

*Whisky
makes
you well*



Geoffrey H. Manning

WHISKY MAKES YOU WELL

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G. H. Manning

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The family of Francis Maiden

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*Whisky makes you well
When you are ill.
And Whisky when you're ill
makes you well.*

*Told to F. J. Maiden in the early 1920s
at the Mildura Settlers Club*

*end papers
First motor mail service
Broken Hill—Menindee
Second from left: Frank Maiden*

Introduction

FRANCIS JAMES MAIDEN (Frank) was born on 3 June 1895 at Pamamaroo, some ten miles north of Menindee on the River Darling in New South Wales. A midwife brought him into the world, she having walked five miles from her residence at a nearby station after being alerted to the pending birth by Frank's elder brother, Charlie, who summoned her after a hurried dash on horseback from the Maiden family homestead.

Frank had little formal education and in retrospect he told me 'A child couldn't live the same today as I did growing up to manhood: all you wanted in those days was a reasonable amount of common sense and a will to work', and when you consider what he has achieved in his lifetime there can be no doubt that he has those two attributes in over-abundance.

At a very early age he helped his father on the family property and by the age of nine was able to safely drive and control a horse and buggy, and within a further four years he was handling a unicorn team of 'four reins'. His late 'teens found him engaged in the horse and motor coach trade out of Broken Hill and in 1929 he established the Murray Valley Coach Service from Mildura to Adelaide. He sold out in 1937 and returned to his first love, the land.

The Maiden family has been associated with Menindee and the surrounding districts since the 1860s, when Frank Maiden's grandfather settled there. The following story has been compiled from Frank Maiden's personal reminiscences together with tales told to him by his parents, who, in turn recounted to him memories of his grandparents. Personal research has supplied historical background to the overall Maiden family history.

I thank Claire Eaton, Frank Maiden's daughter for inviting me to write this story and to become involved with the 'Maidens of the Darling'.

Ballad of Frank Maiden

Let me tell you a story of a man I know,
Whose back is bent and hair like snow.
He has travelled the Outback far and wide,
And the stories he tells will fill you with pride.
Now when he was young, tall he was not,
And his family would joke, they called him young 'DOT'.
This family was large, some fourteen all told
And oft' a stray horseman would add to their fold.
Life in this Country it really was tough,
A Drag and three horses just wasn't enough
So a Coach and five horses were his pride and his joy.
And he started to drive them when only a boy
Carting wood to the Steamers, then Shearers and Mail.
He drove through the Outback in sun, wind and hail,
Then came the day when the Motor was born.
Unlike all his elders—Dot did not scorn,
For he knew that the car would take over in time—
I'll start with just one, then a fleet will be mine.
Well this daring young man *he did* just that,
By now he was married with young wife and dog—Pat.
From Mildura to Renmark to and fro, then as far as Bendigo
He carried the Royal Mail then passengers too.
By now he was looking to do something new.
This daring young man he wasn't afraid,
So he started a Parlour Coach to Adelaide,
Again he would drive through the night and the day,
And soon these new Coaches were well under way.
He then sold this service and off back to the land,
To bring up his children the way he had planned.
Two daughters they had, of which I am one.
And the man in this tale is your grandfather, son.

Claire Eaton

Emigration to Australia

THE FACTS SURROUNDING my grandparents and why they came out to Australia have been told to me over a number of years by my father and several of his brothers and sisters.

My grandfather, Samuel Maiden, was born at Newcastle, England, in 1818 to William and Fanny Maiden (nee Watson). In 1840 he married Elizabeth Langford, the daughter of William and Elizabeth Langford (nee Poynton). My grandmother was born at Whitechapel, London, in 1823

Samuel and Elizabeth Maiden applied for assisted emigration to South Australia in 1853, and they departed from Southampton on 2 February, 1854 on the sailing ship 'Royal Charlie'. I believe that the ship's departure was delayed for a few days because of the birth of my father Charles, who apparently was named after the ship. Four other children also accompanied their parents—Elizabeth (12), Sarah (10), William (6) and George (2).

The 'Royal Charlie' was a barque of 480 tons, with Captain Thomas as master. After a voyage of 112 days it arrived at Port Adelaide, and the SA Register of 25 May 1854 reported:

'The Government emigrant ship 'Royal Charlie' arrived yesterday in healthy condition. The departure from Southampton took place on 2 February, when the number of souls on board was 214 (168 adults), but as there were twelve births on the voyage and only three deaths, the number of souls on arrival was 223. Emigrants from English counties predominated, and as the ship is already in harbour, employers will have an early opportunity of selecting suitable persons.'

While my grandparents were at liberty to move freely within South Australia in search of employment, certain restrictions were placed upon them as set down in the declaration which they were obliged to sign prior to their departure from England:

'We severally promise and undertake that if we or any of our family with our permission quit or propose to quit the Colony within four years from the day of our landing, we will repay to the Government a proportion, or a part of the cost, of our passage to South Australia, that is to say—at the rate of £4 a piece for ourselves and half that sum for each of our children for each year or any fraction thereof, which shall be wanting to complete four years residence in the Colony.'

What prompted my grandparents' emigration has never been fully explained to me, but I have reason to believe a relative of my

grandfather (possibly a brother) James Maiden, had arrived in Australia some years earlier and his glowing accounts of the country possibly enticed him to leave England.

Reports of James Maiden are few. In 1845 he was established as a cattleman on Perricoota Station north of the Murray River in New South Wales and tiring of the long haul to Sydney markets he turned his eyes to the shorter Melbourne route. He built a punt and at a later date he added a public house, smithy and a few stores and shortly thereafter squatters from all over the Riverina district were taking their wool to Melbourne via Maiden's Punt. By 1850 the little hamlet had a population of about thirty and today it is called Moama. The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 started a vast profitable meat market for the squatters and traffic across Maiden's Punt increased ten-fold and as could be expected a rival, by the name of Hopwood, appeared on the scene and established a punt service near the sight of the present town of Echuca. Rivalry between the two men was strong and Maiden built a bigger punt capable of carrying four bullock drays and 600 sheep in one crossing and Hopwood, not to be outdone erected a pontoon bridge and it was so built that the middle section could be swung away to allow passage of river steamers. In 1857 Maiden sold out to Messrs Robinson and Stevens, who were taken over by Hopwood in 1862.

My grandfather was a sawyer and during 1855 he purchased a bullock wagon and a flock of sheep for rations and commenced a trek up the Murray and Darling rivers to Menindee. Whether this journey was undertaken with a view to meeting up with James Maiden is not known, but is thought to be highly probable.



*Mr Burns (circa 1860)
(Frank Maiden's grandfather)
He is buried at Nocatunga
Station, near Thargomindah,
Queensland*

The Trek to Menindee

IN 1855 THE TRACK from Gawler to Blanchetown was, at its best, tortuous and difficult. It had been originally blazed through the scrub by explorers and overlanders droving cattle from New South Wales to Adelaide. By 1842 a small village had been established at Moorundee, south of Blanchetown, which in turn was laid out in 1855 and named after the Governor's wife, Lady Blanche McDonnell. Prior to reaching Blanchetown the Maidens passed through Wheal Barton, near Truro, which was established in 1849 following discovery of copper in the near vicinity. This mine was to be short-lived due to underground flooding, so the miners left for the Victorian goldfields and by 1852 it had been abandoned.

Upon arrival at Blanchetown the family halted for some time, for two reasons—the birth of the fourth daughter Annie and the necessity for grandfather to obtain work for the sustenance of his family. Station-owners in the district welcomed the arrival of grandfather, and his expertise as a sawyer was put to useful purpose and river red gums were soon falling to his saws and being converted into building timber.

Leaving Blanchetown the family headed slowly north-east to Morgan and it was here, because of ample work in the area, grandfather built a hut about one mile back from the river. I believe that until very recent times this hut was still standing and was known to the locals as 'Maidens Hut'. While grandfather was busy felling trees the two eldest sons, Will and George were left in charge of the family's sheep and regular trips were made to the river to water the flock. These excursions must have been full of interest to the young boys because the river and billabongs were alive with flocks of wild fowl, musk ducks and black swans while, at a distance, kangaroos could be seen stealthily hopping towards the water. The family's almost incessant diet of mutton and damper was supplemented by trading tobacco, sugar, etc. with the natives in exchange for fish.

1858 found the Maiden family settled at Thurk Station. The head stockman was Harry Pretty and there began a romance between Harry and my Aunt, Sarah Langdon Maiden and they were duly married on 30 September 1858 at Wheal Barton.

Details of the family's forward movements to Menindee are very hazy as no specific details are known. However, it is quite certain

that their journey took them via Lake Victoria and Wentworth.

Today, Lake Victoria is utilised as a water storage basin and across its southern end at Rufus River a levee holds back the waters but under natural conditions as my grandparents saw it, water only reached the lake, in quantity, during floods. Red gums grew in profusion together with blackbox on the flood plains and the higher and drier country was covered by saltbush and other grasses and herbaceous plants.

Wentworth was named after the famous politician and explorer William Charles Wentworth and was proclaimed as a town on 21 June 1859 and at the time the town had four shops, two doctors, schoolmaster, carpenter, shoemaker, tailor and a lemonade and ginger beer manufacturer. My grandparents must have been most surprised at the sight of log huts built with loopholes to fight against aboriginal attacks.

It is not known the exact route taken up the Darling because in those days there were two alternatives; the main river if it was not in flood or the branch if a high river was running. It is most unusual for one river to flow into another by two active channels as the Darling does into the Murray and to achieve this, nature must provide a flat country and a delicate balance of flow.

Exploration and Development of the Darling

THE PENAL COLONY at Port Jackson from 1788 was confined to a narrow coastal belt until May 1813 when Gregory Blaxland and his exploring party blazed a trail through the Blue Mountains opening up the broad fertile plains to the West. Settlement and exploration continued over the ensuing years and in 1829 Captain Charles Sturt discovered a river in the West, which he named the 'Darling' after the resident Governor at that time.

In 1835, Major Thomas Mitchell attempted to follow the headwaters of the Darling to its mouth. Commencing near the present site of the town of Bourke he proceeded South along the river course but upon reaching Laidley's Ponds (the present site of the town of Menindee) he encountered hostile blacks and retreated 600 miles to Fort Bourke across country 'peopled by cunning savages with whom we were now likely to be involved in war'.

The circumstances which prompted Mitchell to retreat are vividly portrayed in Daniel Brock's book 'To the Desert with Sturt' and if his story is accepted as the truth there can be no doubt that Mitchell and his party were not entirely blameless in respect of the aborigines' warlike postures. Brock wrote:—

'It is no wonder they should have meditated evil against us, for this is the very tribe which were so shamefully injured by Mitchell's party. I will here relate the circumstances. As was customary, Mitchell had encamped two or three miles from the river. One of the men, on coming to the river for water, had had an interview with a female native, and promised her a kettle, if she would gratify his lust. A day or two after, the wretch again came to the river and the poor creature, who had an infant at her back, came for her kettle, having with her two or three others. It appears he first knocked her down, and she, as soon as she could, ran to the river, but just as she was jumping in, the brute fired, and instead of falling into the water, she fell back on the bank a corpse. The white fellow came up to her and finished his butchery by taking the child by its heels, and dashing its brains out against a gum tree; and then observing the natives (who were with the unfortunate female) crouching behind a tree on the opposite bank, he fired a volley at them. To conclude the scene—one of these behind the tree was a young lad—he is now a tall fine young man, named Topar—he has shown us the grave, the tree where the child perished, the tree behind which he crouched, in which were the marks of three balls. Well might Mitchell say 'Oh! that my good name is

entrusted with such men'. It was this circumstance that gave rise to the report that murder had been committed. After this Mitchell was obliged to make a hasty retreat.'

In 1844, following an expedition by John Eyre and Edward Scott from Moorundee in South Australia to Laidley's Ponds, Governor Grey of South Australia attempted to have the South Australian Border shifted thereby pre-empting the wishes of modern day citizens of the area who are socially and economically bound to South Australia. Grey made representations to the Colonial office in London to the effect that the Darling River should mark the eastern boundary as far as Laidley's Ponds and north of that point, 142° East Longitude. His request was denied.

During 1846-1847 several hardy pioneers entered the district with sheep to pasture and in 1850 squatters licences were issued, but no systematic surveys were made until 1854 and consequently until this was undertaken many arguments as to boundaries occurred between the squatters. Tyson, a notable Australian squatter described the situation as follows:—

'a new man coming along in search of land was looked upon by most of the squatters as worse than a highwayman and he could seldom obtain information as to the boundaries of the runs, for most stockholders claimed all the land to the nearest neighbour'.

Two Scots were the first squatters in the Menindee area in 1850; Messrs MacCallum and McKinley, and gradually over the ensuing years the runs crept northwards towards Bourke and westwards to the South Australian Border. Native unrest caused a withdrawal of the squatters and by the end of 1852 there was no white settlement north of Polia but gradual re-entry occurred over the years.

Menindee

THE DATE OF the arrival of my grandparents and family at Menindee is not known to me but I suspect it was in the early 1860s but my father did tell me that the last two children of the marriage, Ellen and Alice, were born there.

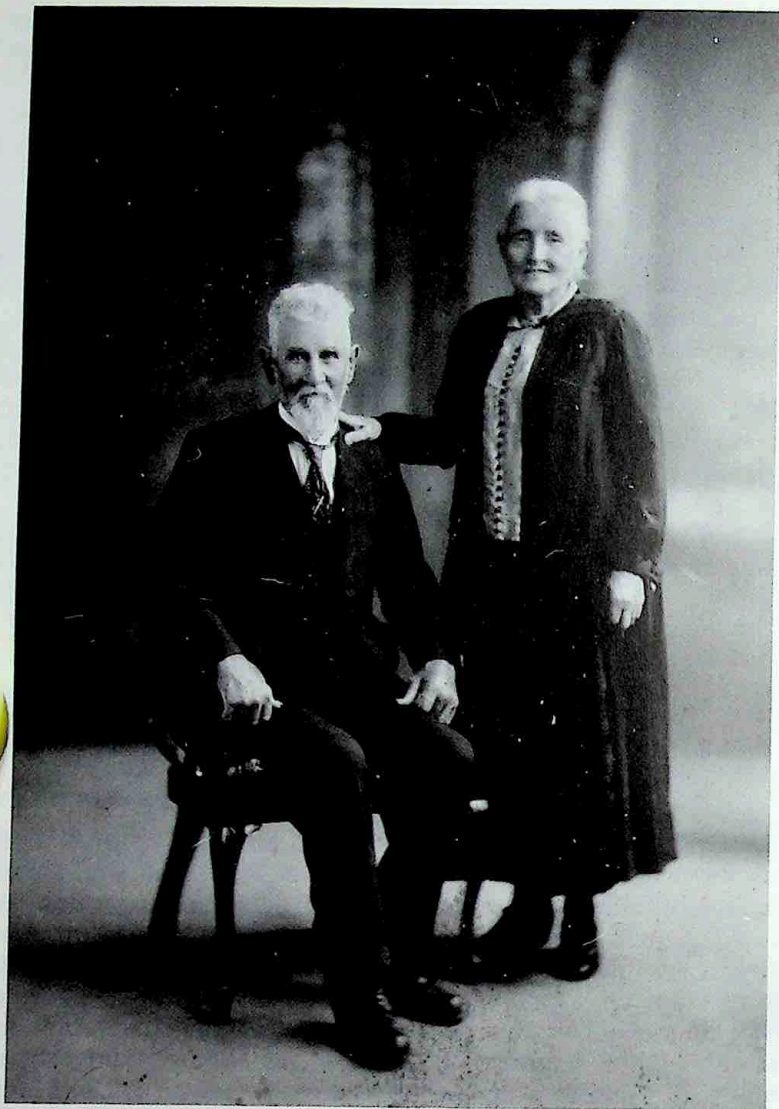
Menindee is a native word meaning 'many waters'. A store was built there in 1859 and by the time of the arrival of the Burke and Wills expedition in 1860 Menindee was an outpost as no other settlement lay beyond it to the centre. There was a shanty pub run by Thomas Paine, a few wooden shacks, a landing stage for river steamers and one of Captain Cadell's stores.

In 1862 it was chosen as the site of a town to be named 'Perry' but later it reverted to the aboriginal name of Menindie, then Menindee. Another aboriginal name for the locality was 'Williorara'.

The permanent population at that time, was few in number but it was very much a pioneer centre and a jumping-off place for the interior. Settlers pushing out in search of new land were assisted by local tribesmen and every newcomer was quizzed concerning his equipment. Each man returning to the settlement was closely questioned in respect of the location of waterholes, his route and the condition of the country.

With the prospect of ample work for his talents as a sawyer in the immediate districts my grandfather decided that the Maiden family roots should be entrenched in Menindee. Land was purchased in the township, a timber home constructed and for many years he was gainfully employed in construction work at nearby stations and felling and sawing timber for river boat fuel. Evidence of his labours is contained in the records of Kinchega Station and one entry dated 6 September 1870 shows Samuel Maiden as an employee, together with Edward White, Frederick Ford and W. G. Clarke. Station hands were paid twenty-five shillings a week plus their keep, and fencing costs were thirty-five pounds per mile. The station manager, Thomas Taylor was paid at the rate of seventy-five pounds per quarter.

Samuel's two eldest sons, George and Will, were enterprising young men and they entered into partnership as bullock drivers, servicing outlying stations with provisions and, in season, back loading with bales of wool for transportation to Menindee and the awaiting Darling steamers. In the early 1870s my father joined his two brothers as a 'bullocky' and at the height of the mineral



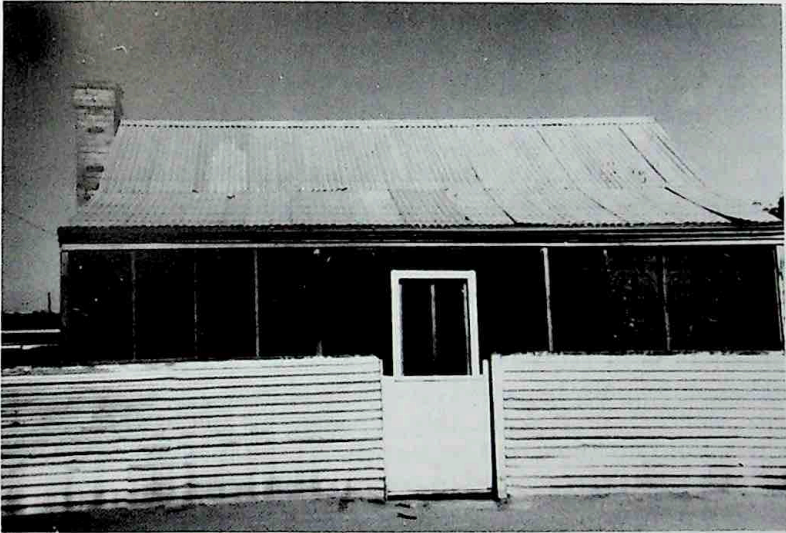
Charles and Elizabeth Maiden, circa 1927

exploration fever on the Barrier Range and on a return trip from Thackaringa Station they pegged out two claims, one of which was to become the South Mine and the other, portion of the Zinc Corporation.

In the course of his ramblings over the countryside my father took time off from cursing his team to court and wed Elizabeth Burns, whose father was employed by Hughes Bros on Kinchega Station. They were married at Menindee.

In 1875, assisted by Samuel Maiden, a timber home was erected in Menindee opposite the West End Hotel on a small rise and it became known as the 'House on the Hill'. It was here that the first seven children of the marriage were born.

My father always had a strong desire to purchase a property in the area and the opportunity arrived in about 1888 when the Pamamaroo Section of Kinchega Station was resumed from the Hughes Bros and offered for private sale. Father obtained a 10000 acre parcel of land with a frontage to the River Darling south of Lake Tandora and east of Lake Pamamaroo. So he departed with his bullock team and set forth to Pamamaroo with his wife and seven children, with hope in his heart for a long and prosperous life as a sheep farmer.



Home of Charles and Elizabeth Maiden at Menindee

Memories of Menindee

IN MY YOUTH there were two general stores in Menindee, run by Messrs Faust and Klemm, and although they were in competition with one another they were very close friends. Faust had two sons. The older of the two was a builder and blacksmith, while the younger, Otto, looked after the store and married one of Mr Klemm's daughters.

Faust's store was built from the bricks which once made up the Menindee Hospital, which I believe was built in about 1866. By 1879 the hospital was in ruins due to lack of support by local residents, and so the enterprising Mr Faust carted bricks from the site by dinghy along the river, and built his store in the township.

Today the remains of Mr Klemm's store can be seen close by to the old punt cutting just down from Maiden's Hotel.

A post office was established at Menindee on 1 January 1861, and Mr Edward Wieker, a storekeeper, was the first postmaster. He was paid £12 a year plus a small commission on the sale of postage stamps. Mail was delivered from all points of the compass by various coach services, which arrived at odd hours between 4 am and 11 pm. The post office even opened up on Sunday mornings for one hour, so that country people going to church could collect their mail.

In the early days of this century there were four hotels in Menindee—the West End, Maiden's, Albemarle and the Crown, which was next door to Maiden's, being separated by a long narrow lane. The Crown Hotel was owned by a Mr Nicholls, while in later years a Mr Underdown was the lessee of the other three hotels.

Mr Scobie and Mr Hart were local saddlers. Scobie had political aspirations and received a lot of support from my Uncle, Will Maiden, and finally he ended up as a Member of Parliament. I don't know whether or not he ably represented his constituents in Sydney, but I do know that he was successful in having a parcel of land at Horse Lake allotted to his two sons.

Dr Tomlinson was the local medicine man, and his wife was a music teacher. The locals were of the opinion that she could certainly read music and understand theory, but was an awful piano player. The story is told that Will Maiden loved dancing, but would refuse to front up if Mrs Tomlinson was playing. Her piano rhythm apparently only catered for humans with two left feet.

Early Days at Pamamaroo

I WAS BORN at Pamamaroo on 3 June 1895 and for the next fifteen years I was part of a very close knit and happy family and my childhood is today, in retrospect, full of happy memories. The family home lay about 100 yards from the river and consisted of three separate units. The main house, rectangular in construction comprised of living room, my parents' bedroom and the girls' bedroom and was of wood and iron construction. The only entrance was by a door into the living room and I believe father built it in such a fashion to enable a close check to be kept on my sisters. Some ten yards away lay the boys' bedroom which doubled as a school room and a little closer to the river was a kitchen, constructed entirely of galvanised iron. In those days it was usual for kitchens to be detached from the main living quarters and the reason, of course, was that the kitchen was the most likely place to catch fire and if so it would not readily spread to the house proper.

1888 was a drought year as only 2½ inches of rain fell while in the following year a record of 18½ inches drenched the countryside. With such vagaries of nature it was soon apparent to my father that the property was neither large nor productive enough to obtain sufficient income to provide for his family and so reluctantly he often left home for long periods leaving his elder sons in charge. To supplement the family income he sank dams, felled timber for river boat fuel, trapped and poisoned rabbits for their skins and took charge of the annual woolwash at Topar Station to the north of Menindee.

In later years father bought a further 20000 acres adjoining Pamamaroo and the property came to be known as the Mt Brown paddock. A canegrass swamp lay on the property at the foot of a large sandhill and I can recall travelling there in a spring cart and camping out overnight with father while he laid baits for dingoes, which were attacking our sheep and becoming a nuisance in the area. Adjacent to the swamp was a waterhole which was invariably full of sweet pure water. Box trees grew profusely around its perimeter and it became known as Maiden's Box Water Hole. While revisiting the area in 1978 I was informed that the waterhole is still there and has been unaffected by the modern day locking scheme.

Rabbits were always a pest in the district and the approach of summer invariably brought them to the river in plague pro-

portions. As I understand it the rabbit was introduced into the Australian countryside in Victoria about 1859. They reached the Murray River during 1872, crossed it, and by 1884 the Lachlan and Darling areas were crawling with the pests.

They entered into competition with the squatters' sheep and cattle for available grass, and nibbled it off until regeneration was impossible. In wet seasons their ground-riddled burrows started soil erosion and led to the collapse of top soil. After consuming the grasses the rabbits turned their attention to the edible bushes on which stock was surviving. Their voracious eating raped the countryside as they stripped it to bare bones.

The effect on pastoralists was, in many cases, a path to bankruptcy. Conoble Station near Wilcannia shore about 100000 sheep before the arrival of rabbits, but within about five years the number had been reduced to 45000.

To combat the menace the NSW Government introduced a bounty scheme, and in 1887 about 25 million rabbit scalps were produced for Government inspectors. The efforts of the 'Maidens' to combat the pest and our meagre reward for their skins is appropriately put by T. Wakefield in his ballad.
'The Rabbiter'

*'I skinned and scalped and scalped and skinned
Till me back was nearly broke,
With blood and muck all stiff and brown,
The stink of me clothes would knock you down,
And I slaved all day for half a crown
For the Sydney market bloke.'*

Most of the larger stations in the area employed a man known as the 'poison cart driver'. The poison cart was equipped with a hopper and a furrow making device. Poison pellets, made from phosphorus and pollard, were fed into the hopper and, as the cart was slowly driven they would fall into the furrow, to await the marauding rabbits.

The professional 'rabbiter' was usually a shrewd and, at times, devious man. Upon arrival of the Government inspector, the scalps would be counted, threepence a head paid, and then thrown on a fire to burn. The canny 'rabbiter' would ensure that the fire had been dampened down to delay the destruction process and, upon the inspector's departure, the scalps would be retrieved for counting again upon his next visit.

The end result of the rabbit invasion was inevitable. Many landowners had to resort to Bank finance for carry-on purposes, and if a bad season or two followed they would be sold up by the financiers. As G. H. Gibson put it 'The Banks own 'alf the bloomin' runs. The rabbits own the rest;' and a Queensland pastoralist was even more bitter when he said, 'and there's not much to choose

'twixt the Bank and Jews once a fellow gets put up a tree.'

I shall give one example of the manner in which pastoralists were treated by ruthless mortgagees.

In the 1880s Yanda Station, near Bourke, was owned by Mr W. Hatten. He experienced several bad years and his wool yield was reduced dramatically. The mortgagee of his property informed him that the interest rate would have to be increased. With diminished income Mr Hatten couldn't meet this demand, so the mortgagee immediately took possession and evicted him, 'without a shilling and without a horse to ride.' I might add that Mr Hatten had worked the property for over twenty years, and had invested £17000 in capital improvements.

The old folk song, 'The Squatter's Defeat', summed up the ruthlessness of capitalism in those days:—

*'The rich won't pay the piper,
So the poor man must, you know.'*

When I was six years old I would go with my brother to set traps on the property and before dawn we were out of bed to make a round of our traps. I was surprised to see, what I thought was another type of rabbit caught in a trap. 'Hey Dick', I called to my brother. 'I've got a long tailed rabbit' 'Leave him alone' replied Dick, 'He'll bite you'. It was my first sight of a possum. Father employed two methods to combat the rabbits. Green sticks, about six inches long and as thick as a finger, were cut from trees and dipped into a mixture of strychnine, flour, sugar and water. To my horror father used to taste the mixture to ensure it was sweet enough; I was afraid it would kill him but he assured me that none of the mixture was swallowed. These baits were then laid along drawn out furrows leading from the rabbit warrens to their watering place. The other method he used was netting. A deep hole lay in the creek and in dry seasons rabbits would water there in their thousands. The hole was surrounded with wirenetting and at its base round funnel holes were inserted in the netting. On one night 3000 rabbits were snared in the trap. The task of skinning the rabbits and pegging out the skins on wires was delegated to myself and brothers. This job took us many hours to complete and by the time it was finished we were sick of the stench emanating from the corpses and to this day I cannot fancy eating rabbits.

Clouds of white cockatoos and galahs frequently descended upon the station to feed on small, bitter paddy melons and their sharp beaks quickly stripped the outer skin to expose the seeds which were quickly disposed of with a constant clicking noise of their voracious beaks. Wild turkey and ducks often filled the family larder and we boys always considered that shooting these animals was one of the more pleasant chores associated with station life.

When a high river was running, it would fill the nearby lakes and

ducks would nest in hollow logs in Lake Tandora. We used to row out on the lake in a dinghy and rob the nests and the eggs were taken home to Mother for cooking purposes.

Wild turkeys were a welcome change to our normal mutton diet. Father often drove the younger children out to the swampy scrub, near Lake Pamamaroo, and, to yells of delight from the kids, he would shoot this delicious tasting bird. My mother once told me that, when the family first moved to the Pamamaroo property, wild turkeys could be shot only yards away from the house. Alas the arrival of foxes in the area soon led to their extinction.

In my early days the River Darling was virtually alive with fish. At one time father employed four men to catch them. Their catch was brought to the station and after being gutted and washed they were hung in bough sheds to dry. Later in the afternoon they were placed on a cart, between layers of leafy boughs and at dusk one of my older brothers would commence an overnight trek to Broken Hill where there was a ready market for the catch.

Snakes were prolific in the area and the most common species was the carpet snake. I remember one humorous event concerning a snake and the family pet cockatoo, which was a very good talker. The cocky was in a cage under a pepper corn tree and I picked up a dead snake on a stick and waved it in front of the cage. The poor old bird was alarmed and stuck its feathers out, which made it appear twice its normal size and after an initial burst of raucous shrieking, cried out plainly 'Put it down!'

One warm summer's night we boys in our isolated bedroom, heard terrifying female yells coming from the main house. Dashing out of bed, barefooted and with our nightshirts streaming, we hurried over to find Father, waddy in hand, killing a snake which had ventured into the girls' room. Snakes were common in the area, and rarely did they venture inside, but on this occasion the girls' bedroom window was open, and the marauding snake had somehow found its way in, and raised the alarm by making a thudding noise as it fell onto a tin trunk below the window.

My brothers and I were keen horsemen and while we were at Pamamaroo my older brothers rode at several race meetings. I can recall one particular event held at Topar Station, which, at that time was owned by my Uncle, Billy Daws. Father was the official judge and my brother Arthur in one particular race was satisfied that he had won by a short head, but father not wishing to show any family preference called it a deadheat. A re-run was arranged between the two 'deadheaters' and Arthur raced past the winning post by a clear margin of two lengths and as he came to salute the judge he said sarcastically, 'Call that a deadheat!' Father responded in a quiet, threatening voice 'If you don't behave yourself you'll do in first prize'.

With a large family to look after my mother was a very busy woman and her days were fully occupied. Bread was baked in the kitchen oven and one of her specialities was what I called 'brownie'. To the normal bread dough was added sugar, currants and raisins and to this day I can savour the delicious taste of that sweetbread.

Modern day housewives would possibly not have taken too kindly to the primitive cooking conditions which my mother had to endure. In the early days at Pamamaroo she cooked over an open fireplace, and it wasn't until the early 1900s that she had the luxury of a cast iron stove.

When my parents first went to Pamamaroo there was no bridge over Pamamaroo Creek, and any journey to Menindee had to be done over a rough bush track around the lake. My father, tiring of this, and being an innovative man, stretched a taut wire across the creek, and crossed it by standing in a 400 gallon tank, pulling himself across while his horse, Sheet Anchor, swam behind. This sometimes worried Mother. She feared he might fall out of the tank after having a few ales, in Menindee.

The family was reasonably self sufficient in respect of fruit and vegetables as father established and maintained quite a large garden comprising of nectarine, peach, apricot, pear and cherry trees and many varieties of vegetables. In the early days at Pamamaroo, water had to be carried in buckets to the house and garden from the river but at a later date father bought a donkey engine and pump from Syd Gough and installed two 400 gallon tanks near the house. Thereafter the garden was irrigated and to supplement stock feed a lucerne paddock was established. A pipeline was laid from the tanks to the house with a tap outside the kitchen.

Sleeping indoors during the extreme heat of summer was, at its best, hot and uncomfortable, and to counter these trying conditions we boys built 'post and rail' beds outside. The underlying mattress was wirenetting, and the mosquito repellent was the seeds of peppercorn trees rubbed over our bodies.

Saturday evenings was bath night for the children and how pleasant it was to snuggle down in a warm tub of water in front of a roaring fire. On one occasion, after being dried with a towel, Mother placed a new flannel shirt on brother Arthur and those readers who are old enough to recall them will know that they are very prickly. Arthur decided to alleviate the itching by rolling in a small sandhill just outside the house. Father being alerted to this prank, stormed out of the house and grabbed Arthur by the scruff of the neck with a view to locking him in the boys' bedroom, as punishment. Arthur not to be outdone, bit Father on the finger and

for his trouble received a few whacks across a bare bottom. That was the only time I saw Father physically punish the children.

Five miles to the North of Pamamaroo lay the property named 'Haythorpe' owned by the Larkin family. Matt Larkin, a son of the owner, was a personal friend of my brothers. When I was about eight years of age, a measles epidemic in the district laid low several of my brothers and while they were confined to their beds, Matt rode up on his horse and tied it up outside the homestead. 'Good morning Matt', said my Mother. 'Hello Mrs Maiden' was the reply, 'I've got the bally measles' and he walked over to the school room cum bedroom, stripped off and hopped into bed with my brothers and stayed there until he got better.

The first horse I owned was the result of my labours at the Woolwash at Topar Station, of which more will be related later. The mare was purchased for the then princely sum of eight pounds from Bill Rich, who was camped along Pamamaroo Creek. I lovingly took the horse home, and my brother Bert who considered himself something of a horseman, saddled her. To his disgust she refused to budge. We then attempted to harness 'Possum' (as I called her) into a buggy, and after much cajoling and cursing she paced forward a few steps, and ground to a halt. Exit Possum. I sold her to Pearce Power for the purchase price (£8).

As can be seen from my early days at Pamamaroo our pleasures were few and simple. We had a flock of goats on the property, and they served a dual purpose. Father built a small cart, and we children would harness a goat to it to spend many pleasant leisure hours exploring the countryside and carting wood home.

They also provided us with milk and butter, which was made by mother in a churn. In dry seasons the goats were yarded some four miles from the homestead near a well, surrounding which was permanent pasture. At such times my brothers and I would rise early and walk to the well, milk the goats, and carry it back home in time to have breakfast and be ready for school at nine o'clock.

My schooling was limited. For a short time Father engaged an elderly gentleman by the name of Pearce to conduct lessons, but at a later date my married sister, Louise, taught me spasmodically.

Aborigines were still in the district when I was a young boy, and often they would squat under the homestead's peppercorn tree, and would not move until they were given a handout of sugar, tea, flour and tobacco. We had no trouble with them, and they were frequent visitors in the course of their walkabouts.

Most of the children considered Father too severe with them, but as I said earlier, he never laid a hand on them in a disciplinary way, yet generally the family shied clear of him. I was perhaps the exception. I was never afraid to approach him, and all during his lifetime we had a very fond relationship.

On 2 June 1905, a party was held at home prior to the family's departure to the Woolwash at Topar Station, and by coincidence this was the eve of my tenth birthday. A few days earlier, Mother had been down to the river to do some shopping on a trading steamer, and among the items purchased was a new suit for me.

As luck would have it, the only one she could find to fit me had long pants. She wanted to cut the pants down into shorts, but I pleaded with her, and dear old Mum relented and I was launched into long pants. What a proud young boy I was, and I must confess that I was not sorry to finish wearing knickerbockers with long stockings which were secured with elastic garters and came over my knees.

At one time Father paddocked a herd of cows for a friend, and Dick and I decided to start a dairy. We rigged a yard and bails, and for a while we carted butter into Menindee to sell to the local store. The venture didn't last long as it was not profitable. The cows were very old and had not been domesticated, and their milk production was very low. We needed horses to yard them, and at times they became quite fractious. On one occasion Bert appeared in the cowyard at milking time. Father was about to let a cow out of the bail and told him to stand clear.

'I'll be OK,' said Bert, picking up a large stick to defend himself. The cow took one look at him and charged. Bert was off in a flash, and his headlong dive through the yard rail would have done credit to an Olympian.

1910 arrived and it was evident that my older brothers, who were virtually running the property for very low wages, were becoming disgruntled; wanting to break out on their own.

Talking to my father just prior to his death in 1930 I brought up the subject of the sale of Pamamaroo, and he said, 'If I had known that my brother Will was going to sell "Maidenville" I would have hung on'. I sensed from that remark that Father was sick and tired of living alongside his brother, the so called 'uncrowned king'.

The property had never been profitable, so it was duly sold, and Father purchased the freehold of the Roseborough Hotel.

One of the events of the year was the Boxing Day Sports and evening dance at Menindee. After the Christmas Day festivities were over at home the family would travel by horse and cart over a rough bush track for ten miles to Menindee, where we would stay for two nights with Uncle Harry and Aunt Sarah Pretty.

The two Pedroja boys, Jim, and Jack, would entertain customers at Maiden's pub. Jim, a good singer, was accompanied by Jack on the piano. They lived at Speculation Lake, which filled from the overflow of Lake Menindee.

Sports were held on the afternoon of Boxing Day and my older brothers were very good runners and met with many successes. I

would run in the children's races and usually came second or worse; the prize for such outstanding achievement being a bunch of grapes. At night I would be in bed at Uncle Harry's and hear the music and gaiety from the dance floating on the breeze. The Pedrojas were keen dancers but they could only go to a dance one at a time—they only had one waistcoat between them!

As a young boy it was my pleasure to drive my sisters into Menindee for a community dance. Dressed in my 'Sunday Best' I would harness up our mare into a sulky and transport a gaggle of giggling sisters into Menindee. For the rest of the evening I was banished to an outside room to await the finish of the dancing. In later years I was invited by my sisters to dance with them and finally in 1909 I danced with Myrtle Hart, daughter of the local saddler. I was then fourteen years of age.

The Woolwash

SOME FORTY MILES north of Pamamaroo lay Topar Station, comprising 240000 acres, owned by my uncle, Billy Daws. Topar adjoined Glenlyon Station, and the homestead was built on Yalcowinna Creek.

Each year my father took charge of the woolwash at the station, and the family's annual excursion to Topar was, as far as I was concerned, an annual paid holiday. School was abandoned by the children, and the ensuing six weeks or so were fully occupied with scouring wool from the shearing of 18000 to 22000 sheep.

The family travelled to Topar by covered horsewaggon, and the journey usually took us about two days. The first night was spent camping out under canvas at Maiden's Box waterhole. The earliest incident I can remember of the trip was when I was three years old. On pulling up for lunch one day an old family friend, Tom Reynolds, who was travelling with us, built little hurdles from salt bush sticks for me to jump over.

In the shearing season, Topar woolshed was a hive of activity. New chums and experts spent back-breaking days under a red hot iron roof, which combined with dust, noise and unpleasant sheep-yard odours, made shearing very hard work indeed.



Old Topar woolshed



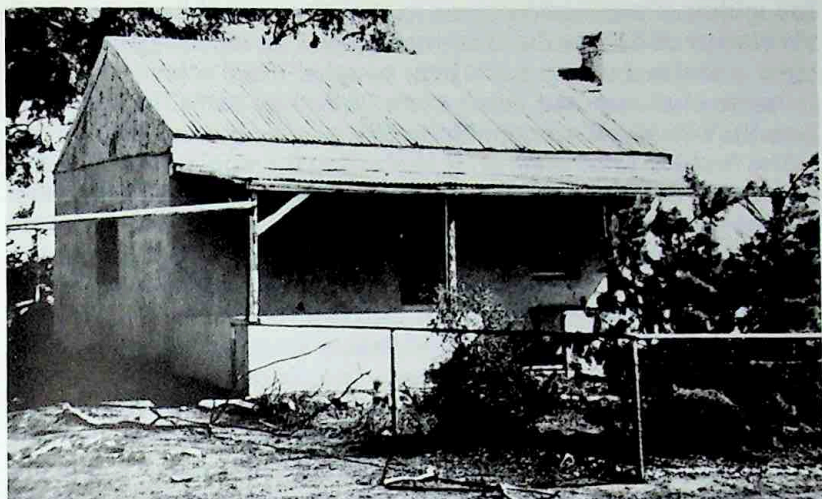
*Swing bridge from
Topar homestead
to men's quarters*

The successful shearer was able to clip the fleece as close as possible to the skin without cutting the sheep. However, even the most expert shearer couldn't avoid this, and when it did happen he would yell, 'Tar!', and a young boy would dash up with a tarpot for dabbing on the sheep's wound.

In the early days of hand shears the most sheep that could be shorn by one man in a nine-hour working day was about seventy to eighty, while if 100 was reached that shearer would earn the respect of both the overseer and his mates. Machine shearing was invented in the 1880s, and the first test was made at Dunlop Station, near Bourke, in 1888.

The usual hours of work were from 6 am to 6 pm on week days, with two or three hours off during the day for meals and 'smokos'. On Saturday work finished at 3 pm, and so the average working week lasted about fifty to sixty hours.

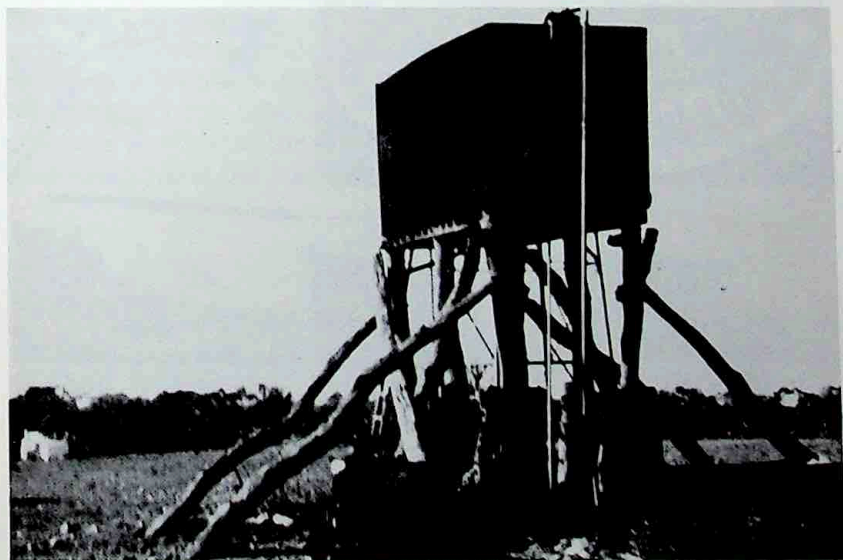
On Saturday afternoon, many of the shearers would hike over to the Little Topar Hotel for a drinking session, the cost of which was usually put 'on the slate' until they received their cheques at the end of the shearing. Some stayed in the shearers' quarters and gambled, using IOUs scribbled on paper, while the more thrifty among them simply rested in readiness for the following week's labours.



Men's quarters at Topar

After the shearing was completed, Billy Daws would pay them off at the station homestead, and to give some idea of the wages of those days—if a man shored say 6000 sheep he would receive about £40 for his labour of about 600 hours.

Upon our arrival at Topar, we would settle into our quarters, which comprised three units. One wood and iron building consisted of three bedrooms—Father and Mother at one end, the boys at the other, and following the pattern at Pamamaroo, the girls in



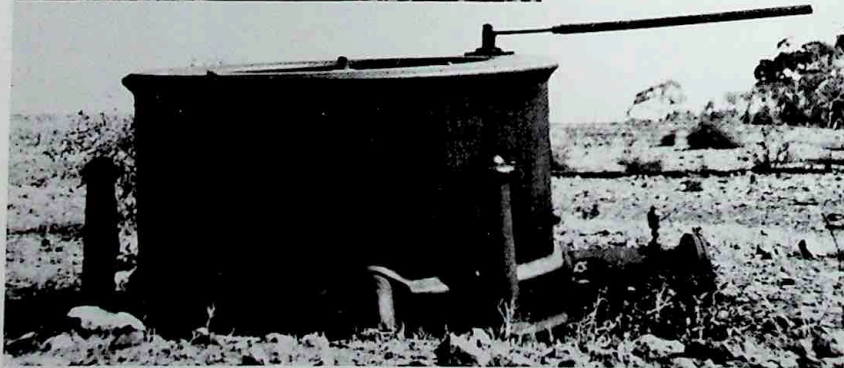
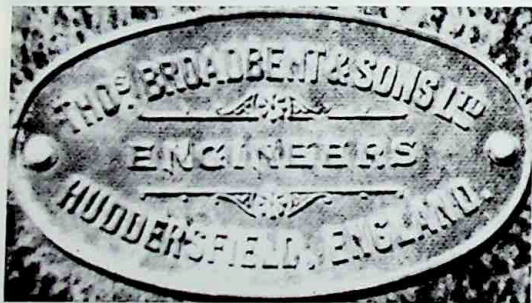
Water tank at Topar

the middle. Once again access to their room could only be made via Mother and Father's! Close nearby was an all-iron galley and a shed constructed of gum tree boughs. This served the dual purpose of dining and living room. It had an earth floor and the benefits of natural air-conditioning!

The first job to be done prior to starting the wool washing was to tidy up what was called the 'green'. This was a piece of land measuring about 2000 square yards, lying adjacent to the wool scour. All hands would set to with scythes and rakes to clear the land and erect a wirenetting fence around it in preparation for dumping the scoured wool upon it to dry.

The scouring team consisted of Father (as general overseer), an engine driver, a soap-tub operator, two men manning the cold water tanks, a wringer, two pressmen, and two men on the 'green'. The most important operation was the preparation of a solution of caustic soda and soap, which was placed in the soap tubs. Too much caustic soda would take the 'yolk' out of the wool and render it useless, because it is the 'yolk' that gives weight to the wool.

Four-gallon buckets of water were heated on outside fires, and bars of signal soap, chopped into fine pieces, were added to the boiling water. This, together with caustic soda, was poured upon the wool in the soap tubs, and left to stand for about twenty minutes.



The woolwash wringer and maker's plate (inset)

As a young boy of ten I was in charge of the water heating and soap-cutting operation, and because of the weight of the mixture, I carried each one into the scour with two hands between my legs. After several trips I was tiring a little, and a bucket hit a stone in the ground and splashed the boiling mixture over my face and legs.

Hearing my yells of anguish Father came running out of the scour and said, 'Quick, get up to the house and rub kerosene into the burns'. Away I dashed, administered first aid, and within half-an-hour I was back on duty.

The wool was pitch-forked out of the soap tubs onto a draining board, after which it was manhandled into the water tubs, through which cold water was running continuously. Once this cleansing operation was finished, the wool was drained, pressed through a wringer and dumped in heaps on the wool scour floor.

The day's operations began at 6 am, and after consuming a pint of tea, all hands would turn to for about two hours to place the scoured wool on the 'green'. Finally the dried wool was pressed and transported to Broken Hill for forwarding to market. I remember that Billy Daws was happy to receive ninepence a pound for scoured wool.

The woolwash was usually undertaken in August-September in each year, but on occasions it was done as early as June and as late as December. The timing would be entirely dependent on the availability of water in the station dams.

The food supplied to the workers was ample and plentiful. Topar mutton, cooked by Mother in various ways, with bread and 'brownie'. Vegetables were obtained from the station garden, which was tended and maintained by a Chinaman, while each morning I would walk over to the cowshed and bring back billycans of fresh milk.

Adults working at the scour were paid about two pounds a week plus keep, while the youngsters only received about five shillings.

August, the German Cook

AS WILL BE related later, my family moved to the Roseborough Hotel in 1910, and my brother Arthur and I took charge of the scour for the next year, after which my uncle sold the property, and my woolwashing days came to an end at the age of sixteen.

One of Billy Daws' old and faithful servants was August, a German cook, and over a period of years, during the annual woolwash at Topar, I came to know him very well. He was a massive man, his hobbies being eating and drinking. He considered that a shoulder of cold mutton was not too much for a growing man to consume at dinner, while seven fried lamb chops was an ideal breakfast.

While the woolwash was in progress my brother Bert was favoured by August because he, of all our family, was an enormous eater and could keep up with the cook in the intake of offerings flowing from the cookhouse.

Every so often August sought leave to go into Broken Hill, where he would cut out a sizable cheque at the Southern Cross Hotel. I witnessed his homecoming on one occasion, as unshaven and with bloodshot eyes he virtually crawled towards his quarters, and in guttural English pronounced that 'he be so crook as any man'.

I was to see August later. During World War I, I was enjoying a beer at the Southern Cross when he wandered in. Mine Host, Jack Fairhead said, 'August, do you know this bloke?'

August gave me a searching glance and replied, 'Little "Dot" Maiden—I reared the bloody lot of 'em'. (In my early youth I was short of stature, and known to my family and friends as 'Little Dot'.)

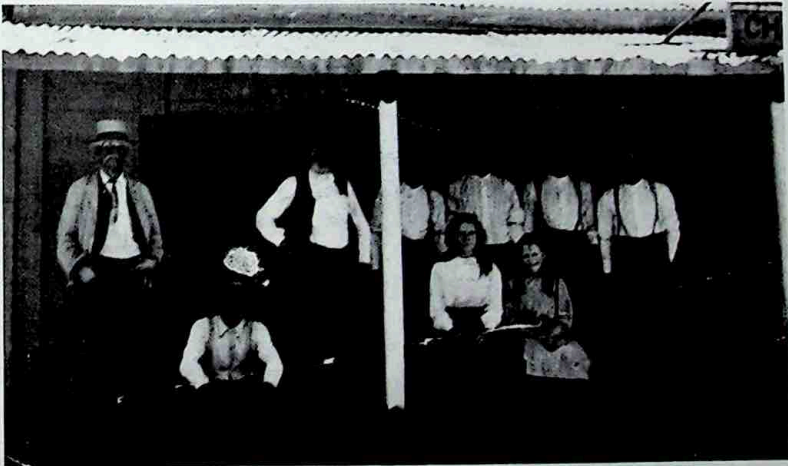
Roseborough Hotel

IN THE EARLY days of the twentieth century, there were many hotels located intermittently along the Darling River. Five lay between Wentworth and Menindee, and eighteen miles to the north of that village lay the Roseborough. Some twenty miles further northward, towards Bourke, was another, which traded at various times as the 'Boundary' and 'Rocky Hotel'. My mother's sister married a Mr Pretty, and for a time they were licensees of the 'Boundary'.

The move from Pamamaroo to the Roseborough occupied many days, and it was left to my cousin, Bill Pretty, and myself, to shift all the furniture. As the hotel was located on the eastern side of the river, Bill and I transported the family chattels across the murky Darling in a large dinghy.

At the time of the move our family had been reduced to Mother, Father, Alice, Maude and yours truly. The rest of the children were scattered far and wide in the immediate district. Dick was working on Henley Station, while Bert was a colt-breaker at Albemarle, about two miles south of the Roseborough.

The Roseborough consisted of eight bedrooms, living quarters and bar; the kitchen and dining room were detached, some twenty yards from the main building.



Roseborough Hotel—1911

Back—Tom Reynolds, Charles Maiden, Arthur Maiden, Bert Maiden, Dick Maiden and Frank Maiden.

Front—'Waterbag', Alice Maiden, Maude Maiden

As Father's only male offsider, I was employed as the yardman and general roustabout. I carted wood from along the Darling to replenish the family woodheap, kept the premises tidy, looked after my pet kangaroos and made lemonade. This particular operation was to mix syrup with water, which was stirred vigorously in a drum. The resultant brew was siphoned into bottles, which had marbles in the crown as a sealer.

The liquor supplies for the hotel were either transported up the Darling on steamers, or came from Adelaide via Broken Hill. The river supply was spasmodic, because steamers were often stranded further south. I remember on one occasion I drove a motor car seventy miles down to Pooncarie to pick up two cases of stranded whisky.

Kegs of beer were housed in the cellar below the bar, and a hand pump lifted the amber brew from the depths for thirsty customers.

Unruly customers and guests were often encountered. One evening the hotel guests were enjoying their dinner with Father, as Mine Host, at the head of the table. Sitting next to 'Poddy' Palmer, a local identity, was a man of Afghan or Indian descent. Having what he considered too much meat on his plate, the foreign gentleman passed some surplus meat onto 'Poddy's' plate. 'Poddy' took exception to this unwarranted lack of table manners, and refused to proceed with the repast. Father, acting with decorum, asked the offender to leave the festive board, and upon his refusal to oblige, the 'old man' gave him a few well placed blows about the head, after which the defaulter left quietly.

Shearing time at Albemarle Station was a busy time for the pub. The shearers were heavy and well seasoned drinkers and their cook loved a bit of a fight. They encamped at the pub one day, and Father was in Broken Hill and had left Arthur in charge. A fracas started in the bar, and the first I heard of it was when Arthur phoned me in Menindee, where I had been picking up supplies.

'There's a stoush on,' said Arthur, 'and no way am I going to buy in. Tell the Police Sergeant to get down here.'

I hot-footed over to the Police Station, and the Sergeant borrowed my horse and set off apace to the Roseborough. Upon his arrival, I learned later, the offending shearers were either lying supine with the effects of booze or were nursing their wounds in various parts of the hotel grounds.

Alongside the hotel was a bit of flat land which was used for athletic meetings. Youths of the district would assemble there to pit their skills against one another. My brother Bert was a first class runner. While employed at Albemarle Station he lived at the hotel and rode his bicycle to work each day. After he had finished his day's labours, as a colt-breaker, he would come home and commence training. After this I came into action with a bottle of

linament to rub him down, 'and if I didn't do it right I would get a clip under the ear'.

My massaging duties were of some assistance, I trust, because on one particular day, Bert won three events—130 yards hurdle over eight flights, 130 yards Sheffield and 220 yards handicap.

While at the Roseborough, Jim Larkins of Haythorpe Station asked me to teach him to drive the Model T. I spent a fortnight with him, my teaching fee being five pounds. Poor old Jim couldn't get the hang of driving the car at all, despite all my efforts to pass on the benefits of my training in Broken Hill and the practical experience I had gained in the meantime.

One day towards the end of the fortnight I said to him, 'Jim, what would you do if you were out driving and the car stopped?'

Jim pondered for a moment, and with a twinkle in his eye replied, 'I would sit and blow the bally horn until someone came along'.

Jim was a brother of Matt Larkins. They had two sisters, Annie and Mary, who were trained nurses.

'Paddy' Leonard lived in an old shanty hut about one mile down river from the Roseborough Hotel. He was a kindly illiterate old man, who scratched out a living by cutting timber for the river steamers. On occasions I used to cart timber for him in a sledge, (pulled by what was called a half draught horse), and stack it in heaps (4 ft by 4 ft) on the river bank. Old Paddy couldn't read or write, but he used to get the Broken Hill papers delivered, and the locals would read them to him.

As time went on, Paddy decided to look around for a wife, and he took up with an elderly widow, and following a short courtship the wedding was performed at Menindee. The groom apparently celebrated the happy event not too wisely, and by the time he and his bride were ready to start for home, dear old Paddy was shickered.

He and a mate, who was also far from sober, crawled up on to the front seat of the horse and cart, while the blushing bride was banished to the rear. Off they started on their two-hour homeward trip, which for the two inebriates passed with much jocularly, together with further draughts from a flagon or two of wine.

The wedding party duly arrived at Paddy's mansion only to find that the bride was missing. This had an immediate sobering effect, and the horse and cart did a quick about turn and hurried off back along the dusty bush track. An irate Mrs Leonard was found about four miles from home, and Paddy and his mate were left in no doubt as to her inner thoughts as she poured forth language of which a 'bullocky' would have been proud. She had apparently fallen from the back of the cart, and her plaintive calls after hitting the ground were not heard by the bemused mates.

Notwithstanding such a disastrous start to their marriage, they

saw out their remaining days in relative peace and harmony on the banks of the River Darling.

The hotel is now demolished, and not a brick or remnant of the original building remains. I found the location a few years ago, and this was only possible because I remember that when we first moved there, Father employed some men to make alterations to the hotel, and to cut an offending bough off a gum tree which hung over the main building. The scar on that tree still remains.

The modern day locking scheme has caused a lot of growth in the area, and a huge levee bank now traverses the site of the Roseborough Hotel.



Menindee Cemetery

Peace

*When you leave the Concrete Jungle and take off far outback,
You'll feel life's tension slip away as you hit the Red Dust track,
You'll visit the old Country townships and stop for a beer or two.
Watch a man shooting ducks with his faithful old dog,
And know that his troubles are few!
See the beauty of the Bush Gums along the River Banks,
And for these days of tranquil peace
I give the North my thanks.*

Darling River Steamers

FROM ITS SOURCE in Queensland the Darling River flows some 1700 miles to its junction with the River Murray at Wentworth. It enters New South Wales at Mungindi, 346 miles from its source.

The first interest shown in navigation of the Murray-Darling system emanated in South Australia. The vessel 'Waterwitch' was sailed across the Murray Mouth in 1840 by Mr W. J. S. Pullen, and this urged others to press the South Australian Government to provide funds for the development of river trade. However, these representations soon foundered as Governor Gawler was recalled to England, and Governor Grey succeeded him with instructions from the Colonial Office to curb Gawler's alleged extravagances.

In 1849 two Murray pioneers, Edmund Morey and John McKinlay of Euston (Victoria), persuaded Governor Young to consider putting a line of steamers on the Murray, and in the following year the SA Government announced that it would pay £2000 each to the first two iron steamers to travel from Goolwa to the Darling junction. The only stipulation was that the vessels must exceed 40 HP and have a draught of two feet or more.

The Governor's offer was not taken up immediately, but the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 soon had two astute men, Messrs Cadell and Randell, undertaking the construction of two steamers—the 'Mary Ann' and 'Lady Augusta'.

These pioneers saw that possible rewards could be gained from their plans to haul supplies and produce to and from settlements along the rivers. At this time the pastoralists were badly hit. Their employees were leaving in their thousands for the goldfields, and the 'bullockies', who transported their wool and produce to markets, were turning their attention to the more rewarding short hauls to the goldfields. By 1853 many of the squatters had two years' wool clip on their hands, and with no prospect of obtaining anyone to cart it to the coast. This was the catalyst for the beginning of what was to be many years of intense trading activity along the waters of the Murray River and its tributaries.

In the late 1860s the railways commenced their incursion into the river trade, and in the ensuing years the states of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia extended their railway systems. The decline in river trade commenced slowly, but surely, from the peak year of 1872.

The first steamer to penetrate as far as Bourke on the Darling was the 'Gemini', commanded by Captain Pickhills, in late 1861. The first reported loss of a steamer in the area was on 9 November 1872, when the 'Providence' blew up after a boiler had burst. This happened five miles south of Kinchega, and four members of the crew were killed, including the captain, John Davis.

Many trading steamers pulled up alongside the river bank when I was a young boy at Pamamaroo. They would virtually stock anything from a fishhook to a bible. I remember purchasing a pair of 'Sunday best' boots for ten shillings from my wages earned at the Topar Woolwash. Mother was a regular customer, buying the majority of the household requirements from the steamer's large stocks. All drapery lines were displayed on the lower deck, where it could be inspected in the shade of canvas awnings.

We children looked forward to their arrival, and quite often, while lying snugly in our beds, the steamers could be heard for miles along the river. Many a night we would jump out of bed and scamper barefooted, in our nightshirts, down to the river bank, watch them steam by and cry out 'What boat?' One night the man steering called out to us and said 'Rob Roy'.

The Darling steamboat crews had to learn many arts which are unknown to seafarers. Pulley blocks were hitched to overhanging trees and cargo man-handled up steep banks; at night they could detect floating logs in the glare of the steamers acetylene gig lamps. By looking at waves on the river or the direction ducks were flying they could tell whether another steamer was close by, and they were experts at spotting tell-tale signs on the river bank as to where cargo was to be discharged or taken aboard.

Some idea of the importance of the river trade along the Darling can be measured by the value of exports and imports from Bourke and Wilcannia in 1890. Imports were valued at £237000 and exports £638000. These river boats were essential to the area. They could carry goods at seventy-five percent less cost than overland haulage by bullocks and camels, and until the coming of the railways they played a vital part in opening up the river lands for settlement, and were the main connecting link with the seaboard.

High rivers presented many problems, because boats could wander for days in backwater before coming back to the main stream. Low rivers slowed down river traffic, and the record for the longest trip from Goolwa to Bourke is held by the 'Jane Eliza'. She took three years to carry a 300 ton cargo of building material to Bourke, being stranded by low water on three occasions.

Snags were a menace to navigation, and boats fitted with powerful winches and tackle were employed to remove these hazards. At times they were self-defeating, because 'snaggers' simply hauled the logs out of the river and dumped them on the bank, only to have them flushed back by the first flood.

On the Darling when a high river was running, steamers were not permitted to travel down-stream at night, because the current was so strong that it interfered with the steering mechanism, and therefore they would pull up alongside the bank for the night.

The Maiden family had an association, of sorts, with steamers. Dick Black married a cousin of mine, and for some years he was the skipper of the 'Marion'. I did not see much of him over the years, but in 1945 I met him at the Pooncarie Hotel. We had a few drinks, and perhaps Dick might have had a few too many whiskeys. Be that as it may, he told me the following story:

'I worked for old Bowering, and the "Marion" used to pull in at Morgan quite often, and I got sweet on a young girl. Her family had arranged to go to Bourke on another steamer, and the time factor was such that I arranged to meet her at a certain spot on the Darling to have a yarn. I duly tied up to await her arrival, and in the meantime I am dreaming up words sufficient enough to express my feelings of admiration and love. To my disgust, when her steamer arrived at the supposed lovers' tryst it ploughed straight on up the river, and there she was in all splendour gaily waving to me. I went down to my cabin, grabbed pen and paper, and wrote to her a letter to end all letters.'

Mr H. B. Hughes who purchased Kinchega Station from George Urquhart in 1870, soon realised the economic benefits to be obtained from the use of steamers, and in 1879 he placed his own steamer 'Decoy' on the River Darling, together with a barge 'Reliance'. The steamer and barge were manufactured at Glasgow, Scotland, and the various sections of the vessels were transported to South Australia and assembled.

In 1864 the largest known flood, until that time, swamped the Darling basin. In following years there was a series of deluges, and the floodwaters turned paddocks into billabongs, while high ground became islands. At this time navigation of the Darling was extremely hazardous, and steamer captains had to be enticed to leave the main stream and negotiate the shallow floodwaters to within safe distance of the sheep stations, where wool would be punted to the steamer in small boats.

As I mentioned earlier, the extension of railway lines sounded the death knell of the steamer trade. Railway bridges built across the River Murray were so low that it was difficult, at times impossible for steamers to pass under them. Station owners were induced to use the railways by being offered cut rates.

The railway line from South Australia to Broken Hill was completed in 1888, and with other rail services being completed east of the Darling, river trade steadily diminished, and by the late 1920s they were rarely seen on the Darling. In 1942 the 'Renmark' was the last river boat to travel up the Darling beyond Menindee.

Horses

I HAVE HAD a lifelong love for horses, and in my youth I would go anywhere to drive a team. As a very young boy my first experience was to drive a horse and sulky at Pamamaroo, and as the years went by I handled two horses and buggy. At the age of thirteen I was driving a 'Unicorn' (three horses-single leader).

One of my earliest memories is of watering the stock and horses at Pamamaroo. My older brothers and I would be out of bed before daybreak, light the fire, make tea and toast and sit and wait for daybreak. As soon as we could see a hand in front of our faces, off we would set for a well which lay four to five miles from the homestead. Upon arrival we filled the troughs, which were made out of hollow logs, then trekked back home, a walk of about one-and-a-half hours.



Unicorn team

On one occasion, Brother Dick was attempting to show me how to get a drink out of a trough, and the next thing he was in the trough, clothes and all. Pulling himself out, and with some boyish oaths, he demanded that his dry, laughing brothers light a fire to enable him to dry off his clothes. They refused to accommodate him with the lame excuse, 'We'll be late for breakfast'.

Horses, including coach horses, were not shod in the early days because there were no made roads, and in the Broken Hill-Menindee areas it was invariably 'soft going'. About the only attention needed was to trim their hooves, because if they grew too long they would split.

The history of horses associated with the coaching firm, Cobb & Co has always intrigued me. A thoroughbred stallion, Mustang,



Cobb & Co style coach

was imported from England and mated with Clydesdale mares, and the progeny was used by the company. The Clydesdale strain gave strength and power, while Mustang's genes provided pace. Mustang was the sire of Carbine, whose exploits need no elaboration by me. My brother Bert once owned a horse called 'Tralita', which was a descendant of Carbine. Tralita was the winner of the only gold cup raced for in Mildura.

Shortly before the family left Pamamaroo I drove my brother Sam and his wife Dolly out to the No. 1 mail change station. The station lay twenty-one miles out of Menindee on the track to Broken Hill, and I drove them in a buggy drawn by a unicorn team of three horses.



Broken Hill-Menindee coach (circa 1890)

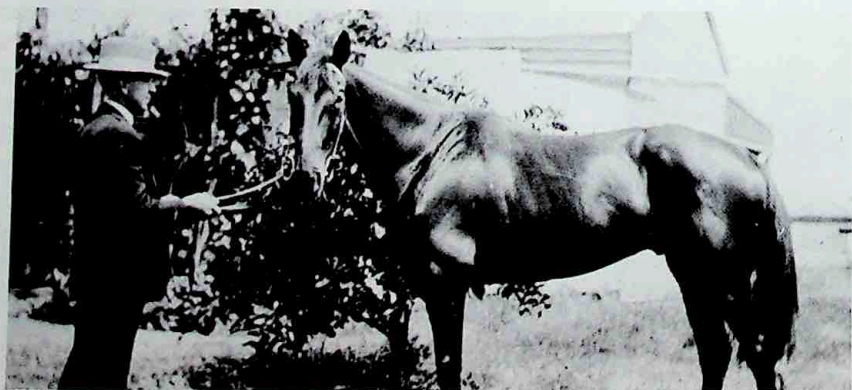


'Tralita'—gold cup winner at Mildura



*L to R—S. Burns,
Alf Golley,
Bert Maiden,
Neil McLeod,
—, Dr Jude*

At the presentation



Frank Maiden holding 'Colite'

Sam was to be in charge of the station, while Dolly attended to travellers' inner needs by way of food and drink. I camped there for the night and carted wood for them next day, and then set off for Menindee, where brother Arthur was waiting for a ride back home. It was Good Friday when I arrived, and Arthur greeted me with, 'I'm hungry and I'm going up to the pub to have a feed of meat'. I remonstrated with him and replied, 'What will Mum say?' Arthur retaliated 'I don't care, I'm off,' and a meat meal it was to be, and our indiscretion became a well kept secret.

My first sight of Broken Hill was in 1911. Jack Cleary, who ran the Broken Hill-Menindee mail coach service, was also engaged in transporting shearers around the district. He employed me to drive a five-horse drag and shearers from Netley Station to Broken Hill. The trip took a couple of days, and after changes of horses at No. 1 Station and Battery Tank we arrived at Broken Hill at 3 o'clock in the morning. Some five miles out of the 'Hill' there was a vantage point overlooking the town, and the sight of the string of lights along the line of lode is one I shall always remember.

At another time I drove some shearers from Albemarle Station to the No. 1 mail change, where Jack Cleary was to bring a relief driver down from Broken Hill. I arrived at No. 1 to await Cleary, but he never turned up. I learned later that he had forgotten the arrangement, and instead of calling at No. 1 had taken a diversion route to Menindee via Box Tank.

The shearers were becoming hot and thirsty, and bemoaning the fact that there was no pub in the near vicinity, when salvation arrived in the form of the motor mail coach, closely followed by my brother Charlie, driving an empty horse mail coach. (In the early days of motor coaches it was usual for a horse coach to follow in case of mechanical breakdowns.)



*Horses to the rescue
Standing near horses—Ern and Jack Tainsh*

Charlie decided to drive the shearers into the 'Hill', and to my joy he told me I would have to take the horse coach into Menindee. Dusk was approaching, and after the gas lamps were lit on the coach I set off, somewhat apprehensively, I must confess. Approaching the outskirts of Menindee I attempted to give the few customary bursts on the rusty coach bugle from which sallied forth a series of piercing bullfrog-like noises.

When I arrived I was greeted by Jack Cleary, and following his apology regarding his forgetfulness he said, 'I wondered who was driving the coach because Charlie never lights the lamps, and he can blow that bloody bugle in the proper way'.

On another occasion I was with Jack Cleary in a horse coach following my brother Charlie, who was driving the motor coach to Menindee. Approaching a steep descent some miles out of Broken Hill a swingle bar hit the leaders on the hocks and the body leader doubled up. I said to Jack, 'If that happens again that horse will kick'.

'She'll be right, son,' said Jack, and a moment later the body leader kicked the offside leader in the ribs, and off bolted the team. In a flash Cleary handed me the rear offside reins and I pulled on them with all the strength I could muster, and the team headed off the track. To my horror I could see we were heading for a deep wide gutter, and as luck would have it the offside leader fell over, and the coach ground to a halt.

I don't know about Cleary, but my heart was pounding as I realised if we had run into that gutter we both could have been killed. However, all was well, so I undid the fallen leader's traces, yoked him up, and off we headed for the No. 2 change station at Battery Tank, about six miles on the Broken Hill side of the present Quondong Hotel.

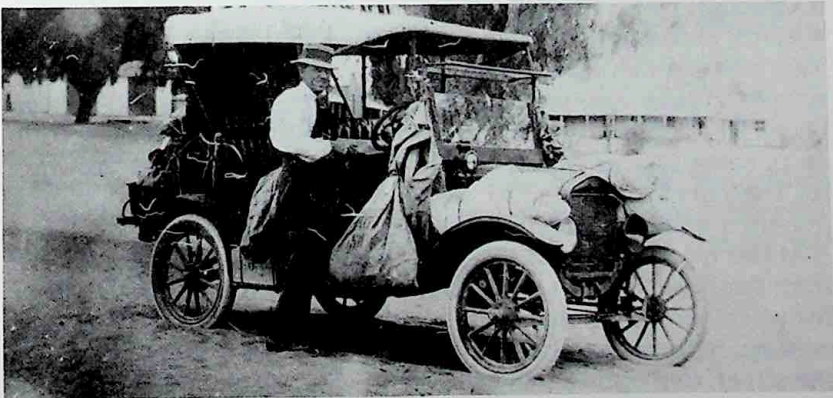
Memories of my First Motor Car

IN OCTOBER 1913 my father decided to buy a motor car, and as the only son left at home at the Roseborough Hotel it was my task to go to Broken Hill to learn the 'ins and outs' of a Model 'T' Ford. I caught the 5 pm coach from Menindee, and arrived at the 'Hill' at 7 o'clock the next morning.

The first thing to be done upon arrival was to obtain a driver's licence. Unlike today, where driving tests are essential, in those days all that was needed was to front up at the Police Station, pay over 2/6 (25 cents), obtain a licence and commence learning how to handle a car.

The car was purchased from Woodman's Garage, and for a short time I boarded with Roger McFarlane, who drove hire cars for that firm. He was my driving instructor, and Mark Walsh (a mechanic at Woodman's) taught me the mechanics of the Ford motor engine. In those days all retailers would give a purchaser one month's free tuition in all aspects of a car.

In the latter part of my instruction period I boarded at the Southern Cross Hotel, which apart from dispensing liquor, acted as the booking office and terminus for several mail coach runs out of Broken Hill. Bill Morrison was the main coach proprietor in the area, servicing Tibooburra once a week and White Cliffs and Wilcannia twice weekly. Several of his drivers stayed at the hotel,



*Dick Maiden driving for Harold Murphy—
Wentworth to Menindee (circa 1915)*

and names I can recall are Phil Tuck, Archie Faulkner, Fred Essen and Bill Eustace, who was to become closely associated with me in later years.

It was during this time I met Bill and Jack Foulds, who were to become my lifelong friends.

The first proprietor I can recall was John Gordon. His son, David, married 'Flo' Maiden, the daughter of my Uncle Will. A Mrs Wisdom followed him as licensee. Jack Fairhead, who boarded at the hotel, kept the books for Mrs Wisdom on a part-time basis, and when she died she left him the lease of the pub. Jack brought his mother and two sisters from White Cliffs, and together they ran the premises for many years.

During my stay at Broken Hill and in the little leisure time which came my way, I arranged to go out into the surrounding district with other drivers with a view to increasing my overall knowledge of cars.

Life was not all work in Broken Hill. In my mid-teens I was fond of dancing, and strange to say, spent many happy nights at the Masonic Hall at dances arranged by the Catholic Club!

Jack Fairhead's nephews were constant companions, and accompanied by the Misses Skipper (Gladys, Doris, Dorothy and Laurel) many a pleasant Saturday evening was spent in their company at the dance hall. A fancy dress ball was held for ladies only, and my partner, Laurel Skipper, won first prize dressed as a Spanish dancer.

On one occasion I travelled with Bill Eustace to Tibooburra in one of Morrison's Fords. Late one night on the way out, the car ran a bearing in the drive shaft. Dismantling the differential and carrying out necessary repairs was effected in the light of a hurricane lamp, and Bill's running commentary while fixing the car was, to me, much more worthwhile than the text book instruction received at Woodman's.

There were many hazards to motoring in the district. Punctures were prevalent along the unmade bumpy tracks, while wet weather started creeks running. Dry sandy creekbeds often led to cars becoming bogged, and to combat this problem most cars would carry some type of matting, which could be laid on the creekbed for the cars to traverse in safety. Some motor coach operators obtained belting from the mines for this purpose.

At last my 'graduation' day arrived. Father came over to the 'Hill' from the Roseborough, and he, Mark Walsh and with yours truly at the wheel, drove ten miles out to Stephens Creek and back without mishap. Returning to home base a young child wandered out into the street, and upon seeing the car bearing down, started running to and fro in front of us. I took evasive action, missed the child and received Father's commendation.

Next morning, Father and I set off for the Roseborough together with Charlie's wife, Hettie, and their two children who were to be dropped off at Menindee. The first leg of the trip, the seventy miles to Menindee, took about five hours, and no complaints were heard from my adult passengers as to my driving ability.

After lunch, Father and I set out for the Roseborough, and all went well until we were about four miles from home. The winding bush track brought us to a canegrass swamp, which in dry conditions was easily traversed. However, rain had recently fallen in the vicinity, and in my judgement the track through the swamp was impassable. I told Father of my fears and suggested that we circuit the swamp, open up a wire fence, pass through it and find our way back to the open track. Father was averse to interfering with the fence, which was not our property. I remonstrated and said, 'The wires can be replaced after we are through'.

Father was adamant in his decision, so revving the car engine I proceeded to tackle the track through the swamp, and within one minute we were hopelessly bogged. A strangely quiet Father and I then walked the remaining four miles to home. Next day we rode out on horses and rescued the old 'tin lizzie' from its muddy grave.

At this time I was rising eighteen years of age, and I suggested to Father that the car and I could possibly be put to better use by plying it for hire as a taxi in Broken Hill. Father agreed, and in December 1913 I drove to the 'Hill', without mishap, and commenced work as a taxi proprietor.

The timing for this venture was not propitious. A strike closed the mines, and another dispute held up all traffic on the Silverton Tramway for a considerable time.

To the motoring fraternity an event of some significance occurred during 1913. A Mr T. Cheney created a record by driving a Ford car from Adelaide to Broken Hill in just under fourteen hours.

I think it is fair to say that Broken Hill was not a healthy town in which to live at that time. Unsanitary conditions were a breeding ground for typhoid fever, and the infant mortality rate was very high. Diphtheria was rife, especially among young children, and the local civic authorities advised that all rainwater collected from roofs should be boiled prior to drinking.

My taxi venture was short lived because of intense competition and the ever increasing number of motor cars being purchased in the town. So it was back to the Roseborough where the car was occasionally put out for hire.

Another Menindee Pioneer

Mr C. MAIDEN DEAD. (The 'Barrier Miner', 17 March 1930.) Mr Charles Maiden (76), another of the pioneers of the Menindee district, died at Menindee at 4.15 o'clock yesterday, about thirty-four hours after the death of his brother, Mr William Maiden.

Mr Charles Maiden had been ill in the river town for a month, and for the last week or so his relatives fully realised that there was little hope for his recovery. Medical advice about a fortnight ago prepared the family for the worst. It was really thought that he would die before his brother, but the death of Mr William Maiden was unexpected.

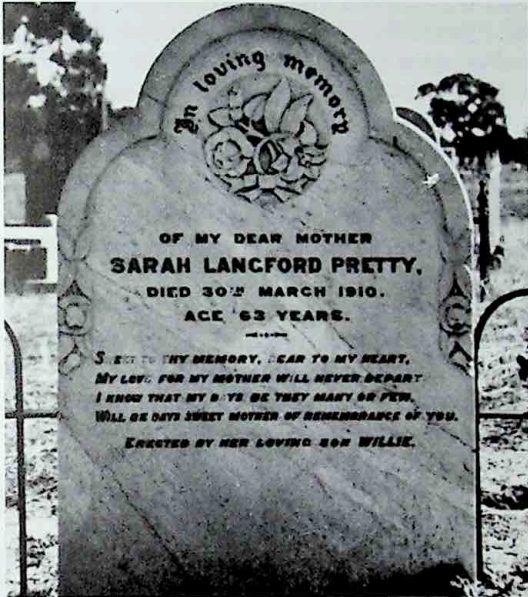
Like his brothers Mr Charles Maiden came from England with his parents in 1854, Mr Maiden being born on the 'Royal Charles' or 'Royal Charlie'—the name has been debated—in Southampton. The birth was considered an important event and the boat was delayed several hours. The voyage to Australia like all others made in sailing vessels, was an eventful one, and the family did not arrive in Australia till late the same year. The family first went to Adelaide, and then the call of the bush was heard. The first bush home was on the Murray, and then they came to the Darling country, where the parents had a homestead on the river at the spot where Appin Station now stands. That is three miles from Menindee on the opposite side of the river from the township.

After the death of the parents the three brothers, Messrs William, Charles and George, set out to make their name on the land. As reported in Saturday's 'Miner' Mr William Maiden took up Maidenville Station, which in those days was named the Five-Mile Point. Later the station was reconstructed and it then got its name of Maidenville. Before the reconstruction, Mr William Maiden sold portion of the country to Beazley brothers of Broken Hill, and they later founded what was known as the Menindee Boiling Down Company. Mr George Maiden took up country on Lake Speculation, while Mr Charles Maiden went to property which he named Pamaroo, but which must not be confused with the old cattle station on the river of the same name. That station belonged to Kinchega.

Mr Charles Maiden went on to Pamamaroo in 1886 and was there until 1910. The trip to the station can be remembered by Mr C. W. Maiden, a son, now of Broken Hill. It was made in a bullock waggon, and Mr Maiden's father was the driver. The exodus from

the station was made in a different manner, horses and buggies being used. The station was sold by Mr Maiden Snr. to the Larkin brothers of Haythorpe Station, and they still possess the country.

After leaving Pamamaroo, Mr Maiden took over the Roseborough Hotel, which was situated about a mile below Albemarle Station. This was an historic building, and apart from Mr Maiden being the licensee, others well known in the Menindee district were once in possession. They included the late Mr Ben Rich and Mr H. Palmer, Mr Cleary, father of John Cleary, now of Menindee, and Mr H. Pretty, a brother-in-law of Mr Maiden.



Menindee Cemetery

When Mr Maiden decided to leave the place he sold it to Albemarle Station and the licence was surrendered. It later transpired, that the station owners bought the hotel with the idea of closing it because of the trouble it caused in shearing season.

Menindee next saw Mr Maiden, but later he went to Mildura where he settled for about a year. He returned to Menindee in 1918 and has been resident there ever since with his wife. Other members of the family surviving are Mrs E. G. Wright (Broken Hill), Mrs E. Moore (Menindee), Mrs E. Wade (Adelaide), Mrs H. W. Coombe (Broken Hill), Mrs W. Coombe (Menindee), Charles William (Broken Hill), E. G. 'Ted' (Everdale, Cobar), Arthur (Wentworth), H. A. 'Bert' (Renmark), F. J. 'Frank' (Mildura). Two sons and a daughter died some years ago, two of them being buried at Menindee and one at Wentworth.

Mr Charles Maiden, like his brother William, had a love for horses and raced some in Menindee years ago. He turned against racing in open company because of an incident in which he considered that his horse won by a good half length and was placed second. He was certain of his horse being first because the two horses fighting out the finish were of different colours, one was black and the other white and this made mistake almost impossible. He later turned his attention to picnic racing, and greatly enjoyed the sport.

The late Mr Maiden also had a fund of information about the Burke and Wills expedition. The camp of the explorers was about a mile from the Pamamaroo property. The members of the Maiden family used to wander about the scene of the deserted camp, and some of the children found copper rivets and pieces of leather from the boots of camels used by the explorers. There is a tree at Pamamaroo bridge with the date and the year the camp was used by the explorers. It is believed that some of the bark bearing the original markings was removed some years ago, and found a resting place in a Broken Hill hotel among other souvenirs of the outback.

Mr Maiden was also very interested in mining and the original plan of the line of lode shows him and his brother George to be the holders of blocks 5, 6 and 7. Mr William Maiden was also interested in the lease. The blocks referred to now comprise the Zinc Corporation and portion of the South Mine. The brothers then little realised that a fortune was buried beneath their leases, and they sold out for about £3000. Mr Maiden spent a lot of time at the Pinnacles, and was there when the mine opened.

The brothers, Messrs William and Charles, bore a great resemblance to each other. Even Mr F. J. Potter, the undertaker, yesterday commented on the likeness of the pair. They were both about the same height and were particularly white-haired.

A form of sport that also attracted Mr Maiden was foot-running, and he won many important pedestrian events along the river. In those days match races were a feature, and Mr Maiden won one big event after being heavily backed by Mr 'Toby' Martin, now of Broken Hill. Mr Martin years later built the Speculation Hotel, but now there is not even a stone left to mark the spot where the building stood.

When the Broken Hill mines opened the Maiden brothers did a lot of carrying by bullock teams between Broken Hill and Menindee. The carriers used to take bullion to the river, and it was then sent down the Darling by boat to Adelaide. Coke was used a lot on the mines then, and the return loading to Broken Hill comprised that material. That was in the days before the railway line to Broken Hill was thought of. The trip to Menindee and back used to occupy

about a fortnight, and bullocks in those days walked faster than is the case with teams today.

Apart from the three Maiden brothers, there were five sisters who helped their parents in their early battles in the bush. There is only one daughter living—Mrs Bock, and she resides in Melbourne. Her health would not permit of her coming to Menindee to see the last of her two brothers. Mrs Dawes, one of the daughters, died some years ago. She was the wife of Mr W. Dawes, who owned Topar Station prior to its sale to Mr R. Crawford. Another daughter was Mrs Gellert, who resided in Cobar for many years. Her son later became a prominent racehorse trainer, and his charges won many events in Broken Hill in the early days. Another daughter, Mrs Burns, died in Broken Hill about five years ago, and another, Mrs Pyke, died in Queensland. Mr Pyke, conductor of the Quartette Club, is a son.

The death of Mr Maiden was responsible for a reunion of members of the family. All sons and daughters were present at the bedside when the death occurred. They came from all parts of the compass, and travelled distances of up to 300 miles. They had not previously been together for twenty-five years.



Menindee Cemetery

Coaching Out of Broken Hill

PRIOR TO THE discovery of the rich lode at Broken Hill in September 1883, nearby Silverton was a horse coaching centre. Burton's coaches left from there every Monday, and travelled via Menindee to Hay and Swan Hill, where they connected with trains to Sydney and Melbourne respectively. McGowan's Royal Mail coaches serviced Wilcannia, and the first service direct to Sydney commenced on 21 November 1885, the operator being McGowan, Morrison and Co.

My first experience with coaching came late in 1913, when my brother Charlie invited me to enter into a partnership with him. At that time he was running a three-horse mail coach out to Quarry Hill Station, which lay about seventy miles east of Broken Hill, and he had prospects of opening up a new mail run to Bucklow, about eighty miles south of the 'Hill'.

So, with hope in my heart I set off in Father's Model T Ford to make my own way in the world. Little did I know that I was to spend almost twenty-five years in the transport business.



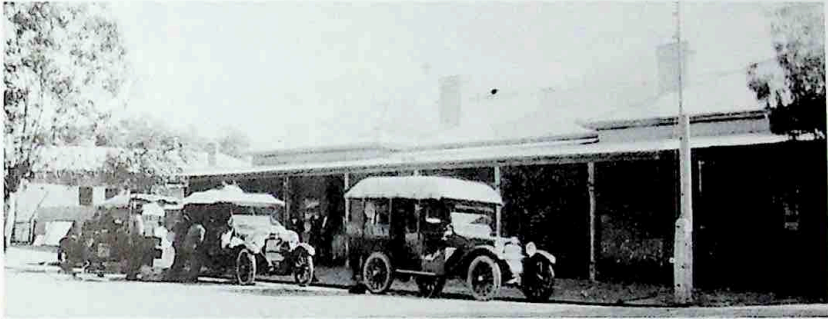
Broken Hill 1913

Charlie and I alternated on the Quarry Hill and Bucklow runs, which collectively occupied four man-days per week, and to supplement our income we worked for Jack Cleary on the Broken Hill-Menindee mail coach service. Jack Cleary was an old identity in the town, and was engaged in horse coaching for many years. In September 1911 he drove the first mail motor coach from Broken Hill to Menindee, and the seventy mile trip took him five-and-three-quarter hours.

Early in 1914, Charlie and I got our heads together and decided to ask Jack Cleary for a rise in wages. I was deputised as spokesman, and the boss's reply was as expected, 'I can't afford it'. I then suggested that if he was willing to sell, Charlie and I would



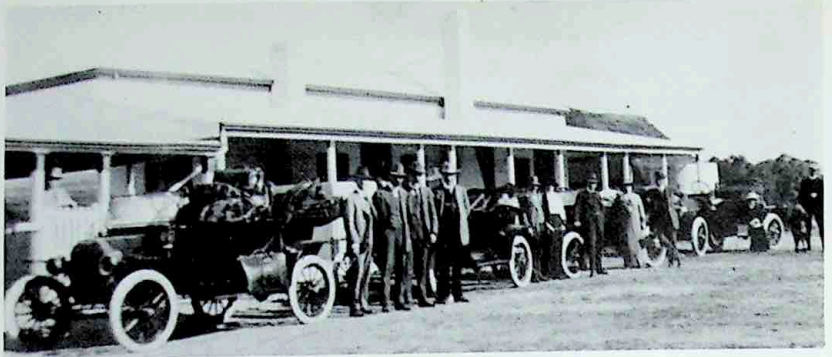
Ford T's when the service was bought from Mr Cleary



Harold Murphy, Bert and Dick Maiden at Wentworth Hotel (circa 1921)



*Menindee 1916
Frank Maiden standing at left*



Ready to take off

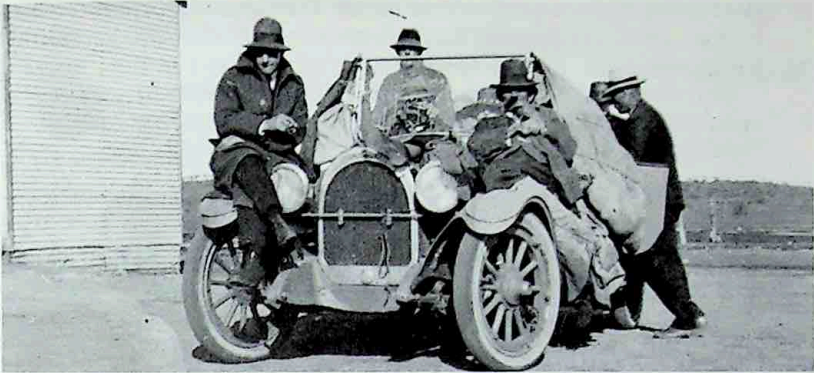
be prepared to buy him out. To my surprise Cleary was interested, and within a couple of months the Maiden Brothers were joint owners of the business, consisting of a Model T truck and car. We purchased Father's car, and thus we had three vehicles to service our mail runs, and to assist us we employed our nephew, Bob Palmer, as a driver.

The run to Bucklow Station took us along what is now the Wentworth Road to Pine Creek and Lang Well, where we branched off to New Well. This run was quite profitable due to the eccentricity of Bucklow's owner-manager, Bill Parker. On one occasion I took two young girls out to Bucklow, where they had obtained a job as maids. Next morning, when I was about to start back to Broken Hill, there they were with bags packed, and poured forth their unsolicited opinion of the station owner. Their immediate desire was to get back to Broken Hill, and I was happy to oblige. This was not an isolated case as I had several similar experiences. At £1 per trip for passengers this mail service was very rewarding.

As the years passed by, our vehicles needed replacing, and about 1916 we purchased a 'Detroit', manufactured by the Oldsmobile Company. In 1919 I saw Adelaide for the first time. I took a train



*De Soto and Ford at Menindee 1918
Charlie (left) and Frank Maiden at the wheels*



*At the Rockwell Hotel on the Menindee road 1920
Frank Maiden at the wheel*

from Broken Hill, and upon arrival negotiated the purchase of an Oldsmobile from Vivian Lewis & Co., and after a trial run out to Paradise and the adjacent foothills I set off for Broken Hill.

The trip took four days and I stayed at Burra on the first night out. At a later time we purchased a Dodge, which proved to be a very good car for use in the back country. The Oldsmobile and Dodge could comfortably carry five passengers, but at times we carried at least four more on the Broken Hill—Menindee run. They would sit on the bonnet of the car, and were invariably uncomplaining. As we only travelled at about twenty miles per hour over the rough bush track, I am pleased to say that no harm came to those human limpets.

In her unpublished reminiscences, Mrs M. A. Harcourt speaks of a trip on the Maiden Brothers Coach Service in 1920:

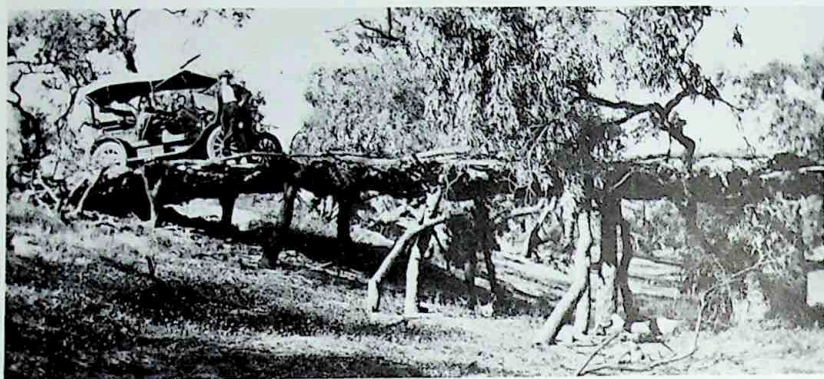
We decided to leave Broken Hill by the mail coach service to Menindee. Mailbags are handed out into all sorts of boxes, kerosene tins, drums, wooden boxes and old tin trunks. The same old sand, a little grey saltbush and paddymelons by the thousand. This mail seemed to carry all sorts of things—a real universal provider. We passengers were packed in like sardines, but we had a friendly driver and he never failed to point out anything of interest. We passed the 'Blazing Stump' (Rockwell Hotel) and on to the



Outside the Quondong Hotel (circa 1916)

Quondong Hotel, where we had lunch. Then we went over a crooked bridge, which floodwaters had put quite a curve into two years previously.

Here we are at Menindee, the usual outback township, and everyone is waiting for the mailman. We go to the oldest hotel, Maidens Hotel, where Burke and Wills spent the night.'



Homemade bridge just above Blackgate, 30 miles north of Menindee, 1918

Memories of the Quarry Hill mail run were brought back to me in 1982, when I made a nostalgic visit to Topar Station, the site of the Woolwash, which I have described earlier. It was at Topar that I met Mrs Crossing, the mother of the present owner of the station.

In her childhood, as Miss Andrews, she attended an outback school at Tandora. The school was situated close to the Tandora Station homestead on the edge of a creek, which caused me no end of bother as its bed was comprised mainly of deep red sand, and nine times out of ten my car would become bogged. On hearing my approach the school children would run to the classroom window, and if I ground to a halt in the creekbed the teacher would declare a recess. The students would run down to the creek, and amidst peals of laughter put their tiny frames at the rear of the vehicle to push with all their might. I cannot recall an occasion when they were unsuccessful, and they certainly saved me a lot of time, as the only alternative was to dig the car out of the treacherous sand.

Other homesteads I can recall on the Quarry Hill run were Munka (Mr Jeffries), Eureka, Horse Lake (Mr Scobie), and a property owned by George Tainsh, the name of which I cannot remember.

Generally speaking our coaching work was quite mundane, but at times a little humour was encountered. One day upon arrival in Menindee I was approached by an elderly gentleman seeking transport out to Kinchega Station, where he had obtained employment as a gardener. My inner thoughts were not disclosed to the old man, but I said to myself, 'I won't miss this for quids'.

The dear old boy was a stammerer, and I knew that Mr Carter, Manager of Kinchega, was similarly afflicted.

Upon arrival I made the appropriate formal introduction, after which followed a stammering conversation.

'Y-y-y-ou s-s-s-stutter,' exclaimed Carter.

'Y-y-y-yes,' replied the gardener.

'I c-c-c-can t-t-tell y-y-you how to s-stop that,' said Carter pontifically. At that stage I was doubled up, trying to suppress laughter, and made my departure as quickly as possible. In retrospect, perhaps I should have stayed a little longer to learn the prescription for curing stuttering!

Apart from conducting mail services, Charlie and I did quite a bit of contract work. I recall taking two well-sinkers out to a station about 100 miles from Broken Hill in our Ford truck. It was a very hot dusty day, and about fifty miles out of the 'Hill' the truck ran a bearing. I had spare parts with me, and after running off the water from the radiator into a can, I took the sump and head off, replaced the bearing and drove off. Within twelve miles of the station the bearing collapsed again and we were in trouble. I filled a waterbag with water from the radiator, and the three of us trudged off to the station—a five-hour hike over the dusty red plain.



Shearing contractors. Frank Maiden at the wheel. Menindee 1918

Camels, Camel Teams and Hawkers

CAMELS ARE GENERALLY considered to be irascible animals, but quite to the contrary they are lovable and intelligent.

During the latter half of the 19th Century they were indispensable in outback Australia. Camel teams covered three-quarters of the continent in every mainland state except Victoria, and their main work was in the pastoral areas, carrying stores and fencing material, and returning with wool. The strongest camel could carry up to nearly 900 pounds in weight.

In my youth at Pamamaroo, camel teams were a common sight as they travelled to and from their main base camp at Broken Hill. My mother once told me that, before I was born, a camel driver walked into the family homestead during Father's absence, and demanded rations. He followed her into the storeroom and stood over her with a waddy until she filled his ration bag with flour, tea and sugar, after which he dashed off to his camel train, standing about fifty yards away on a narrow bush track.

The camel drivers were called 'Afghans', but this was a misnomer, because they were mainly Indians from Karachi and outlying Baluchistan. In Australia they lived as nomads, carrying all



Camel team Broken Hill

their worldly possessions on one camel. They followed the religion of Mohammed, and would only eat meat which they had killed themselves. The killing knife was blessed before cutting an animal's throat, after which they would allow an infidel to dress the meat. Their religion prohibited the eating of pig meat, and they would not transport bacon, and were known to throw it out if it was discovered in any loading. They did not drink intoxicating spirits, and therefore they were widely used to transport same.

Camels were ideally suited in saltbush and mulga country, and they fed voraciously on these plants. The more thorns a tree had the better the camels liked it because they were virtually thornproof. Sturt pea was a favourite delicacy, and the camels would drag plants out by their roots and chew them with relish. Few bushes were poisonous to camels, the most common being ironwood. This bush looks like a camellia and grows in the sandy desert country. A poisoned camel was a sorry sight for it would sit all the time with its lower lip hanging down.

In the calving season the fluffy calves would trot beside their mothers, and those that were too small were tied on a camel immediately ahead of its mother so that she would see her baby as she trudged along.

The death knell of camel trains was sounded by the arrival of motor cars. Whereas camels would take fourteen days for a round trip of 100 miles, a car would take one day. However, when the camel and a car were operating in the same area, many a time camels would drag cars out of bogs and sand drifts. Towards the end camels were used extensively in sinking dams, being harnessed to pull ploughs and scoops.

Many Indian hawkers travelled the countryside when I was a young boy, and I can recall them calling at Pamamaroo and the Roseborough. Some drove horse carts or motor vehicles, while others simply walked. I shall never forget the sight of the pedestrian hawker. On his head he carried a tin trunk about two feet square which contained soaps and scents, while on his back was a swag containing clothing for sale. Truly a human camel.

Coaching along the Murray River

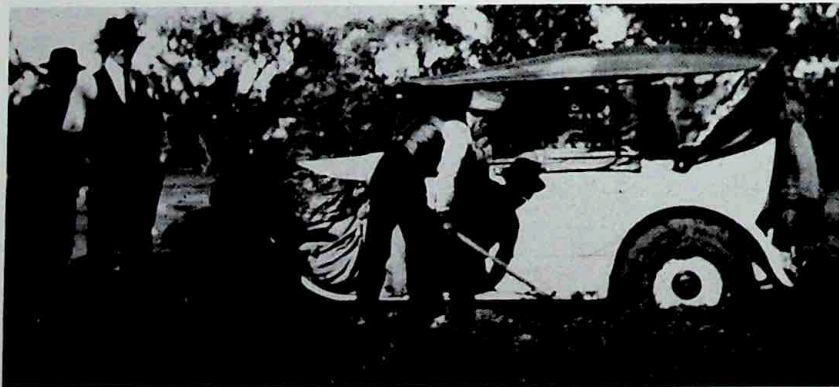
Renmark to Wentworth

DURING 1921 I was having trouble with my eyes, and was recommended to a specialist in Melbourne. I motored down to Adelaide with Bill Eustace and stayed at the Victoria Hotel. The proprietor at the time was a Mr Kerrison. After a tedious overnight trip on the express train to Melbourne, I consulted with the eye doctor and booked my return trip to Adelaide.

At Wolseley a somewhat down-at-heel character entered the carriage and proceeded to hide out of sight under a seat. He explained that he couldn't afford a ticket, and that he was particularly anxious to return to Adelaide and his family. I felt sorry for him and I promised not to give any marauding guard notice of his presence.

I left the train at Murray Bridge for breakfast, and upon my return the stowaway plus my overcoat was missing. I was very 'hot under the collar' at its disappearance, and decided that my coat now adorned the man whom I had befriended. Upon arrival in Adelaide I reported the theft to the local police, who told me that the thief had been nabbed at Callington.

At this time my brother Bert was running a mail service between Renmark and Wentworth on the northern side of the river, and he had invited me to discuss a possible extension of the service on the southern side between Renmark and Mildura. I caught the



*Bogged on the Renmark side of Peglers Hut 1927
Frank Maiden digging out the car*

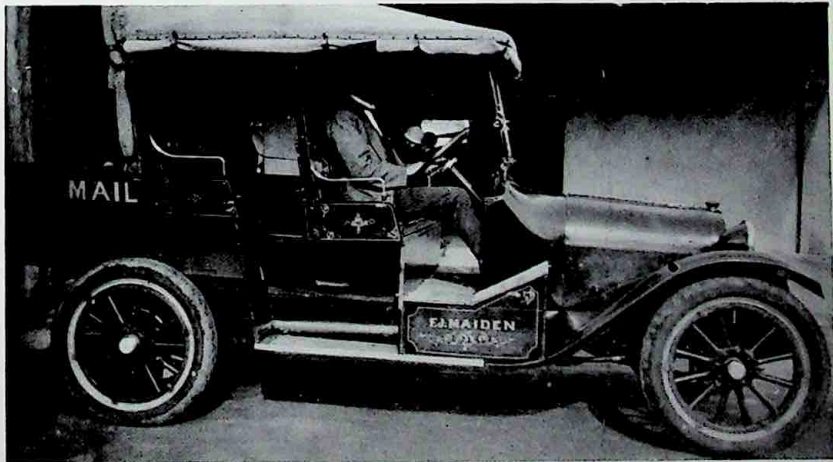
train to Morgan and joined the motor coach service to Renmark, which was owned and operated by a Mr Taylor. He in later years sold out to a Mr Pendle, a name well known in the transport industry in the Murray Valley.

After discussions with Bert I was of the opinion that my future prospects in life would be enhanced by operating along the River Murray. I took the coach back to Broken Hill, told Charlie of my plans, and discussed the dissolution of our partnership. After much haggling we decided that I would take possession of our Oldsmobile car, valued at about £300, and pay him £100 cash. I didn't have any ready cash, and on hearing of my plight Jack Fairhead, owner-manager of the Southern Cross Hotel, lent it to me in exchange for my IOU.

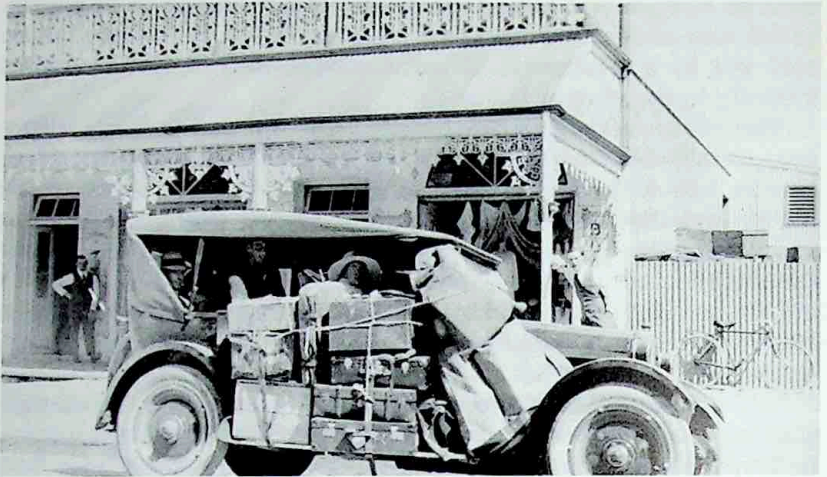
And so it was farewell to Broken Hill. I packed the Oldsmobile with my worldly possessions, and headed down the Darling River to Wentworth, then on to Renmark. I commenced driving for Bert between Renmark and Wentworth, where I usually stayed overnight at Dunn's Hotel, and it was here that I met my future wife, Clare Dunn, the daughter of the proprietor.

During my off periods I called on station owners and other residents on the south side of the river, informing them that I was prepared to carry their mail for them, provided that they would subsidise me for the service. They jumped at the idea, because they had to travel 20-30 miles and cross the river to pick up their mail.

Bert was most kind and generous to me at this time. He lent me the £100 to repay Jack Fairhead and the price of a new Dodge to replace the Oldsmobile, which due to its age and mileage was proving to be unreliable. I sold this vehicle to Mr Johnson, the



*1925 Dodge picking up mail at Mildura
Frank Maiden at the wheel*



This car arrived in a wooden crate from USA to Mildura 1922 and was assembled by Frank Maiden and Charlie Fowler

engineer at Lock 9. New cars were not available locally, and so I went down to Adelaide, picked up a Dodge chassis and drove it to Wentworth, where Ted Payze built a body on it.

I only worked for Bert for about three months, and shortly after my mail-passenger service was safely established I shifted my headquarters to Mildura, which was to become my home for the next sixteen years.

Mildura to Renmark

By the grace of God and the Government, the timing for the commencement of my new venture was most propitious. Work on the construction of Lock 9 was in full swing, and I obtained many



Mildura 1922



Lock 9—Mail from Renmark to Mildura 1921

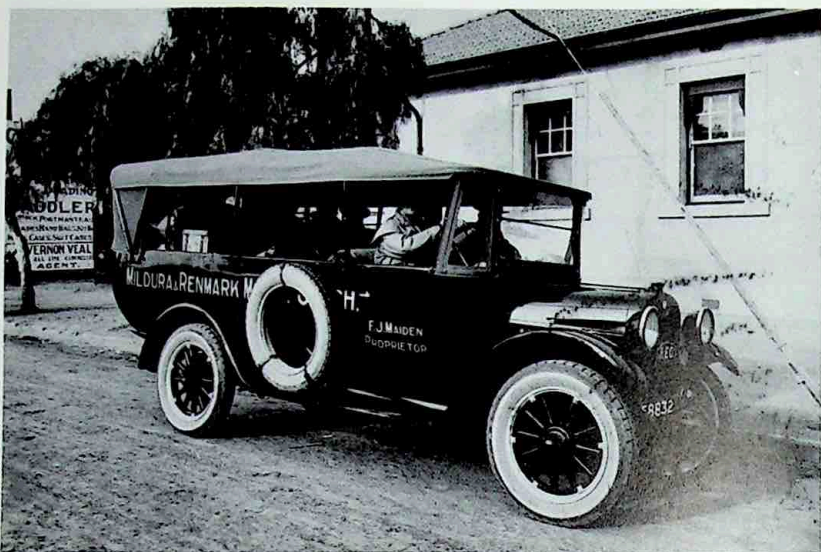
passengers from the site. For some time I was earning five shillings a mile, and within a short time I was able to repay my debt to Bert.

Motoring in the 1920s was not done with the speed and ease as is the case today on bitumen highways. My route from Mildura to Renmark took me through Merbein, and from point to point along the river over a rough bush track at an average speed of about twenty miles per hour. Punctures were frequent; bogging in mud or dry sand was a hazard, while occasional mechanical breakdowns were hastily repaired en route.

Intermittent high rivers also caused disruptions to the passenger-mail service. In those days the approaches to the Paringa Bridge were made over the river flats, and they were often inundated with water and made impassable. At such times the railway came to my assistance, and transported my vehicle and passengers across the railway bridge on its rolling stock.

By the end of 1922 the business was increasing and I found it necessary to purchase another vehicle. I travelled to Sydney via Albury and negotiated the purchase of a seven-seater Reo motor coach. After some time it arrived from the USA, and was delivered to Mildura in several large packing cases. Charlie Fowler, a mechanic from Wentworth, and I assembled it in the railway yards. This car was used in the business for many years, after which I sold it to the overseer of Ned's Corner Station.

During the years 1921-1929 the Dodge car served as the mail coach and the Reo charabanc was used for passengers. I employed Bill Eustace as a driver, and we would alternate on the mail and passenger runs.



The body for this Reo Speedwaggon was built in Melbourne 1922

Following the initial arrangements with residents along the river I successfully negotiated a formal mail contract with the postal authorities in Sydney on a year to year basis. Unfortunately for me, after the first twelve months, I lost the contract to Mr Nicholls, but the travelling public was loyal to me. As a consequence Nicholls found that his newly won mail run was a losing proposition. He pulled out and the contract was mine again.

Early in 1929 I lost the contract again, this time to a Mr Cleary, and this prompted me to diversify, by extending my service to Adelaide.

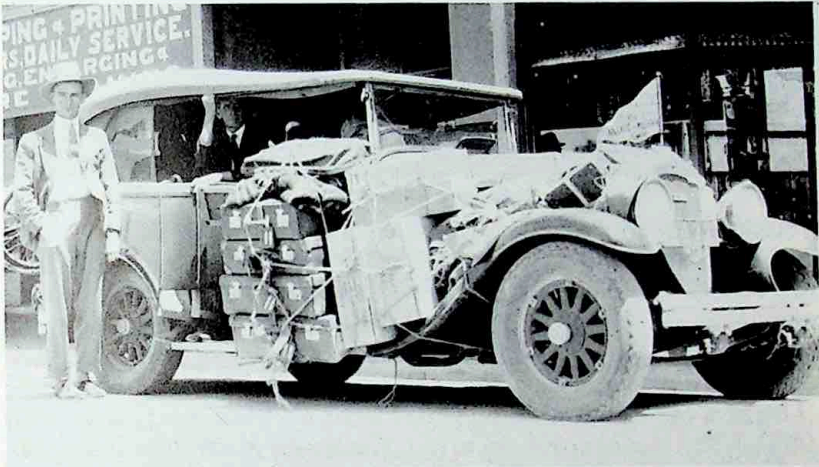
Mildura to Adelaide

The eight years spent on the Mildura-Renmark service provided me with a good income and by 1929 I had purchased a home in Mildura for cash, and through hard work and careful management I did not owe a penny to a living soul. A windfall of £2000 from a Tattersalls sweep, jointly shared with a friend Henry Smith, was also very welcome and was put on fixed deposit in a Bank.

In 1929 the people of Mildura were poorly served in respect of transport to Adelaide. On one day a week they could go to Wentworth by an early morning coach, which connected with another service to Renmark. Here they had to stay overnight before boarding another coach service to Morgan, where a train would take them to Adelaide. The other route was by my service

car to Renmark, stay overnight, thence to Morgan and an awaiting train.

I began operating the Mildura-Adelaide service in October 1929, and by coincidence a Mr L. A. Hardy started a similar service from Adelaide at about the same time. It was obvious from the outset that he was intent on putting me out of business, and for several months he waged a fare-cutting war. Our initial single fare for the trip was £2.15, but by the end of January 1930 he had reduced his rate to £1 and naturally I was forced to follow him.



Emil Gottschutze (standing) with Reo Flying Cloud Adelaide-Mildura 1929

**MILDURA—BENDIGO—
MELBOURNE**

Maiden's "Flying Cloud" Service

Leaves Wm. Davis' Office, Mildura, Sundays and Wednesdays, 7.30 a.m., arrives Bendigo 5.30 p.m., Melbourne 9.30 p.m.

Leaves Melbourne Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4 p.m., Bendigo 9 p.m.; arrives Mildura Wednesdays and Fridays 7 a.m.

Further particulars from the Agents:—

Mildura: Wm. Davis. Phone 224.
Bendigo: Casamento's Garage. Tel. 415.

Melbourne: Wight's Tourist Bureau (next State Theatre). Phone Central 9875.

F. J MAIDEN. Phone 217 Mildura

ADELAIDE—MILDURA

Maiden's "Flying Cloud" Service

Via Renmark, Berri, Barmera, Kingston, Waikerie, Werrimull, Meringur.

Leaves Wm. Davis' office, Eighth St., Mildura, Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8 a.m., arriving Renmark at 11 a.m., Adelaide 6 p.m.

Leaves Adelaide M.T.T.A. (opposite Adelaide railway station), Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 7.30 a.m., arriving Mildura 6 p.m.

Further particulars from the Agents:

Mildura: Wm. Davis. Phone 224.
Merbein: Fisher's Stores Pty. Ltd. Phone 117.

Adelaide Address: M.T.T.A. Phone 7676.

Renmark: R. P. James and Co. Phone 47.

Sunraysia Daily advertisements 2 January 1935



Reo fleet Mildura 1929

Such a low fare was unprofitable and he had to raise it. This pitched battle raged between us for many months until fate intervened. In November 1931 Mr Hardy rolled his car a few miles out of Mildura, and he retired from the coaching business. Rumour had it that he could not find the money to make the necessary repairs to his coach.

Life and my flourishing business went on their merry way until 1935 when a major crisis occurred. The South Australian Transport Board commenced enquiries into the competition between road and rail transport, and I could see that I might be forced to terminate my service at Morgan.



From left—Frank Maiden (Pat, the dog), Mac Penaluna, Emil Gottschutzke, Gordon Hillier

An example of what may be accomplished by the determined pressing of a good case is provided in the decision by the South Australian Transport Control Board announced yesterday, to permit the continuance of the existing passenger road service between Mildura and Adelaide for a further twelve months at least.

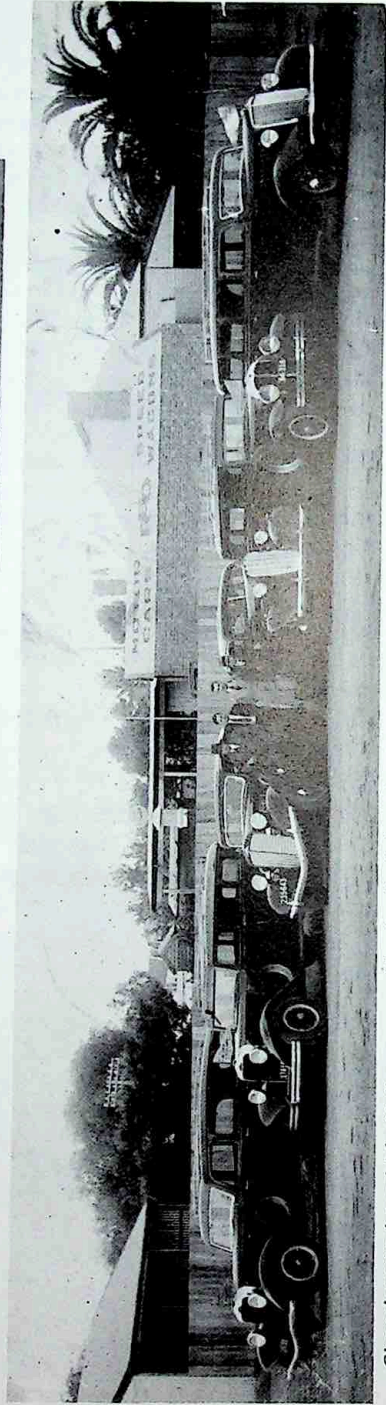
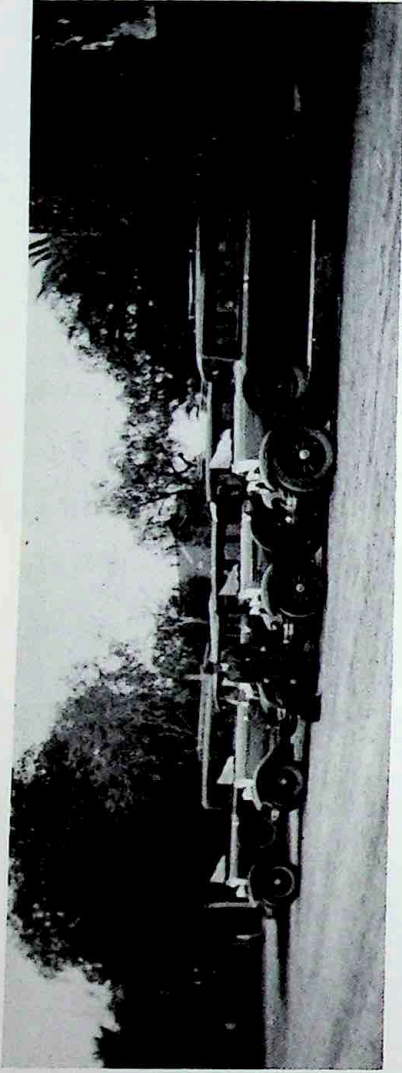
It had been proposed that cars from Mildura should proceed no further than Morgan, where passengers would have to be transferred to rail conveyance. The publication of this intention led to a storm of protest and culminated in a deputation from Mildura, which placed the view of the owners of the service and the business community before the Transport Control Board.

It has to be acknowledged that although for reasons best known to itself the Board received the deputation in camera, the protest was given a considerate and patient hearing. This has been followed by the granting of the extension as stated, and in the intervening twelve months a careful record will be kept of the number of passengers who make use of the services.

The members of the deputation (Messrs E. C. Peverill and J. S. Shilliday) and others who took part in the preparation of the case for the defence of the travelling public's rights are to be congratulated on the success of their fight. It should serve as an effective tonic to those among us who have been rendered somnolent by the constant repetition of the sluggard's slogan—'It Can't be Done.'

Twelve months later I enlisted the aid of two executives of the Mildura and District Tourist Association, Mr Shilliday, a local storekeeper and Mr Peverill, manager of the National Bank Branch at Mildura. They were pleased to help me, and I drove them down to Adelaide to attend the enquiry. On 1 October 1936 an editorial in the 'Sunraysia Daily' stated the following:

'Apart from the fact that passengers who prefer to travel by road cannot be coerced into travelling by rail, excepting if their case is one of dire need, the arguments deduced by Mr J. S. Shilliday yesterday to the members of the SA Transport Board should be sufficiently convincing. The SA authorities desire that Mr F. J. Maiden's licence should be renewed only for the journey between Mildura and Morgan, where passengers should entrain for Adelaide. Mr Shilliday pointed out that while co-ordination of road and rail services was advisable in some circumstances, a compulsory change from car to train at Morgan could turn away the greater portion of the tourist traffic between Mildura and Adelaide, as the route of Melbourne would be more attractive. If the SA authorities are wise to their own interests they will leave well alone. The greater part of the road journey to Adelaide is pleasurable, and passengers are quite satisfied with it. To try to compel them to disembark from a most comfortable car to change into a train at Morgan will merely cause them to abandon the trip altogether.'



Chassis were bought in Melbourne and bodies built in Adelaide by Dawson Body Builders. The flags were aluminium and carried an advertisement for Maiden's Flying Cloud service.
Standing in the centre are Frank Maiden, Len Lemmeke, Emil Gottschutzke, Mac Penaluna

Fortunately, the representations made on my behalf were successful, and I was permitted to continue my service without restriction.

Although the coaching business had been very kind to me over a long period, both from the financial point of view and job satisfaction, my first love had always been the land, and early in 1937 I had thoughts of putting my business up for sale. At that time I owned six Reo fourteen-seat passenger vehicles and had three drivers working for me. The service was popular with local residents, and modestly I must say that I was held in high repute in Mildura.

At this time air services were slowly but surely being introduced, and I could see that this rapid form of transport could make inroads into my business. On the other hand, a Mr Laurence who conducted a road service from Mildura to Sydney via Albury, was putting out feelers to take me over with a view to instituting a Sydney to Adelaide service.

After deep thought and discussions with my wife, the decision was taken to sell, and by the end of May 1937 I was out of business. The selling price was £5000, 'lock, stock and barrel', which in those days was a lot of money.

So, from a few pennies earned at the Topar Woolwash, with little formal education coupled with almost twenty-five years of hard work, I had reached a stage of life (aged forty-two), where I had the necessary cash to purchase a parcel of farming land in Victoria.



*St Margaret's Church—Mildura
where Frank Maiden and Clare Dunn were married in 1926*

Coaching in Victoria

Mildura to Bendigo

ALTHOUGH THE DEPRESSION years of the late 1920s and early 1930s were a most trying time for the majority of the Australian workforce, it had little or no effect on my business.

In 1931 the opportunity arose for me to expand upon my existing Mildura—Adelaide run. In April that year I was informed by Mrs Ann Butler, manageress of the Wintersun Hotel in Mildura, that the proprietor of the Mildura—Bendigo coach service was going out of business. After making certain enquiries, it was evident to me that this service could be made a payable proposition, and what really convinced me was the news that the Victorian Railways, because of the economic climate, was about to cancel two of its daily rail services to Mildura.

To my mind this decision had a twofold effect. Mildura rail passengers would seek to travel to Bendigo by rail and would want onward transport, and on the days when no Mildura train was running I could contract to pick up daily Melbourne newspapers, at Bendigo, for residents of Mildura.

I began this new service on 26 October 1931, a return trip of 520 miles. My Reo 'Flying Cloud' left Mildura on Sunday and Wednesday at 7.30 am, and returned on Tuesday and Thursday at 9 pm. The driving time for the return trip was about eighteen hours.

In July 1935 the Victorian Transport Board commenced investigating the competition between road and rail services, and at a hearing in Bendigo I put, as forcefully as possible, my case for the retention of my coach service. On 11 July 1935 an editorial in the 'Sunraysia Daily' had this to say:

'It cannot too strongly be represented that the retention of the Mildura—Bendigo road service is earnestly desired by a number of people. There is no quarrel with the facilities offered passengers by rail. At the same time it has to be stressed that some people do not care for this means of transport at all, and that others prefer the road for various reasons. They have the right to exercise this preference.'

The outcome of the hearing was in my favour, and over the ensuing years the business went from strength to strength. I sold out in May 1937, and the purchaser was a competitor on the route, Mr A. Condon.

Mildura and Beyond

HAVING SEVERED ALL connection with the transport industry, my eyes turned to the land, but before committing myself in any way, I considered that the first prudent step should be a 'refresher' course in the intricacies of farming.

My father-in-law, John Dunn and his son Maurice, owned a property called 'Hillview', about fifty miles out of Balranald in New South Wales and they kindly offered me 'twelve months tucker' in return for my labouring services.

As luck would have it, George Pascoe, a representative of New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Co., called at 'Hillview' during the early part of my stay, and I informed him of my desire to purchase a farming property. Upon his suggestion, and following a close inspection by myself and earnest advice from friends, I purchased 1654 acres of land seven miles out of Ballan, near Ballarat. I called the property 'Thornbank'. This property was not contiguous, the homestead portion was 600 acres, while two separate portions contained the remainder. The purchase price was £7-5-0 per acre.

I ran sheep and cattle and let out 200 acres a year to share farmers for cropping, provided that they oversowed it with pasture after reaping. My family and I spent a comfortable eight years at Ballan until 1946, when I was forced to sell out because of persistent ill-health. I sold to Bill Rankine, who was, at one time, manager of Netley Station, for £10 an acre.

At the age of fifty-one and with a wife and two young daughters to support, I had no time for thoughts of retirement. My car, propelled by a gas producer with caravan attached, set off for Broken Hill for a holiday and time for thinking and discussion about the future.

The decision was taken to settle in Adelaide and in 1947 I built a house at Tennyson, a seaside suburb.

At this time my daughters' education was of prime importance, but this was a dilemma because I could not, after many happy years in the country, firmly place my roots in city life.

With my wife and family established in Adelaide, over following years I farmed properties at Cape Jervis, Nairne and Waikerie.

Three other events which had special significance for my sixteen years at Mildura were:

Wednesday, 28 April 1926

Miss Clare Dunn and Mr F. Maiden

A very pretty little wedding was performed by the Rev. T. M. Smith of St Margarets Church of England, Mildura, when Clare Lillian, second daughter of Mr and Mrs H. C. Dunn of Wentworth was married to Francis James, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Chas Maiden of Menindee.

The bride looked charming in a frock of white georgette over white satin, with pearl trimmings and coronet of orange blossoms encircling her veil.

Only the relations and very intimate friends of both families were present at the reception, which was held at the future home of the bride and bridegroom where the customary toasts were drunk and the usual speeches made.

After the reception Mr and Mrs Maiden left by car for a long tour of the coast of South Australia. The bride travelled in a nut brown crepe de chene frock with ensemble coat of brown woven cloth, and with hat to match. The happy couple were the recipients of many beautiful presents.

PAT—THE TEETOTALLER COCKER SPANIEL

In my lifetime I have derived much pleasure from animals. As I said earlier, in my younger days horses played a big part in my life. Goats gave me childhood pleasure as I drove them in carts about Pamamaroo, but in the evening of my years a cocker spaniel brings back fond memories of an intelligent, lovable animal.

Early in 1930 a friend drove me to Merbein for the opening of the duck shooting season. At dusk the shooters gathered around a roaring fire, exchanging stories of the day's sport, and I heard one chap ask his mate if he would like a cocker spaniel pup. On hearing a refusal I stuck my bib in and said, 'I'll take him'.

Pat, as I named him, was only a few weeks old at the time, and as I nursed him on my lap on the way back to Mildura his little heart was pounding as he whimpered and looked up at me with doleful, enquiring eyes.

As he grew up he turned out to be an excellent dog, and I took him on many duck shooting trips. I remember one time I drove a team of shooters out to Prill Park in one of my parlour coaches. Upon arrival at the lake we were pleased to see hundreds of ducks settled. While a boat was despatched out onto the lake to stir up the ducks so that they wouldn't settle in the middle, George Mills and I placed our cartridges in a half-kerosene tin, which was floated behind me, secured by a length of rope around my waist.

With our guns held over our heads we started to wade into the lake with dear old Pat swimming alongside me. As the ducks came within range I gave a panting Pat a spell on the leaning limb of a dead tree to ready him for his job of retrieving the teal and black ducks, which hopefully would come our way. About 1000 ducks were shot on the day, and most of the shooting party tied up their bag into bundles, put their name on a tag, and gave them to Arthur Mills, who owned the local iceworks, for storage.

Whenever I bought a new car for my business, I would usually run it in by driving out to Lindsay Creek, about sixty miles from Mildura. On a cold wintry day my wife and I, with Pat, set out on such a trip, and as the duck shooting season was in full swing my gun and cartridges were taken along. Luck was with me, and my first few shots accounted for three ducks which fell on the far side of the creek.

Pat dashed off, reached the edge of the creek, placed one foot in, and ground to a halt. I urged him on but he refused to enter the water. I got the message. In his own baleful way he was telling me, 'The water's too cold. If you want ducks, get them yourself.'

As no one else was about, I asked my wife to light a fire, stripped off and plunged into the icy cold water, swam to the ducks and retrieved them. This was the only time that dear old Pat let me down, but I couldn't blame him, because after all, they have feelings the same as we humans.

Whenever I set my foot out of the house, Pat would be at my heels. If I went into the town he would wait outside the premises, and it wouldn't make any difference if I was inside for five minutes or five hours. The one exception would be if I entered the pub or a licensed club. For a reason best known to himself, he would head for home as soon as I stepped inside any of the five such establishments which were in Mildura at the time. Whether or not he disliked the smell of alcohol I do not know, but nevertheless his devotion to me vanished at such times as he headed for home away from the evils of booze.

Early one morning I went to the Post Office and Pat took up his waiting position on the verandah outside the main entrance. I left by a side door, and later that afternoon I got a phone call from the Postmaster. 'Frank,' he said, 'is Pat at home?'

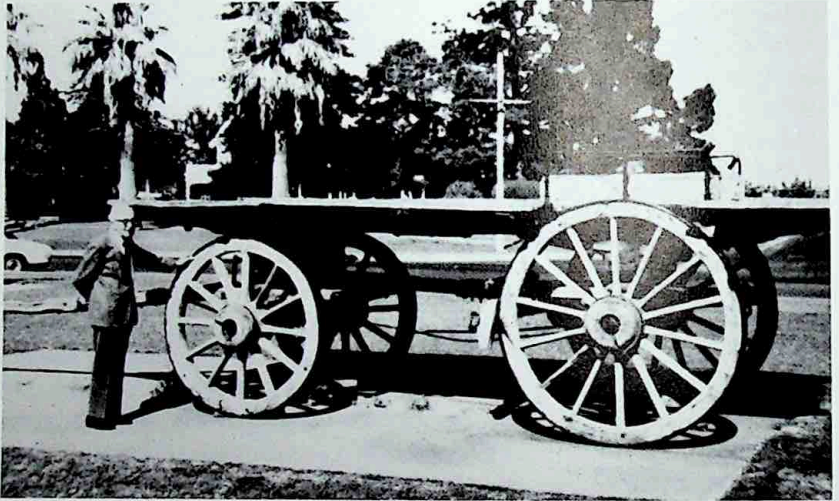
'Hang on a minute,' I replied, and after a quick look outside I told him that Pat was not to be found.

'I thought so,' said the Postmaster, 'He's sitting outside my office.'

I had forgotten the poor old dog, and I received a welcome greeting when I picked him up. My 'teetotaller' dog gave me many years of affection and pleasure, and I hope that today Pat lies in peace. I have fond memories of him.

LOUIS YUILL

One character I can recall in the Mildura district was Louis Yuill, a German 'blocker'. Like many other fruitgrowers in the area he grew 'side-lines' such as watermelons, sold them for cash and did not disclose the income in his taxation return. One time a taxation inspector interviewed many growers as to their alleged non-disclosure and, on approaching Louis, the old boy was adamant in saying he had never grown watermelons. The tax man then said to Louis that his neighbour had just had a wonderful season and his watermelons were the best ever grown in the district and the cash return had been most gratifying. At this disclosure of a neighbour, with whom Louis was not on very good terms, he put his foot in it by declaring 'The bloody liar, he didn't sell as many as I did'.



Frank Maiden alongside a bullock waggon. Mildura 1982

I called it a day in the winter of 1982, aged eighty-seven. I ponder and reflect on a life which has been diverse and pleasurable. Fond memories of childhood, manhood and the ongoing love and support of my wife and family, console me in my twilight years.

William Shakespeare said:

'Every man's life is a history.'

I hope what I have had to record will be of some interest to future generations.

For myself, in the words of Henry Lawson:

'I "dips me lid" and stand aside.'

