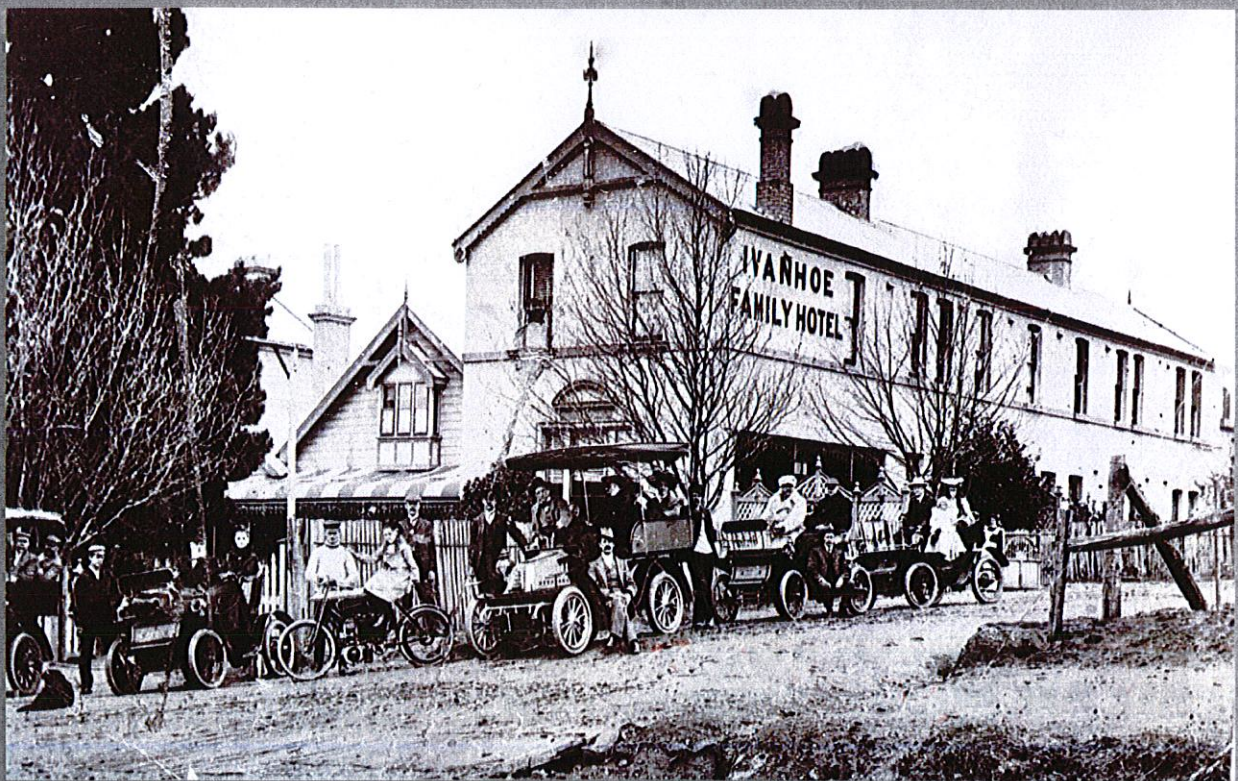


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WATERING THE GEE-GEES: A Survey of Blue Mountains Horse Troughs, Part 1

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*"In the shade of a gee-bung tree,
There they water the gee-gee free."
(Anonymous 1918a).*

Abstract

There are, perhaps surprisingly, many old horse troughs still surviving in the Blue Mountains and while most are now redundant and un-regarded, in their quiet way they have the capacity to reconnect us to our past. Through their modest presence, and the stories of the people associated with them, they remind us of a time when the horse was central to community life; and of the idealism and dedication of individuals and groups who recognized the needs of animals and felt the moral imperative to advocate on their behalf. As such, these old water troughs deserve to be seen in their proper historical context, documented and preserved as important local heritage items.

Key Words: horse troughs, water, animal welfare, wayside features, Bills, Meagher, Schleicher, Blue Mountains.

INTRODUCTION

Scattered around the urban and rural landscapes of the Blue Mountains, a surprising number of old horse troughs, in various states of repair and neglect, have survived the passing of the working horse. Their original purpose now generally redundant and lacking the heritage glamour of large buildings and monuments, these simple, functional structures, falling into the category of 'wayside features' or 'street furniture' (Harling 1990), can slip easily into a state of public invisibility. The Blue Mountains, nonetheless, compared with many other regions, has been fortunate in both the number and variety of those that have survived their obsolescence.

There are troughs sponsored by private individuals, community organizations, local council and state government authorities. Some bear the names of their donors, others the names of the commercial firms that manufactured them, others are anonymous. Some

combine drinking facilities for both horses and dogs. While most are made of concrete, there is one of iron and an interesting and quite distinct category of five water troughs hewn from the local sandstone and fed by natural springs (see Part 2). All of the troughs considered in this paper were originally for public use and, with one exception, are still accessible to the public today.

Despite their lack of pretension each bears a rich cultural memory of times when the horse was central to everyday experience; when wagons and drays, coaches and cabs, delivery carts and a whole array of private traps, gigs and sulkies plied our main roads and the streets of our towns. The clip and clop of hooves, the jingle of harness, the whiff of leather and manure, the crack of whips and a multitude of other sounds and smells, all provided a sensory backdrop to life that is absent today. Though most of our surviving troughs were erected in the closing years of this era, each has a story to tell and not only of the past, for every one resonates also with the quest for a more humane society and the dedication and idealism of men and women who worked to achieve this.

In this survey of the surviving horse troughs of the Blue Mountains I will provide a brief overview of the historical context that produced them and catalogue each individual trough, providing information on location, description, history and personal associations. Part 1 covers the geographical area of Glenbrook to Wentworth Falls.

Provision of Water in the Early Years

The first horses to cross the Blue Mountains were the

"four horses loaded with provisions, ammunition and other necessities"

that accompanied Gregory Blaxland and his companions in May 1813. On the Mountains feed and water were scarce and the horses were greatly troubled by the thick scrub and rocky terrain. Until they reached the open and watered country west of the main range they went without water on occasion and survived mainly “on the coarse swamp grass or rush” (Blaxland 1813, p.5) that grew at the few watering places found along the ridge. This grass had to be cut and carried as extra load.

This supply problem persisted after the opening of the Western Road in 1815 and on the journey between the coast and the hinterland the old watering places soon became recognized camps where travelers and stock congregated. In time, a number of these sites evolved a more permanent presence in the form of inns which, with their sometimes large complexes of stables, stockyards, orchards, dairy, smithy etc., became the primary refueling stops for man and beast. Feed for horses no longer had to be carried and the inns also, of course, provided watering facilities. Early paintings and photographs (Figures 1, 2 & 3) depict the huge ‘dug out’ tree trunks employed as water troughs to accommodate the heavy animal traffic – bullocks, horses, sheep and cattle – along the road.



Figure 1. *Pilgrim Inn, Lapstone Hill 1860*
(Martindale 1860; Mitchell Library).

Water for animals would normally be included in the price of a drink or a meal or covered by overnight accommodation although occasionally there were situations in which the reverse might apply. During the early 1860s at Whipcord Pinch, a section of the old Western Road (now bypassed) west of Pulpit Hill,

“a rustic hotel was erected, and also troughs for the convenience of horse teams” (Mudge 1905).

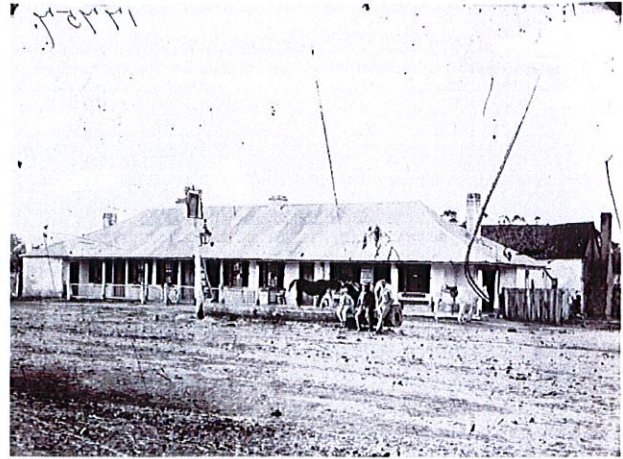


Figure 2. *Edward Field's Hotel, Little Hartley*
(originally Joseph Collits' 1846 *Rose Inn* and later *Ambermere*), 1870-1875
(American & Australasian Photographic Company 1870-1875a; Mitchell Library).

‘Rustic’ this shanty would certainly have been and illegal too, but its keeper, remembered only as ‘Sly Grog Sam’, had his own method of getting around the legalities. The price he placed on the spring-fed water dispensed from his troughs was amply compensated for by the ‘free’ liquor that accompanied it (Peckman 1919; Bennett 1967).

When the inns closed on the Blue Mountains in the wake of the railway's arrival (1867-1868) such distinctive ‘tree-trunk’ water troughs gradually disappeared from the roadside. Animals, of course, still travelled and the provision of watering facilities for stock in transit (especially at railheads) would become a major concern of animal welfare groups in the second half of the nineteenth century. While many of the old timber troughs did hang on in rural and urban areas, by the later years of the nineteenth century their replacement was being actively sought. In 1893 the Water & Sewerage Board decided that in the city and suburbs of Sydney

“no more dug-out timber troughs should be supplied with water”

and began encouraging the replacement of those remaining with

“properly-constructed iron or stone troughs”
(Anonymous 1893).

Smaller replicas of the early roadside dug-out timber troughs were visible until recently in front of the Farmer's Inn at Hartley (Figure 4), now occupied by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service Information Centre.



Figure 3. The Farmers' Inn, Hartley, 1870-1875 (American & Australasian Photographic Company 1870-1875b; Mitchell Library).



Photo – Lois Sabine 2007

Figure 4. The Farmers' Inn in recent times.

Animal Welfare: the Rise of a Public Conscience in Britain and Australia.

It has been argued that the modern animal welfare movement began in England in the late eighteenth century when the philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1789) posed his question

“Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being?”

and a number of humanitarian reformers (both secular and Christian) started to take seriously the inclusion of animals in their quest for a more moral society. The real question, Bentham argued, is not whether animals can reason or talk but “can they *suffer*?”

Though this question entered parliament in the form of proposed legislation in 1809 (Erskine 1824), its instigator, the eccentric Scottish Lord Thomas Erskine, was only partially successful, his bill passing through the Lords but failing in the Commons. It was not for a further twenty-three years that another

‘colourful’ parliamentarian, the Irish member for Galway (Richard ‘Humanity Dick’ Martin) successfully sponsored in 1822 an “Ill-Treatment of Cattle* Act” that became the first piece of legislation in the world to make cruelty to horses, cattle and other farm animals subject to legal penalty (Farrell 2004).

[*: The word ‘cattle’ in its now obsolete sense covered a range of domesticated animals, including horses, sheep and cattle.]

Martin, soon known as the ‘Wilberforce of Hacks’, was also among a group of prominent reformers (including William Wilberforce) who responded to an invitation from the admirable (though unjustly neglected) Anglican clergyman Rev. Arthur Broome and gathered in 1824 in the ironically named Old Slaughter’s Coffee House to establish a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Moss 1961). Under the auspices of this society the successful passage of a further animal welfare act in 1835 extended the law’s protection to an even wider range of animals.

Some years later again, in 1859, another significant event, especially where watering facilities were concerned, took place in London in response to the city’s desperate need for clean drinking water. Initially occupied with the erection of drinking fountains for humans, the Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountain Association soon began including small bowls to accommodate dogs and erecting troughs for horses, cattle and other stock on the move through the city. Accordingly, in 1867 its name became the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association (Figure 5) and along with this adjustment came a broadening of its focus to include all of Britain and beyond, its influence extending even to the Antipodes (Anonymous n.d. a).

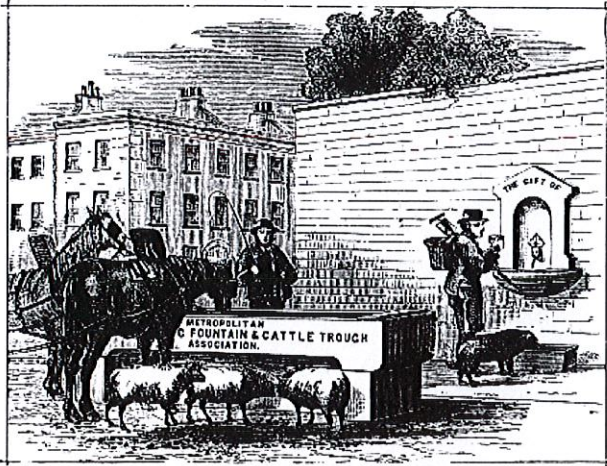
This emerging consciousness concerning animal welfare slowly found its way to Australia. While early protests against cruelty to animals were mainly concerned with their value as property, sporadic intimations of a growing awareness of animal suffering can be found in the early years (Anonymous 1803, 1804; Campbell 1811; Anonymous 1815). In NSW, however, it was not until 1850 that *An Act for the more effectual prevention of Cruelty to Animals* was enacted and, while imposing a broad prohibition on cruelty, was narrow and negative in its definitions and application. Unlike Acts that were subsequently passed in Victoria (1854) and South Australia (1863) the NSW Act did not include a positive duty of care to ensure an animal was supplied with food and water (Jamieson 1991, pp.239-242; MacCulloch 1994, p.44). Despite subsequent efforts to strengthen the Act and an amendment in 1899 that extended the range of

METROPOLITAN Drinking Fountain & Cattle Trough ASSOCIATION.

Supported entirely by Voluntary Contributions.

Offices: VICTORIA HOUSE, 111, VICTORIA ST., WESTMINSTER, S.W.

President—His Grace the DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G., &c., &c.
Chairman of Committee and Treasurer—JOSEPH FRY, Esq.
Secretary—M. W. MILTON.



This is the ONLY AGENCY for providing
FREE SUPPLIES OF WATER FOR MAN AND BEAST
in the STREETS of LONDON,

and the relief it affords, both to human beings and dumb animals, is incalculable.
The total number of Troughs and Fountains now erected, and at work in the Metropolis, is as follows:—597 Troughs for Animals, and 575 Fountains for Human Beings, at which multitudes of Men, Women, and Children, Horses, Oxen, Sheep, and Dogs quench their thirst daily, amounting in the aggregate to probably not less than the enormous total of 250,000,000 drinkers in a year.
All the Fountains and Troughs require constant care and supervision, and are regularly inspected, cleaned, kept in repair, and well supplied with water by the agents of the Society. Half-an-hour spent at one of them during the heat of the summer would do more to secure sympathy and support for the Association than any words which the Committee can use.
Contributions are earnestly solicited to enable the Committee to sustain and extend this simple scheme for the amelioration of animal suffering and the promotion of habits of temperance amongst our itinerant and working population. Contributions may be paid to the Bankers, Messrs. KANSOFT, BOUVIER & Co., Messrs. BARCLAY, BEVAN & Co., or at the Office, to M. W. MILTON, Secretary.

FORM OF BEQUEST.

"I give and bequeath the sum of _____ to be paid (free of Legacy Duty), out of such parts of my personal estate as can be lawfully applied for that purpose, unto the Treasurer for the time being of a Society called or known by the name of THE METROPOLITAN DRINKING FOUNTAIN AND CATTLE TROUGH ASSOCIATION, to be at the disposal of the Committee for the time being of the said Society."

Figure 5. MDFCTA Advertisement from *Burke's Peerage* 1879 (Anonymous n.d. b).

animals covered, such was the legislative situation in NSW for the remainder of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. It was also the legal context within which an organization devoted to animal welfare on the English model was eventually established. This did not happen, however, until the early 1870s when, following moves in Victoria (1871) and Tasmania (1872), a meeting held in July 1873 in Sydney saw the formation of the NSW Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Anonymous 1873), known from 1878 as the Animal Protection Society NSW (APS)**. To encourage the recognition of a 'positive duty of care' on the part of those owning and working with animals became one of its major objectives.

[**: The Society was called the NSW Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) when it was founded in 1873. In 1878 it became the Animal Protection Society NSW (APS). In 1918 it again adopted its original title and in 1923 became the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA).]

As in England, working horses and livestock in transit occupied much of the new NSW society's attention. Though the APS was able to report in 1882 that,

"the general condition of the omnibus and cart horses has improved, and neglect and cruelty in working horses ... has greatly diminished" (APS 1882).

the horse remained a central focus for vigilance. Indeed, a survey of cruelty cases dealt with by the APS during the 1880s and 1890s showed that almost 90% related to the ill-treatment of horses (MacCulloch 1994, p.52), while in 1904, 195 of 199 successful prosecutions for cruelty in NSW involved horses (APS 1904).

A large portion of the APS's concern focused upon the provision of appropriate watering facilities. Not only were there insufficient numbers of street water troughs but many of those that did exist were badly designed and their maintenance neglected (APS 1878; Anonymous 1878). Nor was there sufficient provision in stockyards at railway stations and wharves or for animals awaiting slaughter, kept often for days in enclosures without water or sustenance (APS 1886). Drinking water for dogs, too, was a concern, especially in Sydney when the city authorities began to use salt water to clean the streets and dogs could no longer "assuage their thirst in the running channels" (APS 1886).

To rectify these problems the APS campaigned relentlessly, lobbying City and municipal authorities alike offering both criticism and advice and obtaining

"plans of the troughs and fountains used by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Association in London"

and submitting them for guidance (APS 1881). In 1903, as part of a delegation of cabmen, draymen and other horse employers, it urged Sydney's Lord Mayor to support "a better system of water troughs for both dogs and horses" and offered to donate to the City council an appropriately designed trough

"to be erected in a good place, having water at the top for the horses and water underneath for the dogs" (Anonymous 1903).

The Society also solicited subscriptions from its own supporters to finance the erection of troughs (APS 1902, 1903) and sought out and encouraged private benefactors

“who may be willing to present drinking troughs, designs of which, with all information regarding cost, may be obtained from the Society’s Secretary” (APS 1886).

In the late 1890s the campaign was made even harder when the APS found itself fighting not only apathy and budget priorities but also the threat of an ill-conceived ‘Water Troughs Tax’ proposed by the Water & Sewage Board which, if introduced, would likely have seen many of the already existing troughs disappear (APS 1899). Water would remain a principal concern for the APS well into the twentieth century and in 1919 the Society was still recording in its annual report that, with regard to the supply of troughs, “much remains to be done” (SPCA 1919).

Though horse troughs of one kind or another would have featured in the developing Blue Mountains townscapes of the nineteenth century, most of those that survive today date from the first half of the twentieth century, some quite late in that period. When, in the 1960s and 1970s, following the dominance of motorized transport over the horse, many were removed from Sydney’s city and suburbs, the more ‘rural’ location of the Blue Mountains beyond the suburban spread gave its troughs a deal more protection. It is evident, too, that the local Council exhibited a more tolerant view towards their disposal, deciding in 1969

“not to remove horse troughs unless in the interest of public health as they are still used by horses and added an atmosphere to the surroundings.” (Anonymous 1969).

While some were relocated, especially when their original sites posed an accident risk due to the increasing motor traffic, such an enlightened policy goes a long way to explain the healthy number of survivals.

Trough Supporters and Benefactors.

Many individuals responded to the entreaties of the APS/RSPCA to lobby, raise funds and support financially the erection of water troughs. Among those whose efforts were important for the Blue Mountains region were the following.

George and Annis Bills.

Though George Bills (1859-1927; [Figure 6](#)) and his wife Annis (1859-1910; [Figure 7](#)) were not locals their memory, through their horse troughs, is etched into the landscape of four Blue Mountains towns (Glenbrook, Warrimoo, Wentworth Falls and Medlow Bath). In the Bills the APS found responsive supporters to their call for assistance. Their story is one of emigration, business success leading to prosperity and a desire to use their money to fund the causes in which they believed (Gibson 1996; Roche 1995; Palmer & McWilliam 1991).

George was born in the English seaside resort of Brighton on 11 March 1859 and migrated with his family first to New Zealand in the 1860s and then to Australia in 1873 while his father Richard, a naturalist and bird dealer, was engaged in supplying English and (later) Australian birds to the Acclimatisation Societies in Dunedin and Christchurch. Growing up in the Echuca-Moama district of western Victoria, George and his brothers entered the family bird



Figure 6 & 7. Portraits of George and Annis Bills (Gemmill 2010).

business as they came of age, eventually opening outlets for their father's collecting in Dunedin, Sydney and Melbourne. In the early 1880s, leaving his brother Henry to manage the Sydney shop, George travelled north to establish a short-lived branch in Brisbane and while there proposed to another English immigrant, Sheffield-born Annis Elizabeth Swann. They were married at the Brisbane Central Registry Office on 18 May 1885.

For some years George's two Melbourne brothers (Richard Jnr. and Walter) had begun experimenting with a new venture – wire working – that soon revolutionized their business as they moved from making bird cages into the manufacture of wire mattresses. By the mid 1880s the Sydney branch was also moving in this direction and when George returned from Brisbane with his new wife he and his brother Henry steered the business into a long period of growth that saw wire mattresses quickly supplant bird dealing as the firm's business priority. By the early 1900s, when substantial donations from Bills Bros. began appearing in the Annual Reports of the APS, the now prosperous firm was occupying spacious and permanent premises at 541-543 Kent Street, Sydney.

Following his retirement c.1907, George and Annis moved to Melbourne where they settled in the suburb of Hawthorn and quickly took a practical interest in the provision of water troughs in the city. Tragically, however, in 1910 Annis died suddenly during a visit to George's birthplace in the UK. She was just fifty years of age. On his return George was joined by his brother Henry (who had also retired to Melbourne) in an increasingly active involvement with the Victorian Society for the Protection of Animals (Pertzel 2006) and a funding partnership that benefited animal welfare in both Victoria and NSW. Both were appointed 'Life Governors' of the NSW APS.

When George died on 14 December 1927, aged 68, the will he had drawn up two years earlier ensured that his and his wife's ideals would continue to find expression. It stipulated that, after bequests to family, friends and employees were satisfied, a trust fund be formed from the residue of his estate (valued in total at between £70,000 and £80,000) to fund horse troughs wherever, with the consent of the appropriate authorities, they be deemed

“necessary or desirable for the relief of horses or other dumb animals” (Bills 1925, p.3)

and to assist the work of societies and organizations established for the purpose of protecting and alleviating cruelty to animals.

All troughs funded from his estate would be supplied free of charge (including freight and installation), the recipient's only requirements being the provision of a suitable location, appropriate foundations and a consistent water supply. All troughs were also to be

“suitably inscribed with the names of Annis & George Bills Australia” (Bills 1925, p.3).

The terms of his will received wide publicity and requests for troughs, especially from local councils, began immediately. To begin with troughs were designed and built individually but by the early 1930s a pre-cast concrete design with Art Deco touches was registered and soon became the standard. In the early years work was carried out solely in the factory of local (Hawthorn) concrete manufacturers J.B. Phillips but when the expanding Melbourne firm Rocla (established 1922) became involved production spread also to NSW; first to Rocla's Junee branch in 1937 and later to Sydney (Anonymous 1972).

George's estate, through the Trust administered by his sister Daisy and her husband, funded hundreds of troughs around Australia, the majority of which were dispatched to locations in NSW and Victoria and were designed to include a bowl for dogs and cats and, sometimes, even a 'fountain' for human use. A number were also funded overseas in Britain and, it is said, in places as diverse as Ireland, USA, Canada, South Africa, Japan, Romania and Switzerland. While a number of Bills troughs erected in association with the MDFCTA have survived in Britain (Anonymous n.d. c), there is no evidence of any remaining in these other countries.

Most troughs distributed in Australia were constructed during the 1930s and early 1940s, with demand and production shrinking rapidly in the years following World War II as motor vehicles replaced the working horse, especially in urban areas. However, as directed in the will, other animal welfare initiatives also benefited generously from the Bills estate (Pertzel 2006; Jack 2003) and as the demand for horse troughs lessened in the post-war years, the Trust shifted its primary concentration to the wider problems of animal welfare. In the early 1960s, for example, it contributed about \$5,000 towards construction of a fully equipped emergency animal rescue centre in the Melbourne suburb of Burwood (Pertzel 2006, p.108) and when finally wound up c.1980 the remaining funds were distributed among various animal welfare

organizations, including the RSPCA in Sydney which received a legacy of around \$17,000 (Smith 1991).

Despite the disappearance of many Bills horse troughs there are a remarkable number still in existence. George Gemmill, historian and guardian of the Bills memory, through his dedicated website/blog, has documented and photographed over three hundred Bills troughs surviving throughout Australia and overseas (Gemmill 2015). His project has garnered considerable interest and a wide network of informants.

Bernard and Ruth Schleicher.

Bernard Schleicher (1885-1971) and his sister Ruth (1893-1976), the driving forces behind the Lawson-Hazelbrook-Woodford RSPCA Branch, were born in London and Sydney respectively, the son and daughter of an Oxford-educated Anglican cleric who became Principal of Sydney's Moore Theological College. With their sister Dorothy they settled in Hazelbrook at the end of the First World War on a small farm near the entrance to the Horseshoe Falls Reserve and over the next half century sunk their roots deeply into the Mountains' soil. Their home *Currawong* became a by-word in the district for home grown produce and while remembered warmly (Anonymous n.d. d; Jeavons 1971), both for their eccentricities and their commitment to humanitarian, environmental and community activities, memory of them is now fading to sporadic references in a few local history books (Campbell 1989, pp.55, 60, 121 & 123; Goodlet 2006, pp.49, 73, 75, 91 & 150; Hooke 2008, 377-380).

Bernard was scholarly and his intellectual interests ranged widely. He taught languages, mathematics and history, both privately and at a number of the local independent schools and he and Ruth were prolific letter writers whose opinions on subjects like animal welfare, bushfire prevention and the preservation of native animals and plants appeared regularly in the local and city press. But they were also 'practical' activists. In the 1930s Bernard became Secretary of the Hazelbrook Reserves Trust, a position he held for thirty eight years, and Chairman of the Hazelbrook Urban Area Committee, the organization that supported the first of the horse trough projects.

In the early 1950s he and Ruth formed a Blue Mountains Fauna & Flora Protection Society at Hazelbrook, the first of its kind in the Mountains and a strong advocate for the region to become

“a national scenic and faunal reserve for the use and enjoyment of this and future generations, and that all timber getting on public lands be entirely forbidden.” (Anonymous 1953).

As its long serving President Bernard convinced the Mayor in the early 1960s to convene a meeting in Katoomba to establish a similar group there, the result being the birth of an organisation that ultimately evolved into the present Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

For many like the Schleichers, concern for the bush and native flora and fauna went hand in hand with protecting the welfare of domestic and working animals. Accordingly, in 1935, assisted by Mrs. Claire Wilson, the wife of the Blue Mountains Shire President Percy Wilson, Ruth convened a meeting (Anonymous 1935a) that was held on the 13 September in the Methodist Church Hall at Hazelbrook to form a Lawson-Hazelbrook-Woodford branch of the RSPCA. Chaired by the Shire president, the meeting voted to establish the branch and elected Bernard President and Ruth Hon. Secretary (Anonymous 1935b). The branch was instrumental in raising funds to erect horse troughs in both Hazelbrook and Woodford.

Nurturing and strengthening these convictions and involvements was their religion. Both were devout Anglicans and closely associated with the life of that denomination's Central Mountains churches, Bernard taking on at various times both administrative and lay preaching roles. Some months before his death in 1971, the congregation of St. James church at Hazelbrook erected an ornamental rock pool and fountain in the grounds of the church to honour his long service. Sadly, St. James was destroyed by fire in April 2004 and only the brass plaque off the memorial fountain was rescued. This is now attached to the 'Memorial Wall' at the Lawson Emmanuel Anglican Church and it joins the small Woodford horse trough as the only public reminders of the deep Schleicher commitment to community.

Alice Meagher.

Alice Meagher (ca.1862-1924) was born Alice Maude Osmond in New Zealand and probably crossed the Tasman to Sydney in the late 1880s. When she married the twenty-five year-old Bathurst-born solicitor Richard Denis Meagher in January 1891 she was twenty-nine years of age.

After establishing their home at Bondi, Alice soon found herself engulfed in public controversy. Life with the volatile and ambitious Meagher was never going to be easy and when he was charged with conspiracy during an 1896 legal case, struck off the roll of solicitors and lost his newly won parliamentary seat, financial ruin and public humiliation threatened.

Though she must have despaired at times of ever leading a normal life she survived her husband's public transgressions and assisted him in gradually rebuilding his career. Their marriage rested on the strong foundations of mutual devotion.

Added to the worries of her husband's flawed public life was the fragility of her health. Never robust, she nevertheless played her part in public life with enthusiasm and commitment. During her time as Sydney's Lady Mayoress (1916-1917; [Figure 8](#)), when her husband served as the city's first Labor Lord Mayor, she opened the new Anzac Parade, supported her husband's efforts to raise money and men for the war and during a major transport strike embarked upon a tireless fund-raising campaign to relieve the distress of the strikers' families.

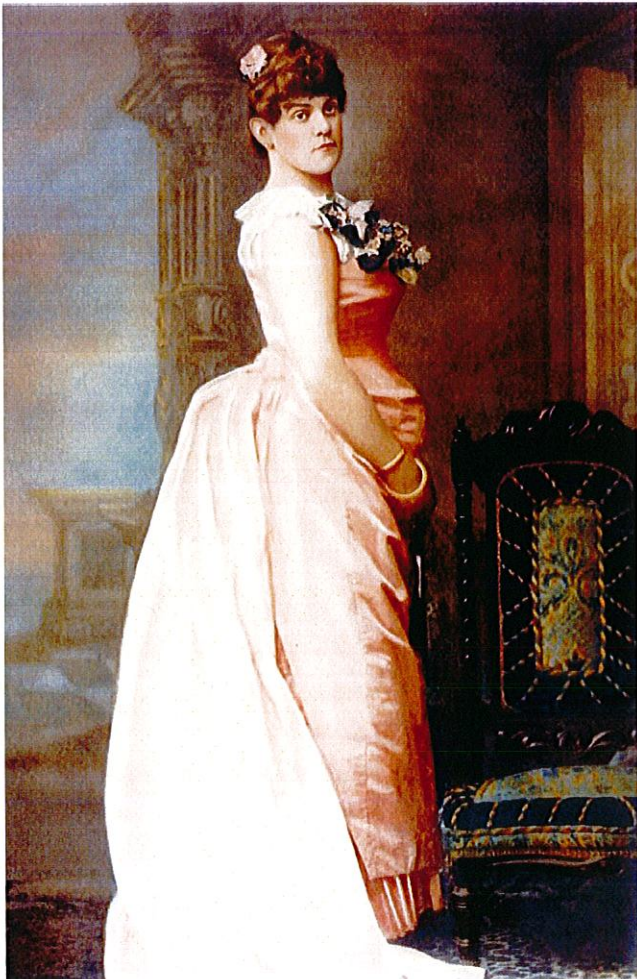


Figure 8. Alice Meagher, Lady Mayoress
Anonymous 1916-1917).

In 1920, hoping his wife might benefit from the upland climate and clean air, Richard Meagher purchased *Yarrowee*, a substantial sandstone cottage on 5 acres (2ha) of land fronting the Western Road at Lawson. They renamed their new country home *Durham Lodge*

and even here, though increasingly an invalid, Alice continued her community work. Few passing swagmen, tramping the Western Road in search of work, left her door empty handed. She successfully approached the Blue Mountains Shire Council with an offer to fund a horse trough in Lawson and continued to campaign to raise money for horse troughs in Sydney (Anonymous 1923, 1924a). Too ill to attend the Lawson trough's opening ceremony in December 1921, her husband handed it over to the people of Lawson on her behalf. She died on the 9 April 1924 and was buried in Waverley Cemetery.

Both Alice and Richard Meagher were devout Catholics and, having no children, made plans to use their property for the benefit of their religion. Alice especially wanted part of their land at Lawson to become the site for a new Catholic Church and hoped that ultimately *Durham Lodge* would go to the Franciscans. While the latter was not to be, following her death her husband purchased the neighbouring property, donated both it and *Durham Lodge* to the Church, and helped finance the building of a substantial church dedicated to Our Lady of the Nativity.

The new church was consecrated on 7 April 1929 and stands as a memorial to the life of Alice Meagher,

“a good citizen, philanthropist and an ever-willing worker in all public causes” (Anonymous 1924b).

Her horse trough survives as a further, if more humble, memorial to her compassion and concern for animals.

For a slightly fuller portrait of Alice Meagher see my article “A Gift to the Horses of Lawson” published some time ago in the BMACHO newsletter (Low 2011b).

A ‘Catalogue’ of the Surviving Horse Troughs in the Blue Mountains

What follows is an account of the surviving horse troughs located in the Blue Mountains. Organized geographically, taking an east-to-west route (with an occasional detour) along the Great Western Highway, the survey in Part 1 of this two part article covers the area between Glenbrook and Wentworth Falls. It includes what is known about the history of the troughs, their location and present condition and links them to the people with whom they are associated whose memory and story they hold. Their relationship (if any) to other troughs is also canvassed.

Trough No.1: Glenbrook (Figure 9).

Location: On the grass next to the footpath on the Western side of the Glenbrook Theatre (formerly the School of Arts) facing Ross Street near its intersection with the Great Western Highway.

Description & Condition: This is a concrete trough designed with an attractive simplicity and touches of Art Deco style; it is supported level but rests almost on the ground. The trough itself is approximately 240 cm long, 40 cm wide and 40 cm deep and includes a 40 x 40 cm cistern separated by an internal concrete wall; at its rear is a 40 cm high ornamental pediment. While the trough itself is unpainted, the pediment is cream with a green inset. Attached are two plaques, one (concrete) on the rear pediment bearing the words "Donated by Annis and George Bills Australia" and the other (brass) on the face of the trough itself (Figure 10). The cistern is uncovered and contains a tap attached to a pipe, suggesting that the water may still be connected; there is water in both the drinking section and the cistern. The small dog and cat trough that would originally have accompanied the horse trough is missing. This description is based on my last inspection (29 July 2015) and while the pediment could do with a new coat of paint, the structure remains in good condition.

History: The Glenbrook trough is one of four 'Bills' troughs surviving in the Blue Mountains, funded through the estate of businessman and animal welfare activist George Bills. While most of these troughs



Photo: John Low, 2007

Figure 9. Annis & George Bills trough, Glenbrook.

were manufactured and distributed during the 1930s, Glenbrook was rather late in benefitting from the Bills' generosity. It was not until mid 1945 that the Blue Mountains Shire Council (BMSC) accepted an offer (probably made before World War II began) from the Bills Trust and agreed to receive three

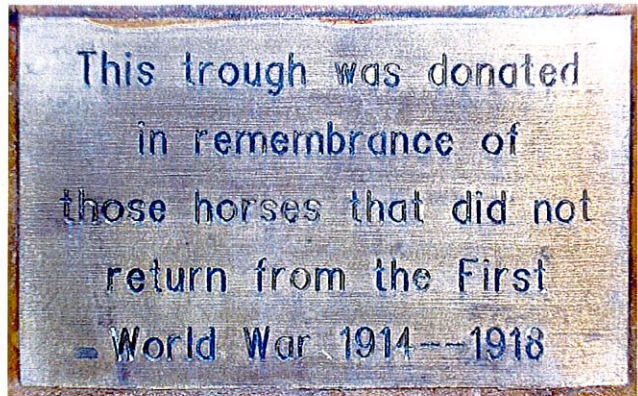


Photo: John Low, 2007

Figure 10. Plaque on the side of the Glenbrook trough.

troughs for placement at Glenbrook, Warrimoo and Wentworth Falls (BMSC 1945).

Though the original position of the trough at Glenbrook, installed by October 1945, is uncertain it was probably aligned with the highway in front of the School of Arts. Like many other horse troughs, it would have been later removed during the 1960s or 1970s, possibly even as late as 1978 when major renovations to the School of Arts building took place. Stored by Council, it was reinstated to public life during the Glenbrook Centenary celebrations in 1985, when Mayor Peter Quirk 'unveiled' it on its present site on Sunday 10 November in the presence of residents, visitors and several local horses (Anonymous 1985).

It was at this time that the small brass plate and its historically inaccurate text first appeared (Figure 10). No such stipulation regarding his trough funding motivation appears in George Bills' will. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the addition of the plaque could be seen as a serendipitous mistake for, not only is it a sentiment Annis and George Bills would have shared, but it grants the old trough a new relevance – the only (albeit unofficial) war memorial in the Blue Mountains dedicated to the service and suffering of animals in war. For a discussion of this and the as yet unrecognized possibilities it offers the local community, see my earlier article on the Glenbrook trough (Low 2011a). The trough is listed in the Blue Mountains City Council's Local Environment Plan (LEP) as having local heritage significance (NSW Government, Office of Environment & Heritage, n.d. a).

Association with Particular People: George and Annis Bills.

Trough No.2: Warrimoo (Figure 11).

Location: A short pedestrian pathway, between the railway and the Great Western Highway and leading west from Warrimoo Railway Station, delivers the walker into the small oasis of Ardill Park where another ‘Annis & George Bills’ trough is now located.

Description & Condition: This is an identical trough to the one at Glenbrook in size, structure and design; made of concrete, it is designed simply but attractively in an Art Deco style and includes the regulation plaque bearing the words “Donated by Annis and George Bills Australia”. It is supported on three sandstone blocks and the only real distinguishing feature from its Glenbrook twin is the paint work; the pediment and front panels and sides of the trough are painted blue/grey. The trough holds some water, the cistern has no cover and appears to be unconnected and inoperative and there is no sign of the “dog fountain and bubbler” mentioned in the press at the time of its erection (see below). This description is based on my last inspection (3 September 2015) at which time the trough appeared to be in good condition.



Photo: John Low.

Figure 11. Annis & George Bills trough, Warrimoo.

History: The Warrimoo trough is one of three horse troughs funded through the estate of businessman and animal welfare activist George Bills (the others being at Glenbrook and Wentworth Falls) that were accepted by the Blue Mountains Shire Council in mid 1945 (BMSC 1945).

With accompanying “dog fountain and bubbler” (Anonymous 1945) the Warrimoo trough was in place at the side of the Great Western Highway by October 1945 and the brief account given in the history of Warrimoo Public School published at the time of Australia’s Bicentenary suggests that by 1988 it had

already experienced a (probably slight) relocation from its original position (Warrimoo Public School Anniversary Committee 1988, p.16). In 1999 it was moved again to its present site (NSW Government, Office of Environment & Heritage, n.d. b) when highway widening necessitated a redesign of the reserve between the highway and the railway. The trough is listed in the Blue Mountains City Council’s LEP as having local heritage significance (NSW Government, Office of Environment & Heritage n.d. b).

Associations with Particular People: George and Annis Bills.

Trough No.3: Woodford (Figure 12).

Location: In the village of Woodford a small water trough sits on the grass verge near the western corner of Glen Street where it intersects with the Great Western Highway.

Description & Condition: This is a very basic rectangular concrete horse trough, approximately 200 cm long, 65 cm wide and 40 cm deep and lacking the embellishments of the Bills design. It is supported on two concrete ‘legs’, contains no water and is unconnected and inoperative. There are, however, indentations in the internal wall of the trough suggesting the former location of a small cistern and an old plug is still present. Any facility for dogs and cats is no longer evident. This description is based on my last inspection (3 September 2015) at which time the trough was clean and its condition reasonable, though the passage of time is leaving its mark on the aging and distressed concrete. At the trough’s northern end a small interpretive plaque (Figure 13) has been placed drawing attention to its history.



Photo: John Low, 2015

Figure 12. The Woodford trough.

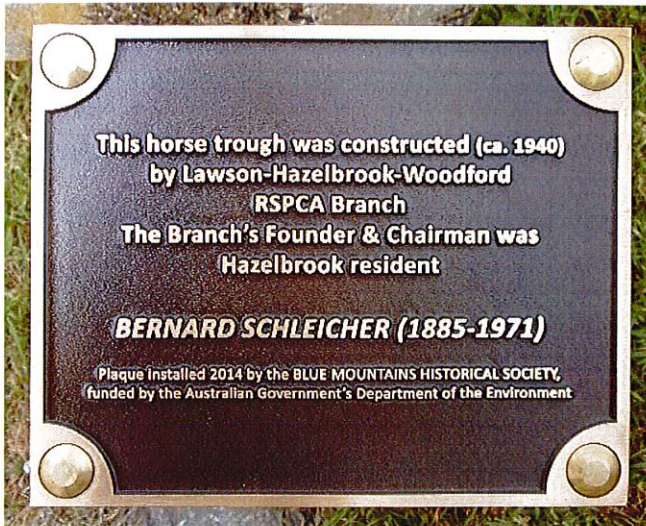


Photo: John Low, 2015

Figure 13. The Woodford trough plaque.

History: Erected ca.1940, this trough had its origins in the activities of the first RSPCA branch to be formed in the Blue Mountains. Like its parent organization, the Lawson-Hazelbrook-Woodford Branch, established in the mid 1930s, expressed a concern at the general lack of drinking facilities for working horses and initiated a fund to raise money for the placement of a small trough at Hazelbrook. With the assistance of the Blue Mountains Shire's local Urban Area Committee and in the face of some local opposition – whose argument that the money would have been better spent elsewhere was refuted strongly in the press by the branch's secretary (Schleicher 1937) - this occurred in early 1937. Reported also to include a drinking facility for the local dogs (Anonymous 1937c), the trough's location at Hazelbrook is somewhat uncertain. Described as "in a side street" (Anonymous 1937b) and "handy to the main road" (Anonymous 1937a), it was nevertheless clearly accessible to the Western Road.

Encouraged by the success of this project, the branch declared at a meeting the following year that

"When Woodford secured a water supply the question of erecting a similar trough would be considered." (Anonymous 1938).

Accordingly, when residential connections to a supply began in the village in the early years of World War II, a concrete trough made its appearance. While the Hazelbrook trough has now gone, the Woodford one remains, probably (though this is unconfirmed) in its original position. Its story, hidden by the passage of time, has recently been brought back to public notice

by means of a small interpretive plaque (Hanley & Low 2015). The trough is not on any Heritage Listing.

Associations with Particular People: Bernard and Ruth Schleicher.

Trough No.4: Lawson (Figure 14).

Location: The Lawson trough can be found on the grass verge adjacent to the kerb at the north-eastern corner of Honour Avenue.

Description & Condition: This rectangular concrete horse trough, approximately 240 cm long, 65 cm wide and 25 cm deep, rests on two concrete supports between which is a shallower trough (or tray), also concrete and approximately 170 cm x 65 cm x 14 cm, for use by dogs and cats. Attached to both ends of the horse trough are two marble plaques each bearing the same text (Figure 15). The southern end of the trough includes a cistern (approx. 40 x 65 cm) covered by a padlocked metal lid, the horse trough (though not the dog and cat tray) holds water and a wooden traffic barrier protects the structure on its side fronting the road. This description is based upon my last inspection (3 September 2015) at which time, despite evidence of some concrete damage and deterioration and given its ninety-odd years, the structure appeared to be in reasonable condition. The marble plaques,



Photo: John Low, 2007

Figure 14. The Lawson trough.

however, are showing their age and while the lettering at the northern end is still readable, the text at the southern end has deteriorated badly.

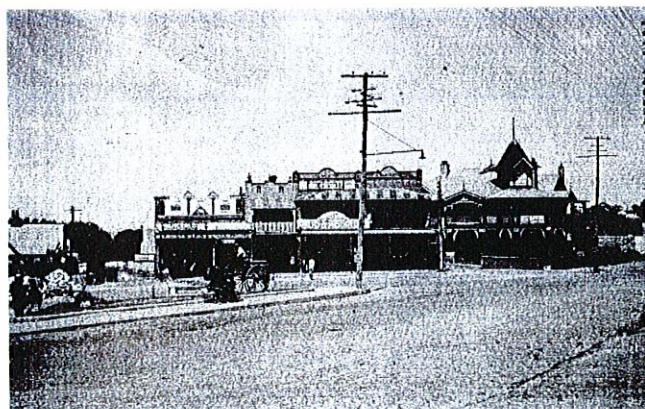


Photo: Peter Rickwood 2015

Figure 15. The Lawson trough plaque.

History: The trough was donated to the people and horses of Lawson by Alice Meagher, wife of controversial solicitor and politician Richard Meagher and like Annis and George Bills a committed supporter and Life Member of the SPCA. When she arrived in Lawson in 1920 she soon spotted the absence of a community horse trough and in August 1921 approached the Blue Mountains Shire Council with an offer to cover the cost of obtaining one. The Council agreed and instructed its engineer to prepare an appropriate design and carry out the work which was completed in time for an official opening in early December that same year (Anonymous 1921a, 1921b).

The trough was originally located at the edge of a grass plot in Douglass Square (Figure 16), accessible to the Western Road and facing the shops next to the Blue Mountain Hotel. It was moved to its present site during later roadwork to realign Yileena Avenue and an 'Archival Record' commissioned by the RTA during more recent highway widening (Fisher & Fallon 2008) has recommended that it be relocated



BMCC Photo Library 005/005000

Figure 16. Douglass Square, Lawson, including the horse trough on its original site.

again to a safer site where the public can enjoy it. The trough is listed in the Blue Mountains City Council's LEP as having local heritage significance (NSW Government, Office of Environment & Heritage n.d. c).

Associations with Particular People: Alice Meagher.

Trough No.5: Wentworth Falls (Figure 17).

Location: This Bills trough is situated in Falls Road near the south-eastern corner of its intersection with Fletcher Street. It sits in a grassy area and is back-dropped picturesquely by the white picket fence of No.140 Falls Road.

Description & Condition: In size, structure and Art Deco styling this is an identical trough to those at Glenbrook and Warrimoo. Made of concrete and supported on three concrete blocks, its pediment includes the regulation plaque bearing the words "Donated by Annis and George Bills Australia". Unlike those at Glenbrook and Warrimoo, the Wentworth Falls trough does not appear to have been painted and, though darkened with age, probably looks much as it did on arrival seventy years ago. It holds water, the cistern is covered and padlocked and seems to be connected and in working order; unlike those at Glenbrook and Warrimoo it is also accompanied by a small dog and cat trough (approx. 60 x 30 x 14 cm).



Photo: John Low, 2005

Figure 17. The Bills trough in Falls Road, Wentworth Falls.

This description is based on my last inspection (3 September 2015) at which time the trough appeared to be in good condition.

History: The Wentworth Falls trough is one of three (the others being at Glenbrook and Warrimoo) that

were accepted by the Blue Mountains Shire Council in mid 1945 (BMSC 1945) and funded through the estate of businessman and animal welfare activist George Bills. It arrived and was erected by October that same year, possibly on its present site where at least one long-time resident remembers it being in 1968 (Smith n.d.).

When the Bills trough arrived, older residents may well have recalled the controversy that accompanied the placement of an earlier trough in the town. In 1917 the Shire Council, on the recommendation of the local Progress Association, had placed a trough under a geebung tree in a grass plot at the intersection of the Western Road and Station Street. It drew criticism almost immediately, being described as

“a miserable-looking structure of galvanised iron on a skeleton stand” and “an abominable eyesore ... in a most conspicuous place” (Anonymous 1917).

To make matters worse, connection to the water supply which had been the responsibility of the Railways Department was delayed and the trough remained empty (except when it rained) until finally connected in February 1918 (Anonymous 1918b).

The trough, of course, also had its defenders who argued that “it was a humane necessity” (Rose 1918) and one city visitor writing in praise of it thought it

“just lovely to stand and watch the spirited cab horses ... stopping to drink their fill in the shade of its beautiful tree” (Anonymous 1918a).

Subsequent to the water connection, criticism shifted to the heavy use the trough attracted and the consequent destruction of the grass plot on which it stood (Anonymous 1919). Ultimately, however, the whole argument became redundant when the site was chosen for the planned war memorial and cleared (Anonymous 1920a, 1920b). The iron trough was shifted to a new location (nearby but unidentified) and seems to have been replaced in 1930 by “a good concrete horse trough” that promised to be “permanently serviceable” (Anonymous 1930; BMSC 1930). This later concrete trough may still have been in operation when the Shire Council received its three funded Bills troughs in 1945 and therefore the reason the Bills trough destined for Wentworth Falls was placed in Falls Road and not in the commercial centre of the town. The trough is listed in the Blue Mountains City Council’s LEP as having local heritage significance (NSW Government, Office of Environment & Heritage n.d. d).

Associations with Particular People: George and Annis Bills.

Conclusion:

This paper will continue in Part 2 where troughs surviving in the Blue Mountains region west of Wentworth Falls will be surveyed.

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Abbreviations:

APS Animal Protection Society, NSW
 BMACHO Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations.
 BMHS Blue Mountains Historical Society
 BMSC Blue Mountains Shire Council
 LEP Local Environment Plan
 MDFCTA Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association
 n.d. no date
 SPCA Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, NSW
 RSPCA Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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