

## *Wee Jasper Station*

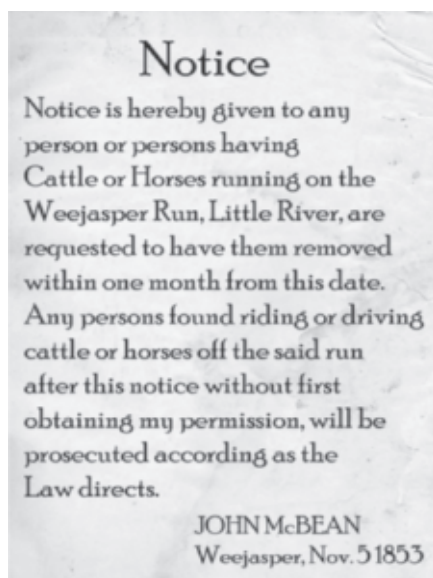
### *Charles Lewis*

The New South Wales Government Gazette of 1849 lists Charles Lewis as having a 'licence to depasture' a run of 4000 acres called *Wee Jasper* in 1844. (cited in J.F. Campbell, *Squatting on Crown Lands in New South Wales*, 1968, p. 54). This suggests that Charles Lewis was the first to use the name *Wee Jasper* (sometimes written as *Weejasper*) and the first to occupy land close to the current location of the village of *Wee Jasper*. The 'licence to depasture' had to be renewed annually.

Lewis no doubt employed several shepherds to help him manage and protect his stock on a property this size.

### *McBean family*

An advertisement, with John McBean's name on it in the *Goulburn Herald* on 5 November, 1853 indicates that the McBean family, who came from Scotland in 1838 and to Yass in 1844, held the lease on the *Wee Jasper Run* in 1853. This



advertisement also indicates there were others running cattle in the area in the early 1850s.

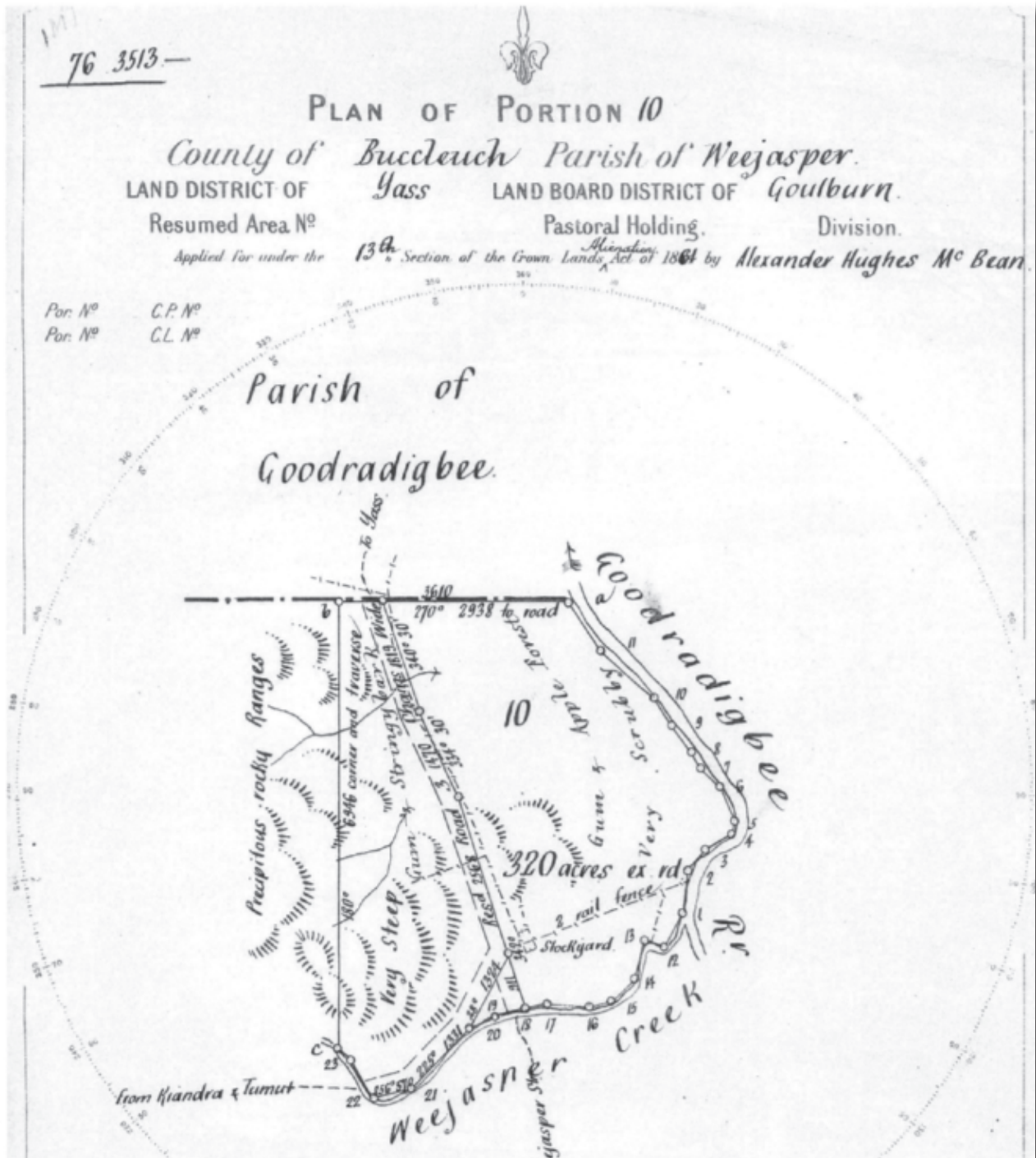
The McBean brothers, William, John and Alexander Hughes McBean, had their names jointly and individually on a huge number of runs around Yass and *Wee Jasper* by the 1870s. They frequently worked together and moved stock between their holdings.

By 1870 the *Wee Jasper Run*, now 29,000 acres and called *Wee Jasper Station*, was in the hands of Alexander Hughes McBean (*Bailliers New South Wales Gazetteer and Road Guide 1870*, p. 595). The major part of this run was a vast scrub lease.

Alexander's brothers eventually settled on properties closer to Yass – William at *Springmount* and John at *Charnwood*, Black Range. Alexander married Sarah McPherson in December 1877 and brought her to live on *Wee Jasper Station*.

During the 1870s Alexander purchased several blocks fronting the Goodradigbee River within the *Wee Jasper Run*. Survey maps of these blocks record improvements including several huts, stockyards, fencing, ringbarking, and an old house. One block by the river, which he purchased in 1875 after occupying it since the 1850s, included a house valued at £300.

The McBeans employed a governess for their children and, given the success of the McBean brothers' pastoral enterprises over the years, they probably employed others to help around the house and with the



A riverside block purchased by Alexander Hughes McBean in 1875. The McBean brothers, William, John and Alexander, first occupied the Wee Jasper Run in the 1850s. Together and separately, the brothers owned and leased a great many landholdings in the Yass district.

farm work. The 1891 Census records ten people living in the household of Alexander Hughes McBean, six males and four females.

The Electoral Roll of 1908 has Alexander Hughes McBean listed as a grazier living at *Little River*, Wee Jasper. Leslie Ross McBean is also listed as a grazier at Wee Jasper along with Mysie McBean and Marion Elsie McBean who were undertaking 'home duties' at the time.

Norman McBean's name also appears in the 1908 Electoral Roll with the occupation of stock keeper. Norman killed himself in July, 1914, two days after shooting Gertrude McAlister, daughter of Thomas and Mary McAlister of Micalong. Gertrude was working at *Wee Jasper Station* at the time. In his letter of confession, Norman wrote 'It was all a ghastly mistake'. The incident was reported in newspapers Australia wide. No McBeans are listed on the Electoral Roll for Wee Jasper in 1922.

### *Arthur Bryant Triggs*

A large part of the land attached to *Wee Jasper Station* was leased by A.B. Triggs in 1899 with a McBean managing it. A 1907 Lands Department map of the Parish of West Goodradigbee has Arthur Bryant Triggs' name on Scrub Lease 150 — over 20,000 acres that included Nottingham Creek and also fronted onto the Goodradigbee River. Triggs first leased land in the area in the 1890s.

Triggs was a bank clerk in Yass when Abraham Wade suggested to him that they jointly purchase 8000 sheep. Triggs sold his share at a profit and went on to become one of the biggest sheep traders in Australia. He purchased and leased land from Queensland to Victoria so that drovers moving his sheep would never be far from a holding where they could graze the sheep. At one time he

owned or leased almost 100 stations. In 1920 he had 25 stations and over 100,000 sheep producing 12,000 bales of wool (*Yass Tribune* 29 April, 1965).

Triggs married twice into the McBean family. His first marriage was to Maria Ritchie (daughter of Alexander's sister, Jessie McBean). His second marriage in 1901, was to her cousin, Mary, one of John McBean's six daughters.

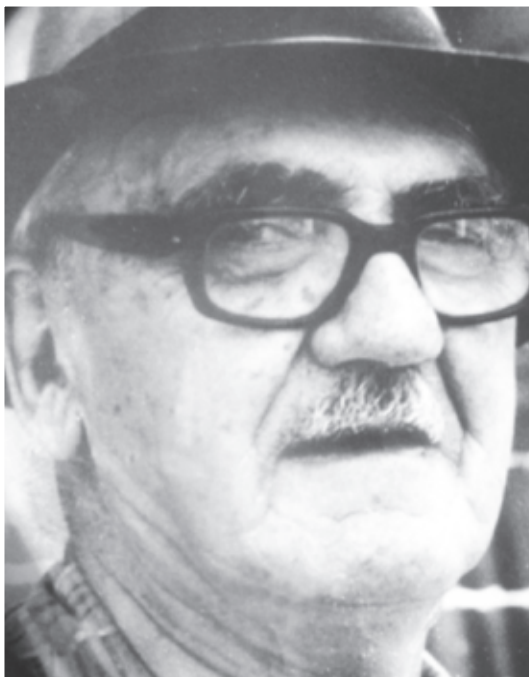
A.B. Triggs employed managers on the properties he purchased or leased and ran his business interests from Yass. One of his managers, W.M. Edwards, had eight children at Wee Jasper School in 1915.

### *The next owners*

*Wee Jasper Station* has changed hands and boundaries many times since the McBeans occupied it. Fred and Mary Dixon from a dairy farm in Ireland owned it for a short time around 1922. They didn't stay long as apparently they felt the area was too much like Ireland. They sold out to Killen and Co. — a pastoral company — and moved to Cobar. Andy Sloan and his brother Jim were responsible for the property in the 1920s and early 1930s. The Sloans came from Ireland with the Dixons, Killens and Armstrongs after World War I. Alan Wilkinson took over management in the mid 1930s.

### *Wilkinson and Whittle*

Alan Wilkinson was a descendant of the Wilkinson brothers who took up land near Tumut in 1938. Thomas Boyd, the former convict who had been a key member of Hume and Hovell's party in 1824, accompanied the brothers, John aged 17 and Henry aged 14, on the journey to Tumut. Boyd had already taken up land near Tumut in 1832. The boys brought with them a herd of 70 cattle that had been given to them by their father who had a landholding in the Lake George area.



Alan Wilkinson, 1900-1991, owned Wee Jasper Station in partnership with his brother-in-law, Harry Whittle, for over 30 years. He was a 'bushman to the core' and held in high regard by other graziers in the district.

Alan was born at the Wilkinson property *Yellowin* in 1900 and had 15 men working for him by the time he was 18. He and his brother Geoffrey had a fencing contract at *Wee Jasper Station* in the 1930s and the Armstrongs soon offered Alan the job of managing the property.

Alan and his brother-in-law, Harry Whittle, bought *Wee Jasper Station* around 1936. Harry Whittle first met Alan and his sister, Marjorie, in Tumut when Harry had a contract to build the butter factory there. Harry married Marjorie and became Alan's business partner.

Wilkinson and Whittle owned *Wee Jasper Station* for 30 years. Alan managed the property as Whittle's main business interests were in Sydney. Mrs Whittle often stayed there with her brother and shared his great love of the garden and the Australian bush.

Harry Whittle was nicknamed 'two bob Whittle' because he would toss a labourer a two-shilling piece before sacking him for not working hard enough. Wilkinson also had little tolerance for 'shirkers'.

Alan introduced Black Angus cattle, which he purchased from Narrangullen Stud in 1936, and had over one thousand head when he sold out in 1965. He also ran up to 15,000 sheep. Local farmers used the shearing sheds on the property. Warren Faulder who worked on *Wee Jasper Station* from 1941 to 1965 recalls years when 25,000 – 30,000 sheep belonging to the station and local landholders were shorn in the shearing sheds there.

Alan had stock all over the vast property and employed Pim Mitchell and other locals for many years to look after sheep he had on unfenced land up at Nottingham. He built several cottages on different parts of the property to house his workers. Alan also had a property near Tumut and occasionally moved stock there to fatten them before he sold them.

Ben and Warren Faulder, who lived at *Tabletop* next door to *Wee Jasper Station*, spent a great deal of their time when they were growing up and as adults working with Alan Wilkinson, for whom they had the greatest respect. Ben recalls that Alan lived in the district for over thirty years and always wore gabardine riding trousers and boots. He regards him as an 'unsung hero' as he did a lot of good things for both individuals and the community – but never spoke about it. He also spent a lot of time beautifying the Micalong Creek area.

Warren recalls Alan as a quiet and generous man who loved nothing more than to be on horseback looking after his stock and camping out. During drought times he would let farmers who had run out of feed take their stock up to his high country.

Alan allowed some locals to build on the property and was very supportive of the community. The Wee Jasper Rodeo was held at *Wee Jasper Station* for many years and locals used the shearing shed for dances. Alan helped to finance the rodeo as well.

Alan had an orchard by the river next to the old house where the McBeans had lived. The original homestead among the poplars close to the river had bedrooms facing the river and was very run down when Wilkinson moved in. He lived there with Joe Connolly, the station cook and general help, from around 1935 until 1948.

Dorothy Barber (nee Smith) who lived at *Coodra Vale* between 1945 and 1948, said that on a quiet night you could hear Alan coughing while smoking his pipe and Joe Connolly rousing on him for smoking. Joe, who had a fondness for alcohol, was always threatening to commit suicide. Once

Alan took him down to the river and told him 'to get it over with'. Joe waded in then changed his mind because the water was too cold. Once when Alan was away, Joe Connolly, who was known for his desperate thirst, 'unlocked' Alan's liquor cabinet with an axe.

Wilkinson and Whittle built a new homestead further back from the river after World War II. It was the first kit home in the district and was constructed of Californian redwood. The prefabricated sections came on a truck from Sydney. Allan Grace and Dickie Flynn helped with the construction. The house had all the rooms opening onto an internal verandah built around an open central courtyard.

The homestead had a beautiful rose garden, as both Alan Wilkinson and his sister Marjorie loved roses. Monica Martin remembers her father, Allan Grace, pruning the roses there. Alan liked to spend time at

Mustered up the lambs early this morning. Jack Kingwell took delivery of 494 after picking out 400 & putting back into cattle shed. The flies have just started on a few dressed what we would before he left. Jack helped him up through Reno Hut. Emptied the rest of the corn that was thrashed into the tank. Jim packed up & left for his camp, after dinner. We are going to muster Oak Creek withers tomorrow to dress & change into Log Bridge. Jim will shift the camp to Pond Mustering pad in the morning & muster a lot of Oak Creek. Horse breakers getting on well with the horses, they know their jobs. Got a jim tonight from Ned Liddy Hyora to say that there's out a new lot of seed there on this side, that to Brown & that

Extract from Alan Wilkinson's farm diary, 1937.

weekends in his garden and planted a lot of trees that he trucked up from Knight's Nursery in Sydney. Ben and Warren Faulder dug the holes for the trees that line the driveway to the homestead and helped Alan build the pillars at the entry to the homestead block in 1950.

When the disastrous bushfire of 1939 roared across the valley, local women and children gathered by the river at *Wee Jasper Station* while the men fought the fire. Fortunately for them the fire did not reach the homestead or the river where they sheltered.

Alma Kershaw of *Doctors Flat* says that her husband, Morris, built the shearing sheds and shearers quarters on *Wee Jasper Station* around 1940. Most of the timber came from the property around the Micalong Creek area. Warren Faulder says that Wilkinson doubled Kershaw's pay after hearing that Morris was only making 'enough to cover tucker'.

Harry Whittle had a construction business in Sydney at the time and some of the

materials in the shearing shed were recycled from buildings he renovated. Some of the doors came from a Sydney hospital.

Ben and Warren Faulder both chuckle over the memory of a day when they almost accidentally killed Alan. The incident involved a strong young 'mickey' bull, a rope, three men pulling on a rope tied around the neck of the bull and Alan Wilkinson standing with a knife ready to do a quick castration. The bull did a quick circuit of the yard and Alan got caught with the rope around his middle. The three men heard a rasping voice saying 'let the rope go'. They saw the rope 'garrotting' Alan at the waist and immediately let go. Needless to say the bull wasn't castrated that day.

Alan Wilkinson had leases further south and the Faulder boys would often ride up into the mountains with him in summer to check on the sheep. They would sometimes be away for a week at a time.

Alan cleared a lot of his high country to increase the carrying capacity of the property – ringbarking and scrubbing and



*Wee Jasper Station* shearers quarters and shearing shed, built by Morris Kershaw around 1940.

putting in miles of fences. Warren recalls sowing grasses that grew superbly on the cleared land. Alan was also involved in experimental pasture improvement in the high country and believed the area had a lot of potential. Some of the land he cleared and improved is now under pine plantations.

Peter Stanford of *Nottingham Station* remembers seeing Alan driving his jeep up Nottingham Road with one arm out the window leading three horses. Peter's father, Bill Stanford had high regard for Alan's knowledge of farming and thought he was a very good neighbour.

Bill Cathles of *Cookmundoon* also had enormous respect for Alan and frequently sought his advice as he made the transition from farming on 200 acres in England to farming almost 10,000 acres in Australia. Alan and Bill were the first to use super phosphate in the valley. Peter Cathles remembers Alan as a great bloke with booming voice who swore a lot.

Alan lived with Warren Faulder and his wife Yvonne in the latter stages of his life on a property at Mount Horam near Adelong. Warren had worked with Alan for more than 50 years.

*Ownership since 1965*

In 1965 Wilkinson and Whittle sold *Wee Jasper Station* to Brigadier Douglas. On a kangaroo drive in the late 60s up at Nottingham, Douglas apparently said to Bill Roche 'This is a nice bit of country. Who owns it?' Bill replied dryly 'You do mate. Don't you know your boundaries?'

Douglas and his sons cleared vast areas of the rough country but found it hard to keep pace with the revegetation. Douglas sold the property to the Morgans in 1979.

When John and Kerry Parker bought *Wee Jasper Station* in the mid eighties from the Morgans, it was a property of around 14,000 acres. The Parkers farmed both sheep and cattle and were the first family to live in the homestead built by Wilkinson

	E. Grace	3. 0. 0
	W. Grace	9. 0. 0
	W. Burden Building material.	2. 10. 0
rod.	Nicolaus Cousin D. Wool press.	4. 7. 6
rod.	R. Faulder. Building	44. 4. 9
	W. Grace	24. 5. 0
	M. Kershaw.	2. 8. 0
	Wks. Engineering Co. Shearing machines	25. 9. 6
	J. Cullens Freight on machines	214. 8. 8
		4. 9. 9

Extract from Alan Wilkinson's records showing some of the costs of the shearing shed built in the 1940s by Morris Kershaw at *Wee Jasper Station*.

and Whittle almost forty years earlier. Whilst it had beautiful views, they found it cold and impractical – but their daughters loved the green tiled bathroom with its sunken bath.

They renovated parts of the house and enclosed the open verandahs to make the house more comfortable. They also established rose gardens and a garden in the internal courtyard. In 1999 the Parkers sold some of *Wee Jasper Station*, including the homestead block, to Chris Barber. They have renamed the acres they retained as *The Dip* and continue to run cattle there.

Chris Barber is the sixth generation of the Barber family to own land in the

Wee Jasper valley. He has since restored and extended the homestead built by Alan Wilkinson. The homestead still features a beautiful rose garden – nurtured by Dorothy Barber when she lived there for several years before her death in 2007.

Chris sold some of the land he purchased and this is now used for plantation forestry. Neil and Peter Carey lease most of the remaining acres for their sheep and grow feed crops. Horses now graze in the paddocks around the homestead. The shearing sheds are used by the Careys and the shearers quarters provide accommodation for visitors as well as a venue for functions.



*Wee Jasper Station* homestead in the foreground built by Alan Wilkinson and restored and extended by current owner Chris Barber. The original homestead built by the McBean family was closer to the river, near the poplar trees on the left

Sources:

- Yass Archives catalogue of information on properties and families.
- J.F. Campbell, *Squatting on Crown Lands in New South Wales*, 1968.
- Bailliers New South Wales Gazetteer and Road Guide*, 1870.
- Goulburn Herald*.
- Yass Courier*.
- Conversations with Ben and Warren Faulder, Kerry and John Parker, Chris Barber, Peter Stanford (2009-10).