



# **Mac Bridge of Muswellbrook: The Man and his Recollections**

by  
Heather Ashford  
and  
Margaret Ashford McDougall

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Mac Bridge of Muswellbrook: The Man and his**

**Recollections** is the second in a series of books published by the Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society in recognition of the Bicentenary of Australia's settlement, in 1988. It is fitting that Malcolm Bridge, who proudly traced his Australian lineage as far back as 1799, and who played a significant part in recording the history of the area in which he lived, should have his life and writings commemorated in this way. By a happy coincidence, his work is now published in book form in the centenary year of his birth (on 5 May, 1883).

Between his retirement in 1958 and his death in 1968, Malcolm Henry Bridge devoted much of his time to writing his recollections of his own childhood on the Rouchel; his wanderings across the Hunter Valley and Liverpool Plains working and searching for work; the people, places, animals and events he encountered and experienced along the way. His inspiration to do this came from a request, in about 1958, from Wilfred C. Green of Gundy, a lifelong friend, and then Hon. Secretary of the Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society, to write down "something of what he knew of the Hunter River District". This he did with great gusto, with the result that, for the compilers of this book, the task of making a selection from his writings was a difficult one indeed.

The selections have been made to indicate the scope of Malcolm Bridge's interest in people and events around him; to paint as broad a picture as possible of the Upper Hunter district, extending from Singleton to Murrurundi; and to indicate the outstanding memory of the man himself.

As Malcolm has said, he wrote in bush shorthand, and with insufficient education to ensure that the commas and capitals were all in the right places. Nevertheless, we have found that only minor editing was necessary to avoid ambiguities and misunderstandings; in our selection and editing we have made every attempt to be true to his own

writing. We have relied on his powers of recall for the accuracy of the information included, adding explanatory notes as necessary to make his work more meaningful to modern readers.

In short, in making the selections and in editing them, we have been guided by a maxim which we have both heard Malcolm Bridge quote many times, and which we believe guided him in his life:

Whatever you are, be that.  
Whatever you say, be true.  
Straightforward in act, be honest. In  
fact, be nobody else but you.

Heather Ashford

Margaret Ashford MacDougall

September 1983

## **BIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM HENRY BRIDGE<sup>1</sup>**

Malcolm Henry Bridge always proudly recalled that his ancestors came from Scotland, Ireland and England, the countries which provided the bulk of the settlers, willing and unwilling, in Australia's earliest days. He derived great pleasure from telling of his longest link with Australia's past, through his father's family, to the birth of Catherine Shaw at Dawes Point, Sydney, on 1 January 1799. She was the daughter of Catherine Neil (or Neal) and William Shaw, transported to Australia from Ireland and England respectively in the early 1790's.<sup>2</sup>

Born at Rouchel Brook on 5 May, 1883, he was the son of William Bridge and Mary Ann Morrison, who were pioneers in the district. He was the tenth child of seventeen, twelve of whom survived infancy. The pioneer families faced many hardships and the difficulties experienced by the midwife in even attending his birth are no doubt typical:

From what I was told, I was born about 1:00 a.m. on May 5th, 1883, which chanced to be a very wet night. The mid-wife who attended at my birth was that grand old lady, Mrs. Mary Jane Stringer Madden (nee Borthistle) a native of Ireland, at that time residing at Davis Creek. On that occasion the creeks were carrying a good fresh, so much so that it was considered unsafe to attempt to cross in the night on horseback. Use of the bridle-track would have involved crossing the creek and brook six times, and so she decided to walk around the crossings. This she did, accompanied by her son George.

The property the Bridge family occupied on the Rouchel was 'Bridgelands'. The home, the working of the property and the pain experienced by the family in being dispossessed of it through hard times are vividly described in an article entitled 'Bridgelands, Rouchel – our home' included later in this book.

Early settlers faced difficulties in obtaining education for their children. The Bridge family was no exception. Their home was five or six miles from the Rouchel School at Main Camp, so in about 1891 the family employed a man named Edward Leary to give lessons to four of the children. In 1892 Malcolm was sent to live with the family of Malcolm Henry Gardner (after whom he was named) and his wife, Sarah Carter. He was to act as nurse-boy for their son, Cyrus, and to attend school. There, his daily life involved:

. . . light the fire and sweep out; set the table for breakfast; milk a couple of cows; chop some wood and after breakfast walk about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to Oakfield and from there ride behind Jim Carter to Rouchel School a distance of about two miles.

So, in September 1892, aged 9 years and 4 months, he first attended school. The teacher's name was F. E. Miller. The impact of his first schooling, and the methods of the day, are illustrated by his recollection of the first lesson he was able to stand up and read:

... in Collins' Second Reader. The lesson was headed 'Captain Cook, he being the second Englishman to set foot in Australia in 1770'. Although I have not seen it since in print, portion of the lesson still comes vividly to mind . . . 'James Cook was born in the year 1728 at Martin, a small village in Yorkshire. His parents were poor, his father being a farm labourer, so that they could not therefore afford to give him much education. Still, small as his opportunities were, he seems to have made good use of them, and thus showed in his early days a desire for self improvement which afterwards enabled him to rise to a position of trust and great honour'.

His education continued sporadically: there was a sojourn at the home of Mrs Hughie McPhee (nee Louisa MacDonald) at Brushy Hill, where he provided companionship while Mr McPhee was away shearing, at the same time attending Brushy Hill school; in 1895 he stayed with Mrs Madden (the midwife) at Davis Creek and attended school there for eight or nine months. In later years, Malcolm calculated that he spent approximately two and a half years in school, but not

consecutively. It appears that the amount of schooling available depended largely on which householder, near a school, had need of a companion or hired boy!

**While** life on the Rouchel would have been hard, there were outings, many of which lingered in the memory for many a year. One such event, because of its own significance, was perhaps instrumental in his later interest in historical events:

The first outing that I can recollect was on January 26th 1888. The occasion was the Centennial Picnic held in Spencer's Paddock, at that time known as Rouchel Vale ...

I well remember being decked out in a blue galatea<sup>3</sup> or drill suit, and also a childish accident which occurred and which showed up vividly on the blue material. When asked by Albert Smith what had happened, my reply was - 'It is a hot day, and that is sweat'.

I also recall that among the speakers at the gathering was John Miller of Back Creek, Upper Rouchel. Portion of his speech, delivered in his Scottish accent, was 'At one time there were no churches. Now there are churches and churches higher than you can reach' at the same time suiting his actions to his words.

Other instances are recalled with the same great attention to detail, but also with a delightful, unconscious humour. Malcolm Bridge begins to describe the first time he saw a train, in Scone at the age of nine and a half years. This would no doubt have been a momentous occasion in a youngster's life, but after the first sentence there is no further mention of the train! Instead, we learn of what was apparently the **real** treat of the day:

That day I had my first meal in other than a private home. The place was the Crown and Anchor Hotel at the corner of Kingdom and Main Streets, Scone, kept by George Hopper and his wife, nee Flanagan. The dessert served was apple pie.

Childish delights ended at an all too early age in those days, and the year 1896 found Malcolm Bridge, at the age of thirteen, at work as tarboy and floorhand for Laban Wisemari at 'Elmswood' near Gundy. **Wages** were 10/- per **week**, and at

the end of his three week stint he was given a cheque for £1/10/-, a bonus of 5/- in silver for being a good shed hand, and a letter to his father from Mr. Wiseman saying how pleased the latter was with Malcolm's work. This was the first of many, many occupations mentioned in his autobiography.

Other experiences he relates also do not sound like a happy way of life for a youngster. At fifteen, he was fired from his job as a shed hand because he had the measles. Fearing an outbreak among the shearers, the boss sent him off on horseback thirty miles to his family at Saturday, under strict instructions not to drink any water along the way. At that time it was believed that drinking water while suffering measles would cause death. His comment was that 'this was hard to resist when I had to cross the Isis River six times and the Page River seventimes'.

Soon after this episode, aged about sixteen, he was in charge of his father's waggonette, carting skins. In this job, he first handled a "unicorn" team:

That is, two horses in the pole and a single leader. That is said to be a more awkward team to handle than a four-in-hand, as unless you have a good leader he or she may decide to turn around to see what is happening behind. In that case the driver has not much to say and must depend upon quick action with the reins and whip.

Although he was abstemious all his life, he did have an early, very memorable encounter with alcohol. It occurred in 1900, while he was working in the blacksmith's shop owned by his father, in Blandford. He was about to cut off a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " point sticking out through a horse's hoof, when -

The foot accidentally slipped off my knee . . . the result was that the nail entered my right forearm to its full length and tore a gash 3" in length. The gash spread open about 2", but did not bleed or damage any sinews or veins. I was in no pain, but said that I was feeling a bit sick. Tom Callan of Scott's Creek was at the shop at the time. He ran to Mrs Dougherty's Plough Inn and brought, not a glass, but a tumbler full of brandy, and said, 'Drink this, my boy' which I did, and hardly tasted it. It was my first taste of strong drink.

My father took me to Murrurundi by horse and sulky,

where Dr Bell put 6 stitches in the wound. When he had finished he gave me my first taste of whiskey - a goblet full. With this mixture of brandy and whiskey inside, by the time we were ached Blandford I felt drunk for the first time.

Between 1896 and 1912, Malcolm Bridge held a total of forty different jobs. This indicates his willingness to work hard, and to turn his hand to any honest work which would afford him a living. This list includes a vast variety in types of work: shed hand, shearer, chaff cutter operator, drover, fencer; salesman (of sewing machines and insurance - the latter, he said, being much more difficult to sell than the former); construction worker and mill worker. During this time also, he had several brushes with death, having survived enteric fever during an outbreak in Gunnedah in 1909, and having narrowly missed being struck by the Brisbane Mail train at Hamilton in 1910, while erecting telephone lines north of Newcastle. During this time too, he witnessed a wonderful sight each night for two or three weeks in 1910', the passage of Halley's Comet; and he viewed for the first



Malcolm Henry and Annie Florence Bridge, 1965.

time in his life wonderful phenomenon, the ocean, at that Newcastle in 1910.

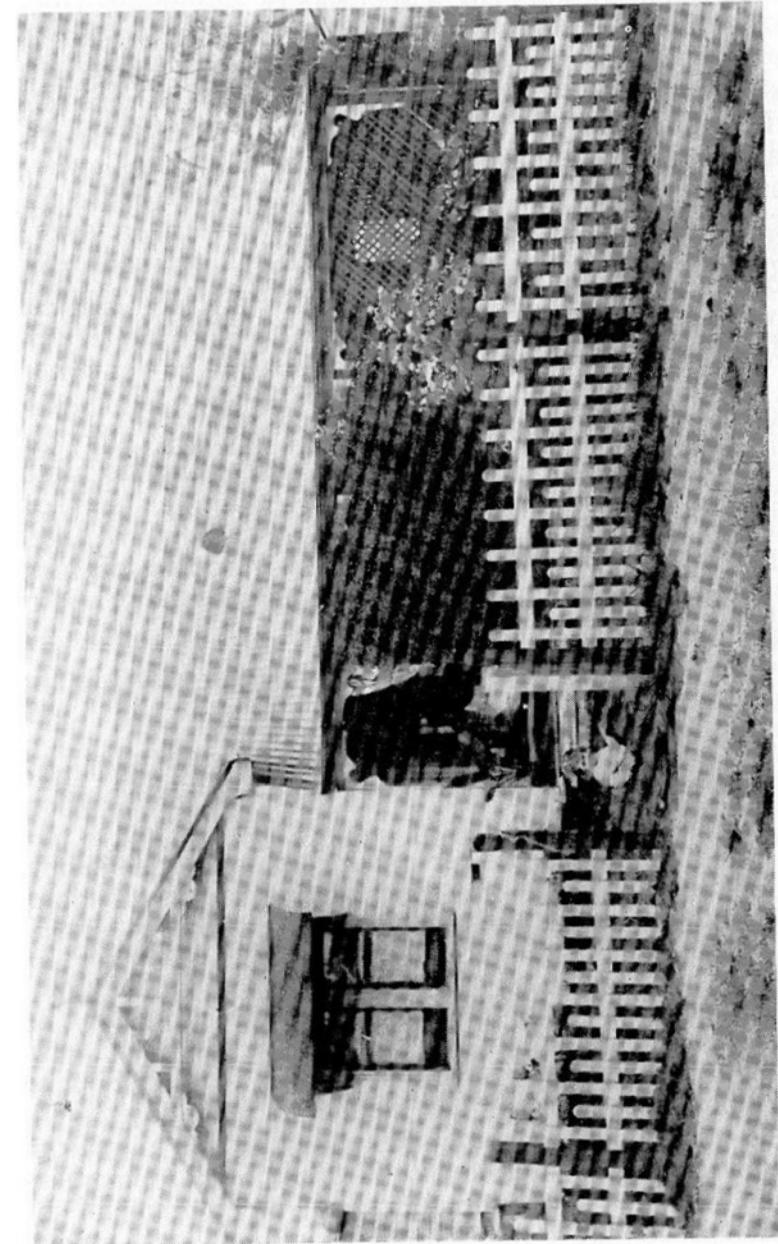
Amongst all the occupations, wanderings and experiences of this period of his life, perhaps the most significant to his descendants was his employment in the Denman area, at Randwick Park. He worked there, first in 1909, operating 'a steam driven irrigation plant on the flooding system for the purpose of lucerne growing'. After a spell of droving, repairing telegraph lines and erecting telephone poles, he returned to Randwick Park, once more to operate the irrigation plant and to help with dairy work for Norman and Bill Willis from 1910 to 1912. We can assume that it was during this time that he met Annie Florence Bush, who was born at Rosemount near Denman, and whom he married on 19 November, 1912.<sup>4</sup>

In 1913, Malcolm and Annie moved to Muswellbrook, first living in rented accommodation and finally in their own ripple-iron cottage in Skellatar Street, which remained their property until disposed of by Annie's executors in 1970. The records of how they obtained and paid for their home indicate the meticulous attention to detail which Malcolm applied to every aspect of his life: a worn, small black notebook records every detail of financing and payment; his autobiography describes it thus:

About May, 1914, I arranged with Walter Barrett to build a cottage. I asked what were his terms. He said, 'You buy a block of land; give me the deeds, and I'll build a cottage. When complete, you take possession, and pay £ '1 per week, which will cover principal and interest.' I bought a block of land which he had for sale for £ 40, and said 'go ahead'.

I gave him a rough idea of what I wanted ... The price of the cottage was £ 357/2/-. Barrett built the cottage and sold it to Dave Fleming. It was he with whom I had to deal, and make monthly payments. The interest was 7% adjusted annually ... We moved into the house on 9th August 1914.

One of the features of the house was a Regina stove, installed in the kitchen, and one of the myriad details he preserved in the small notebook was the following entry:



Home of Malcolm and Annie Bridge, Skellatar Street, Muswellbrook. Erected 1914.  
c. 1917 Photo

Number of fires in Regina Stove  
In use from 9/8/1914 to 30/10/1959  
54 years, 3 months , 21 days - - 14,536 fires

Various occupations were held by Malcolm Bridge after his marriage as well. He sold sewing machines again, he sold Griffith Bros. teas, he caught rabbits, he worked at St. Heliers coal mine. He stayed at St. Heliers from 1925 to 1930, when many workers lost their jobs, partly due to the depression and partly due to changes to the Coal Mines Act which prevented the extraction of pillars while there was still workable coal above the pillars'. This was the case at St. Heliers; preparation to work the seam took three to four years, before the colliery got back into full production.

Work at the rabbit freezing works in Muswellbrook appealed to his sense of 'historical correctness' for the freezing works where Malcolm Bridge worked as assistant to the engineer were located in the building which had housed Chivers' Tweed Factory in the 1840's, where his grandfather, John Morrison, had worked as engineer. In rooms adjoining the old building, his mother , Mary Ann Morrison was born in **1848**.

The life of a rabbit catcher during the depression was not an easy one:

In 1932, I was in a 500 acre paddock on Ridgeland, Wybong, for about seven or eight months and averaged 38 pairs of saleable rabbits each set. The price was the 'killer' - threepence per pair for large, and one penny per pair for small, and the grader often showed more small than large. I just about managed to stay off the 'dole'.

During the second world war, he had a mail contract. The truck was run on charcoal gas for fuel. He decided to leave that business in 1944 because of a blackout, apparently due to low blood pressure . After this experience, he obtained work at Aluinn Stud near Roxburgh Railway siding, ten miles from Muswellbrook, where he worked until 1958. Aluinn was managed by his wife's brother-in-law, Bert Bogan, for Sir Frank Packer. One of the most exciting aspects of his time at Aluinn, and which he dearly loved to recall, was his association with the famous race horse, Gene tout.<sup>5</sup>

After his retirement , Mac Bridge spent many happy hours committing to paper his recollections of his own life and the history of the Upper Hunter, as outlined in the Introduction to this book. He and Annie also derived a great deal of pleasure from the lives and activities of their children and grandchildren. They had three children:

- 1) Heather Jean, born 1914, married Alex Ashford of Scone· now residing there .
- 2) Percy Yeldon, born 1917, married first, Peggy Turner of Scone (deceased); secondly Barbara Hoffman nee Budden; now living in Beresfield.
- 3) Gwynneth Joan, born 1930, married Athol Bevan; now living in Brisbane.

At the time of his death in 1968, Malcolm Henry Bridge was survived by his wife, his three children, ten grandchildren and five great grandchildren. He was fittingly remembered in an obituary in the **Newcastle Morning Herald** which was headlined -

### **Man with Amazing Memory Dies**

Margaret Ashford MacDougall  
Prince Edward Island  
Canada

July 1983

- 
1. This biography is based on his autobiography, written in 1961. Except where otherwise noted , all quotations in this section are taken from the autobiography, the original of which is held by **Mitchell Library , Sydney, MSS 1785**.
  2. See Appendix A for his ancestry.  
Galatea: a material named after H. M. S. Galatea, used for making children's sailor suits, dating from 1882.
  4. Annie Florence Bush was the daughter of Johannah Catherine (Annie) Kramer and Anthony Sebastian (Tony) Bush , both of whom were born in the Paterson district and who were the children of German immigrant families who came to Australia in the mid-19th century to work in the vineyards . The Bush family was employed on both Dalwood and Rosemount, and the Kramers were also employed on Dalwood.  
Oenetout (imp) , French stallion by Vatout, from Lady Genevieve , a mare by the famous stallion, Sir Gallabard III. Genetout stood at St. Aubins Stud, Scone , in the first few years of his stud career. He then stood at Aluinn Stud, Roxburgh , and when Aluinn was dispersed the stud manager , Bert Bogan, took him to a nearby farm , Cr Igend , where he was given a limited season each year. Genetout died in May, 1961 , aged twenty eight years.

## BRIDGELANDS, ROUCHEL... OUR HOME

About, 1883 my father, William Bridge, selected a block on the left bank of the Rouchel Brook, the block on the right hand bank being selected by his eldest son John. After the residential time of five years was completed John's portion was transferred to his father. The whole comprised about 1280 acres of selected land. The two places were named Bridgelands (hence the plural). Adjoining Bridgelands was a 480 block acquired by William Brooker. This block is now known as Bridgelands Travelling Stock Reserve, and was originally owned by a man named Woods. To the Bridge family, of which the writer is one, it was known as Woods's.

William Bridge and his wife Mary Ann (nee Morrison) resided at Bridgelands for about thirteen years from 1883 to 1896. Of a family of seventeen children born to William and Mary twelve survived. (Now 1968, four survive). When they went into residence at Bridgelands they had eight children.

The dwelling consisted of two main rooms, two skillion rooms, split slab walls and bark roof. Later two more sleeping rooms and a dining room were added, and the bark roof replaced by galvanised iron. Then water tanks were added; previous to this time water was obtained from the Brook by means of a horse-slide and cask. In the home the cooking utensils were a camp oven for the baking of the daily batch of bread and the roasting of a joint (of meat), a cauldron for boiling corned beef and mutton, and a small boiler and a saucepan for boiling vegetables and porridge. I nearly forgot the frying pan; and the boiler for boiling the clothes on wash days.

Later a colonial oven was installed and that about eliminated the use of the camp oven. Stoves were practically unheard of at the time – anyway on the Rouchel. Short as amenities were I never hear a word of grumble from my mother.



William Bridge,  
born Wollombi 14 August 1847,  
died Scone 11 September 1930.  
Selector of Bridgelands, Rouchel, 1883.



Mary Ann Bridge,  
born Muswellbrook 15 September 1848,  
died Scone 11 April 1927.

Schooling for the family was a problem. Rouchel School was about five and one-half miles distant, so for the first nine in the family it was a matter of broken short periods. The writer was nine and one-half years of age when he first saw the inside of a public school room, and in broken periods managed to have about two and one-half years of schooling.

On a separate story Malcolm Bridge says the boys in the family took it in turns to go to school; the days at home were spent shepherding.)

In 1894 a wool shed was erected on the place. The builder was the late James Smith, then residing at Stoney Creek. Apart from the Bridgelands sheep others who had their sheep shorn in our shed were William Brooker, the Estate of the late Malcolm Gardner and the Smith brothers, Albert and John.

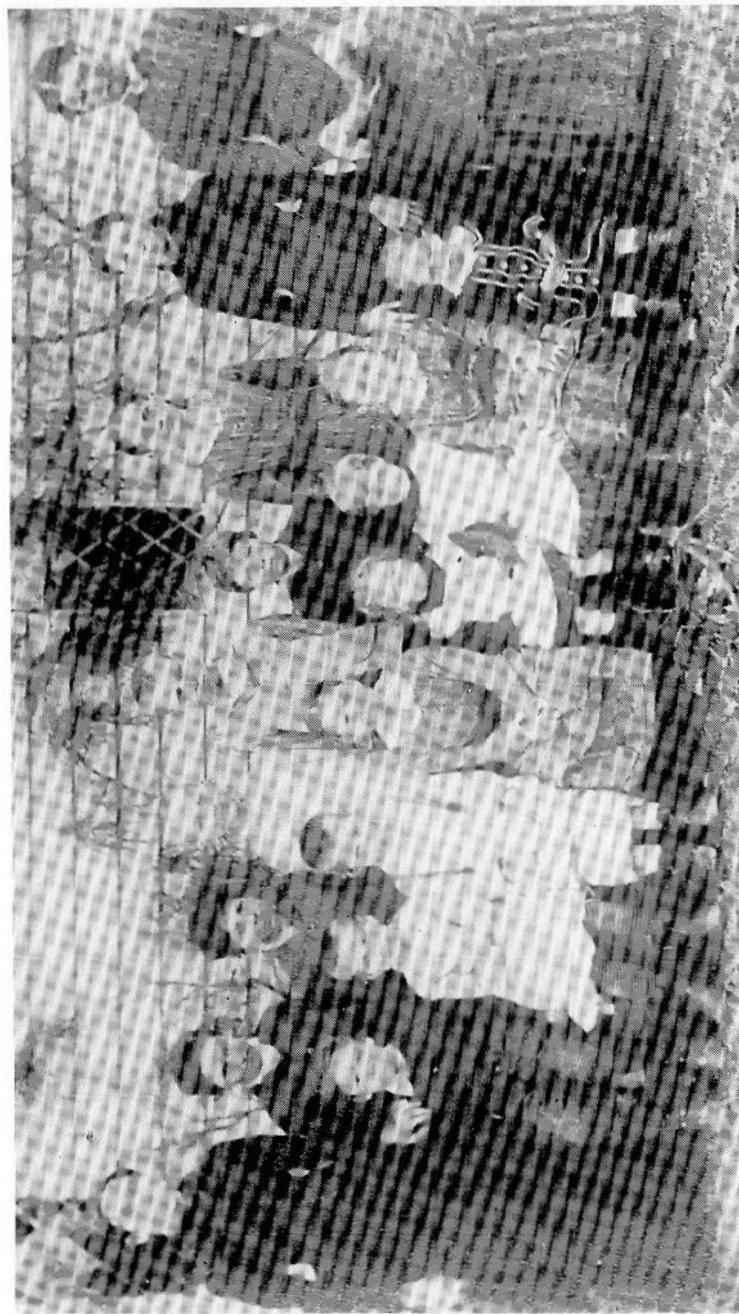
The five shearers who shored in the first year after the shed was erected were Billy McPhee, Jack Smith, Hughie Cumming, Ben Cumming and Jack Cumming. Aubrey Bridge, a young son of the owner, did the picking up and wool rolling. William Bridge's brother Joe did the pressing, while the writer and my father (William) attended to the mustering and the sheep generally.

William Bridge and William Brooker in partnership erected a sheep-dip in Brooker's paddock near the boundary of their adjoining properties.

The year 1895 was the last year the shed was used by William Bridge. (Some few years after the family left the old home the wool shed was made use of as a school.<sup>1</sup>)

The wool from Bridgelands in 1895 averaged about five pence per pound. This low price for the wool and the loss of 1000 sheep put William Bridge in a financial fix so he decided to sell the place. Five hundred sheep disappeared from the paddocks and another five hundred died in the paddock following a cold snap.

Before leaving Bridgelands in 1896 William Bridge's remaining sheep, numbering 1000, were sold by auction on the place by A. F. York, a Scone auctioneer. The highest price obtained was two shillings and eight pence-half-penny



Rouchel Vale Provisional School Pupils 1886. Back Row: Miss G. McGregor (teacher), Andy Smith, Fred Spencer, Andy Bridge, Don Bridge, Arthur Spencer, Lizzie Kennedy, May Spencer, Georgina Kennedy. Front Row: Alf Spencer, Ellen Bridge, Margaret Bridge, Maggie Kennedy, Ida Spencer, Eisie Spencer, Roubina Kennedy, John K. Kennedy (visitor).

(less than today's thirty cents). A few sheep missed in the muster were later sold in Scone, the price realised being between five and six shillings.

There was nothing left but to move on. William Bridge believed Gundy would be a good place to move to. A friend with a bullock team and wagon went from Gundy to execute the move. Father had purchased a buggy and harness and a suitable horse. So with twelve in the cavalcade, some in the buggy, some on horseback and self on foot with the bullock team, we left the Rouchel in 1896.<sup>2</sup>

When crossing over the Black Hill, seven miles from Aberdeen, my father put his hand in his pocket to find the amount of wealth he was taking off the Rouchel. The amount he withdrew was one half-penny. In later years he said he was sad that he had not held on to it as a keepsake.<sup>3</sup>

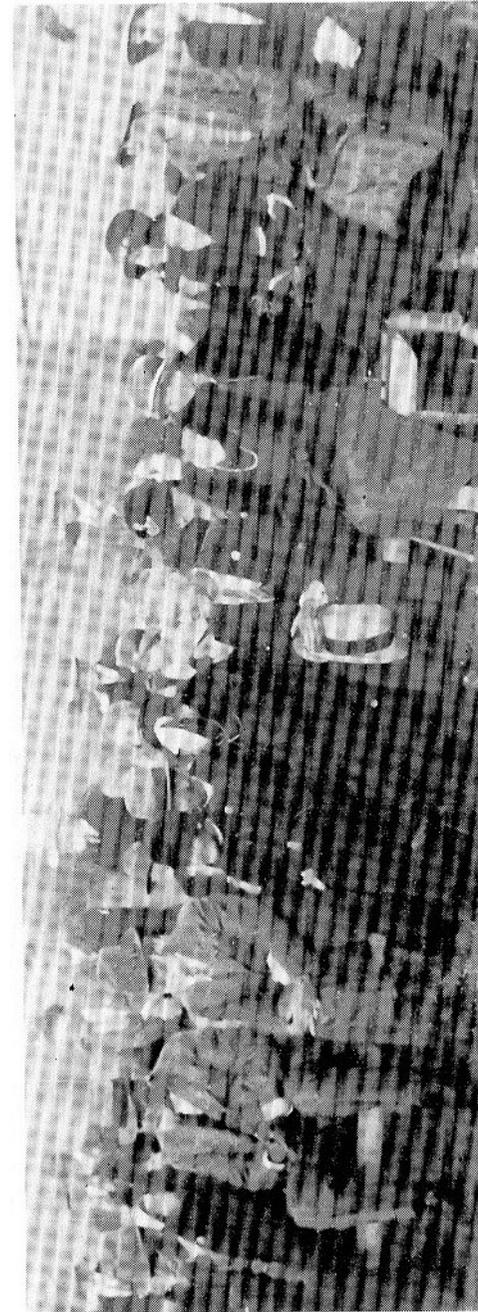
- Extract from Unpublished Manuscript  
MS3/4 held by Heather Ashford.

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1. Mrs. Lily Bell of North Bondi, on 12 August, 1983 supplied the following information:  
I did go to school in the old Bridgelands Woolshed at Rouchel and although I cannot remember the exact dates, I think it would have been between 1906 and 1909.  
The pupils were from three families:  
Archie, Jock and Hector Cameron  
Oscar, Jessie, Harry, Tom, Lance and Jim Beckingham  
Lily and Dulcie Smith  
The teacher was Miss Ada Bourke, from Singleton  
My father, John Osborn Smith, and Alex Cameron had one end of the woolshed closed in for the school. It was set up v ry well with forms, desks and bookshelves.

This was a Government scheme for children in remote areas where the nearest school was too far away for the children to travel to and from each day. The Government would provide a teacher if there were sufficient pupils - I think the number would be around eight to ten - and the Government paid the teacher's salary if the parents of the pupils were prepared to provide board and lodging. When the school first started, Miss Bourke stayed with the Cameron family until they moved to a new property near Narrabri, and then she stayed with my family until the school closed.

2. Malcolm Bridge was then thirteen years of age.
3. See Appendix B.

**Note:** Bridgelands is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Max Turner.



Rouchel School Jubilee Re-Union 20 May 1933. Back Row: Lindsay Carter, Jack Armstrong, Reg McMullin, Bill Maudsley, Bert Griffiths, F. Adam, —, Frank McCabe, Irwin Caban, —, Front Row: —, J. I. McMullin, W. Adam, Mrs F. Adam, Mrs Betsy Cameron, M. H. Bridge, Mrs Reg McMullin, Miss Ettie Brooker, —, Miss Doreen Burgess, Miss Linda McMullin, Miss Kath Clydsdale.

## EXCERPTS FROM AUTOBIOGRAPHY, 1961

Mitchell Library MSS 1785

### SEVEN GENERATIONS

. . . Including Catherine Shaw, her native born descendants now (1961) reach to the seventh generation. To mention one line :-

1. Catherine Shaw, born Dawes Point, Sydney , 1 January 1799; died Gosford 8 August 1894.
2. Mary Carpenter, born Hawkesbury River, 7 September 1824; died Gosford 30 January 1914.
3. William Bridge, born Wollombi, 14 August 1847; died Scone 11 September 1930.
4. Malcolm Henry Bridge, born Rouchel Brook, 5 May 1883; died Muswellbrook 21 March 1968.
5. Percy Yeldon Bridge, born Muswellbrook 28 May 1917.
6. Toni Doreen Bridge, born Scone, 19 December 1940.
7. Mich el Hall Harrison, born Wauchope, 6 February 1960.

**Note:** The list has been brought up to date to include M. H. Bridge's death.

### Footnote - Seven Generations

Heather Ashford's family descends to the seventh generation also:

1. to 4. As above.
5. Heather Jean Bridge, born Muswellbrook, 9 February 1914, married Alex Arthur Ashford.

6. Dianne Heather Ashford , born Muswellbrook, 1 January 1944, married Malcolm Beath Chad.  
Margaret Anne Ashford , born Scone, 4 May 1947, married James Arthur MacDougall.
7. Katrina Dianne Chad, born Quirindi, 15 August 1968.  
Fiona Louise Chad, born Scone, 11 January, 1972.  
Jennifer Anne Ashford MacDouga ll, born Canada, 17 March 1977.  
Ian James Ashford MacDougall, born Canada, 3 October 1981.

### THE NIGHT I WAS BORN

From what I was told I was born about 1 a.m. on May 5th 1883\*, which chanced to be a very wet night. The mid-wife who attended at my birth was that grand old lady, Mrs. Mary Jane Stringer Madden (nee Borthistle) a native of Ireland, at that time residing at Davis Creek. On this night the creeks were carrying a good fresh, so much so that it was considered unsafe to attempt to cross in the night on horseback. Use of the bridle track would have involved crossing the creek and brook several times, and so she decided to walk round the crossings. This she did, accompanied by her son George, who, by the way, when a boy of eleven plunged into the flooded Hunter River at Aberdeen and rescued a girl from drowning . She was Martha Meecham, aunt of Stan Keene of Scone, being a half-sister of his father, Tom G. Keene. Martha later married Tom Jones of Gundy.

When I was a lump of a kid George Madden would say to me: "You young rascal, you should be good to my mother", and would tell me what happened, saying: "You would, of course , be born on a wet night. But as that was something over which you had no control you are forgiven".

When I was about twelve years of age I stayed with Mrs. Madden so that I could attend school at Davis Creek for eight or nine months in 1895. I am happy to say that I was as good to the old lady as was possible. She was like a mother to me.

•Malcolm Henry Bridge was born at Half Moon, Rou chel, later called Brooklyn .

## SPENDING A SHILLING

The first horse race meeting I saw was at Brushy Hill on Boxing Day, 1893. It was held in a paddock owned by James Campbell of Arden Hall, between Gundy and Belltrees .

At the races I made my first purchase of a shilling's worth of fruit, which I bought from John Dunbar of Scone. That was half of the 2/- (1983, equal to 20 cents) which had been given to me to spend. I have no recollection of what became of the remaining shilling.

The only money that I had bandied prior to that was when I was about eight years of age, and attended a picnic held in the Rouchel School ground. A foot race was run. All competitors, young and old, had to stand with one hand on the back fence of the playground until the word " Go!" The finish was near the school bell. I was lucky enough to be handicapped with a pair of new boots. It turned out to be a donkey race, last home the winner. I, being in that position, was offered a pocket knife or a shilling, donated by George Madden. At my age pocket knives were taboo. So I took the shilling. That is the only race I ever won.

## MY FIRST PAID JOB

The first paid job I had was at shearing time at Elmswood, near Gundy, for Laban Wiseman, in 1896, as tar-boy and floor-hand. My floor mate was Bill Batterham. Wages were ten shillings (\$1) and keep. I was paid £ 1/10/0 by cheque at the end of the shearing, which lasted three weeks and was given five shillings as a bonus for being a good shedhand. Mr Wiseman also wrote a letter to my father telling him how pleased he was with my work . . .

... The next was what might be called a school-boy's job. It was to stay at the home of Bill Dearman in the old Elmswood house on Kewell Creek (now Miranee) four miles from Gundy, to be company for Mrs. Dearman and the children while her husband was away cooking for the shearers at Hunters Vale, at that time the property of the Corbett

family. The job turned out to be two shillings and sixpence per week for me; also keep a horse to ride to school three days a week. The nag was a one-eyed mare, which was likely to stick me up at any minute. However, I got through, despite her bad habit.

Outside school time I was to try and keep birds out of the orchard. This I endeavoured to do with the aid of an antiquated muzzle-loading shot-gun. I think that I ate more fruit than I saved. This was my first introduction to a shooting piece.

That about ended my school days, as I was nearly fourteen, the school leaving age then.

If my school days were added together they would not total anything like three years.



W. T. Seaward's Home, Miranee, Gundy, c. 1912.

## THE HEAT . . . 119° F

About the turn of the year 1902 to 1903 I was employed for a few weeks knocking off suckers on the Middle Range on Miranee, in a paddock adjoining Doonabri. My workmate was Bill Dearman. While working on the Middle Range, a severe heat wave was experienced, accompanied by hot winds. A crop of corn near the homestead turned white, so we were sent out to cut the stalks in order to conserve them for fodder.

When we arrived at the homestead on 3rd January, 1903, the thermometer reading was 119 degrees (Fahrenheit). The reading was taken under a verandah, roofed with shingles and covered with galvanised iron, and shaded by a huge acacia tree.

Several fowls succumbed to the heat that day.

The 119 degrees is the highest that I have seen on a thermometer read in the shade.

## EARLY MORNING CHORES BEFORE SCHOOL

In August 1892, I went to live at the home of Malcolm Remy Gardner, after whom I was given my names and his wife, nee Sarah Carter. . . The idea of living with the Gardner family was so that I could go to school and also act as nurse-boy to their young son, who was just about able to run around. Malcolm Gardner was then a very sick man and unable to do any work.

My daily job was to light the fire (in the stove) and sweep out, set the table for breakfast, milk a couple of cows, chop some wood, and after breakfast walk about ¼ mile to Oakfield, and from there ride behind Jim Carter to Rouchel school a distance of about two miles. The mare we used to ride was named Spinning Jenny. Later Jim Carter's father loaned me a horse to ride alone. This horse was called the "Old Race Horse". I do not know if he ever won a race. My father later bought a horse for me to ride to school. He made the purchase from the late Fred Eipper when he sold out at

Be llevue, Gundy. Father also had a boy's size saddle made for me by Edward Solomons, of Scone.

It was Septe mber, 1892, at the age of nine years and four months I saw the inside of a public school for the first time. This was the present (1961) Rouchel School. The teacher was Mr F. E. Miller. The first lesson I was able to stand up and read was in Collins' Second Reader\*. The lesson was headed " Captain Cook ". Although I have not since seen it in print, portion of the lesson still comes vividly to mind.

(The writer then details the wording of the lesson about Captain Cook.)

I stayed at the Gardner home from August 1892 till August 1893. Christmas Day 1892 was the first time I attended a service in St. John 's C. of E. Rouchel. Rev. T. R. Regg conducted the service. Rouchel was attached to the Parish of Gundy.

I believe the Bridge family can claim the highest number to attend school at the Rouchel, nine in all. I believe the Hindmarsh and F. E. Miller families would be second with eight each.

" A text book use d in early days in schools; one for each class.

## EIGHT RIVER CROSSINGS

Early in 1903 I bought a second-hand push-bike from Anthony Dallah, of Gundy, whose Syrian name was Shaka Saloom, for about £ 3/5/0.

I rode the bike from Miranee to Scone. The Page River had to be crossed eight times. The method was to carry a spare pair of boots, shoulder the bike and walk through each crnssing until the last one, then known as Tulloch's Crossing at about the six miles peg from Scone, change into dry boots: leave the wet ones, and on returning change to the wet boots and proceed once again.

Some time during the winter of 1903 a race meeting in aid of the Scone Hospital was held on the Scone Course, then located at Satur, near where the Sledmere homestead now

stands. I rode the bike to Scone in the manner just described, attended the race meeting and danced at the Hospital Ball that night, which was held in the old School of Arts in Kingdon Street. Towards morning, I mounted the bike and headed for Miranee, arriving in time to start work for the day.

An experience I had with the same old bike while riding from Gundy to a shearers' race meeting at Belltrees occurred about three miles from Belltrees, when the back tyre became punctured. I was caught without mending material, and so adopted the next best thing, tying the tyre and tube to the frame and riding on the bare rim to Belltrees. At night I rode it back to Gundy, without a light, in the same manner. So great was the noise made by the steel rim on the gravel\* that it sounded more like a stone crusher than a bicycle.

On another occasion whilst riding a push-bike from Bingara to Inverell a puncture occurred in one of the tyres and for ten miles I had to pump the tyre every mile till I arrived in Little Plain, where I cadged about half a teaspoonful of flour. I put this in the tube, pumped it up and rode the eleven or twelve miles to Inverell without further trouble.

- Before the bitumen road we know to-day, 1983.