere.

A change of government in 1965 and a new Liberal health minister, a bloke named Harry Jago, brought renewed life to the campaign so when Orange MP and deputy premier Charlie Cutler announced Mr Jago was coming to Orange, everyone thought it was to announce the hospital extensions.

After a tour of the crowded conditions with patients in beds in the corridors, Mr

Jago made his speech to the gathered dignitaries and press and said he was pleased to approve...a new boiler room.

The fearless chairman of the hospital board Bill Denman angrily responded and without further ado said: "Thank you minister for coming. All I want to say is you can't put patients in a boiler room..."

Charlie Cutler didn't appreciate the remark and said so but as usual he later fixed things with Harry Jago and we got the new hospital.

Now the wheel has turned and we can't get it pulled down quick enough but that's proving to be just as difficult as it was getting it built in the first place.

Losing our colour

IS Orange losing its 'Colour City' tag? Councillor Neil Jones thinks so.

Looking east at new housing subdivisions from the heights of Gorman Rd he says the city has gone grey far too early in life.

The view is grey roofs, grey roadways, grey concrete driveways and, of all things, grey Colorbond fences.

He wants to know where all the colour has gone. The red roofs, the yellows and greens.

We're becoming depressing, he says.

Three-in-one

A MAN visiting a cemetery sees a headstone that reads: Here lies John Smith, a lawyer and an honest man.

"How about that," he says. "They've got three people buried in one grave."

Summer Street busy

HAVE you noticed the big increase in huge juggernauts rattling shop windows in Summer St lately.

No doubt it's because the bypass, or distributor road or whatever you like to call it, is closed between Forbes Rd and Molong Rd because it's being ripped up and rebuilt.

The closure resulting in the extra Summer St traffic shows the bypass has been working, keeping a good number of trucks out of the central business district at least through the day because the truckies believe it's faster using Summer St at night.

Selfie most annoying

SELFIE may have been named the Oxford Dictionary's word of 2013 but its popularity earned it another accolade: the most annoying and overused word of the year.

It topped a list of words people in a Facebook survey wanted banished in 2014.

Twerk or twerking, a dance move made popular by Miley Cyrus, hash tag, twitter-sphere, which is another word for twitter, t-bone as in a car accident, on steroids for something fast or strong, morally bankrupt used by polities and fan base were some of the other words voted as the most annoying.

Locally what words do you think were over-used in Orange in 2013?

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THE electrical engineer of Hybrid Power Systems Johnathan Davis is passionate about creating power solutions.

He believes small business and households aren't effectively tapping into solar power because they are unaware of what large savings can be made.

"Businesses who operate during daylight hours have the potential to get 100 per cent of their power from solar," he said.

"This includes running of all electrical operations from lights and air conditioners to copiers and office equipment.

"And it's not just businesses that are missing out."

Johnathan mentioned other solar solutions for households like solar pumping systems.

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be a great alternative for those living in rural areas and owners of pools," he said.

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