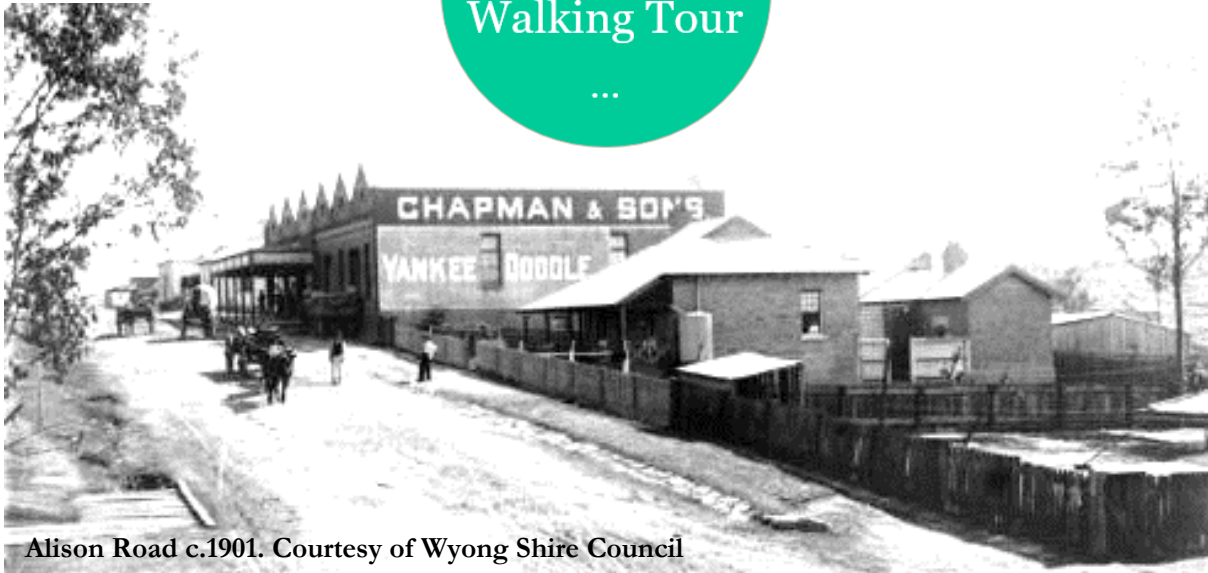


Alison Road Walking Tour

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Alison Road
Walking Tour
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Alison Road c.1901. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council

Erin Blanchfield



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Foreword

While this tour focuses on the period between 1887 and 1937, the history of Wyong extends far beyond the construction of the Great Northern Railway line and the settlement of the township. It must be acknowledged that the history of this region begins not with the European settlers who migrated to Wyong in the early nineteenth century, but with the Indigenous peoples, who for thousands of years inhabited the lands from the Hawkesbury River in the south, Lake Macquarie in the north and Wollombi in the west; the Darkinjung people. Before settlement, it is estimated that as many as five thousand Darkinjung people inhabited this region. However, due to the introduction of foreign diseases and widespread land dispossession, the population of the Darkinjung nation steadily decreased until 1850. From this period onwards, the region was increasingly populated by European settlers. Nevertheless, the traditional culture and customs of the Darkinjung people, including their enduring connection to the lands within and surrounding the Wyong region, continues to remain.

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I would like to acknowledge the Darkinjung people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which this walking tour takes place. I would also like to pay respect to the elders past and present of the Darkinjung nation.

...

Introduction

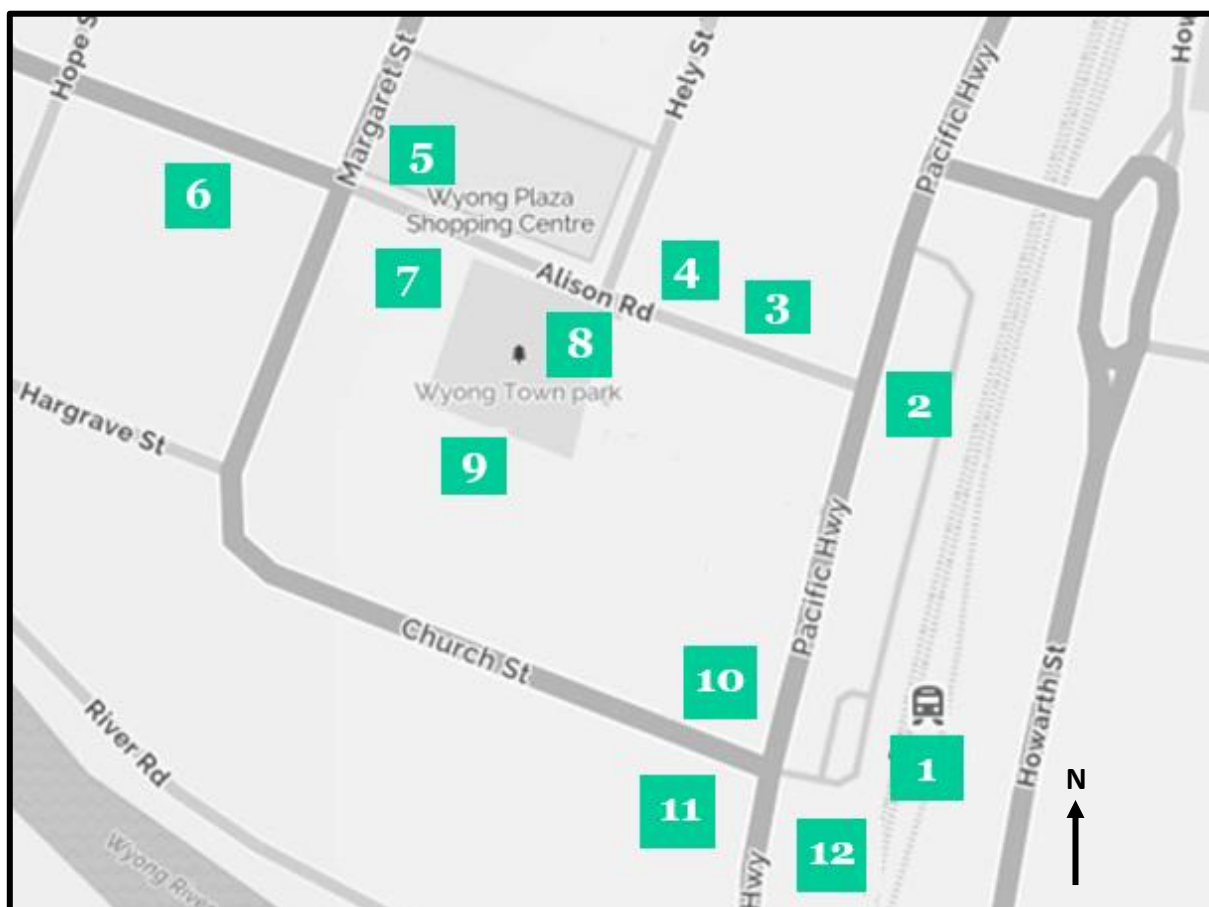
The Alison Road Walking Tour retraces the route of the earliest pioneers to settle in the Wyong region more than one hundred years ago. The tour begins at the railway station, where the township was first settled in 1887 and continues along Alison Road, where traces of Wyong's pioneering past can still be found. As you walk, you will follow in the footsteps of convicts, timber cutters, farmers, butchers, blacksmiths and publicans all alike. Along the way, you will see the buildings in which these pioneers lived and worked and uncover the stories and secrets hidden beneath the sandstone façade.

Step into this tour and discover the past ways and past lives of Wyong's pioneers.



Walking Tour Overview

Please allow approximately 1-2 hours to complete this self-guided tour.



Starting Point: Wyong Railway Station

Finishing Point: Railway Square Shops



This tour is wheelchair accessible. There are ramps available at each stop along the tour where stairs are located.



Public Toilets are available at both Wyong Railway Station and Wyong Plaza Shopping Centre.

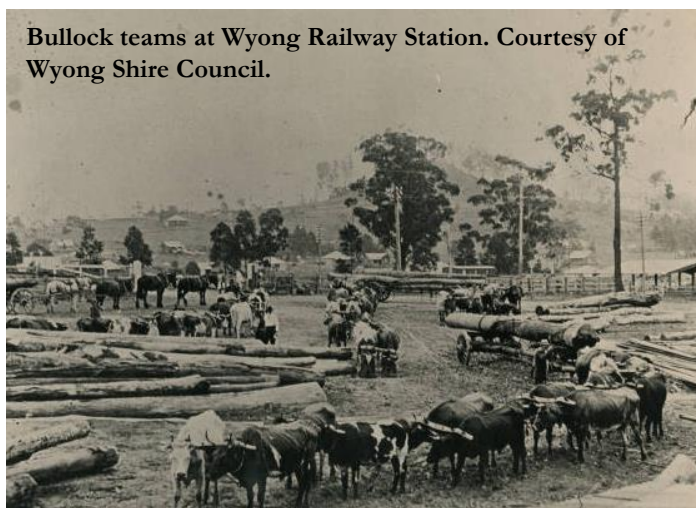
Stop 1: Wyong Railway Station

→ *Start the tour at Wyong Railway Station, outside the main concourse.*

The most important event in the history of the Wyong Township was the coming of the railway. The Great Northern Railway Line opened in 1887 and the first steam train rolled into Wyong Station later that same year. With the railway, came the first pioneers to the region and the small settlement at Wyong soon became a burgeoning town.

The earliest pioneers to settle in Wyong were attracted to the region by the red cedars and rich soils. Many men found work as timber cutters, teamsters and mill hands. In the early 1800s, getting the timber out of the region was just as hard as cutting it down. However, with the coming of the railway this ceased to be a problem. Almost immediately, timber was being stripped from the region

faster than it could be transported out! As a result, the railway yards at Wyong station became the timberyard of the nation. It was a common sight in the period to see bullock teams with logs in tow stretching from the railway station all the way along Alison Road!



BRIDEGROOM KILLED.

SYDNEY, Monday.

At Wyong last night Arthur Brindle (27), a night officer, was killed by the Brisbane mail train. Deceased was going on duty, and was crossing the line at the level crossing. An engine was taking in water at the spot, and the unfortunate officer appeared not to be aware that the mail train was approaching. Although one or two called to him, it was too late, and the engine knocked him down, frightfully mutilating him. Deceased, who was a native of Denman, was to have been married at Christmas.

In late 1912, tragedy struck the township. The night officer at Wyong Station, Arthur Brindle, was killed by a passing mail train. Brindle was crossing the track at the level crossing when he failed to notice the approaching train. His tragic death resulted in the construction of the overhead pedestrian and traffic bridges, which did away with the precarious level crossing.

BRIDEGROOM KILLED. (1912, December 17). *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic : 1854 - 1954), p. 10. Retrieved November 18, 2016, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article203322990>

→ *From your position facing the Pacific Highway, walk across the pedestrian crossing and up the stairs (or the ramp) towards the main road. Follow the footpath until you reach the intersection of Alison Road and the Pacific Highway.*

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Alison Road
Walking Tour
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Stop 2: Alison Road

Alison Road is named after the Alison family, one of the earliest pioneering families to settle in the region. In the late 1870s, William Alison purchased several thousand acres of land in the area that now surrounds Wyong Township. Initially, William divided most of this land into farming properties, which he fenced and developed for grazing cattle. Over the following decade, William and his three sons, Charles, James and William worked on the estate and continued to improve the pasture for farming.

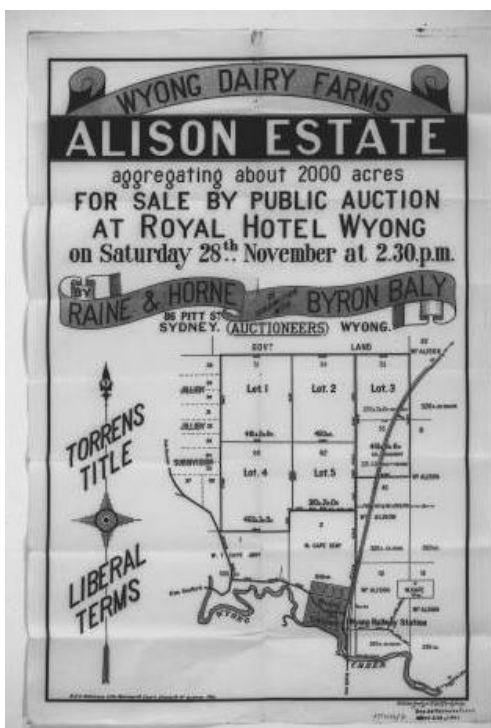
In 1885, his youngest son Charles inherited the estate from his father, which he thereafter managed alongside his wife Constance. During this time, Charles built



the well-known Alison Homestead, which is the current site of Wyong Museum. He also donated much of the land on which Wyong Township was built. In the late 1890s, the Alison family was greatly affected by the economic depression and by 1902 Charles was forced to sell the estate to a local developer. In the years that followed, the land continued to be auctioned off and further developed into cattle and dairy farms.

Without the generosity of Charles Alison, Wyong would not have become the town that it is today. He donated the land for several important buildings featured along this walking tour, including the Old Public School, Post Office and the School of Arts.

→ Cross the intersection at the traffic lights and continue walking up the right-hand side of Alison Road until you reach a red brick building. This is the site of the second Post Office in Wyong.



Advertisement for proposed subdivision and sale of Alison Estate, 1903. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.

Stop 3: Old Wyong Police Station

With the rapid growth of the town, a new Post Office and adjoining postmasters' residence was built in 1911. A local bricklayer, William 'Bill' Ponton was contracted to complete

the work. Throughout Wyong, Bill was renowned for his ability to lay more than 1000 bricks a day and considered a true master of his trade. He completed the construction of the Post Office for the sum of £1151 pounds, nine shillings and seven pence. A very precise figure indeed!

The brick building directly beside the Post Office was the first Police Station to be built in Wyong. When construction of the lockup and adjoining residence was completed in 1901, the Gosford Times boasted that the station was a "substantial brick building equipped with a huge iron door". No expense was spared to ensure that any criminal who spent the night in the lockup was sure to remain there in the morning!

In the early years of the township, many wayward pioneers spent time in the lockup for selling sly alcohol, engaging in illegal gambling and stealing cattle or horses from the nearby farms.

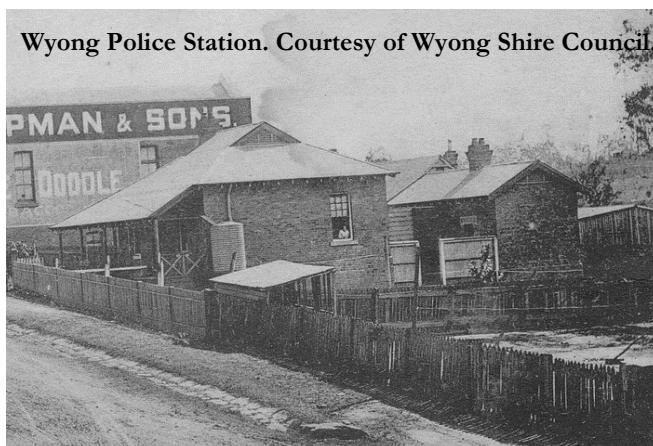
GRABBED AT LAST.

Of all the thrilling accounts from the period, perhaps the most entertaining is that of a nameless, freckled faced young lad. One afternoon in early 1921, the lad took off from Wyong with his master's cherished horse. Despite the best efforts of the local police, he remained at large for several weeks. In that time, sightings of the lad and the horse with a "splash of white on both feet" were reported up and down the train line. Eventually, the young larrikin was caught and the horse promptly returned to its rightful owner. In Australia during the period, larceny of a horse, saddle and bridle was considered a very serious offense!

→ *Next door to the Old Police Station is Chapman's Store.*



This building replaced the existing Post Office in 1911. Edward Stinson (1979). *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire*, Vol 1., pg. 52. Wyong Shire Council, Wyong.



Wyong Police Station. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.

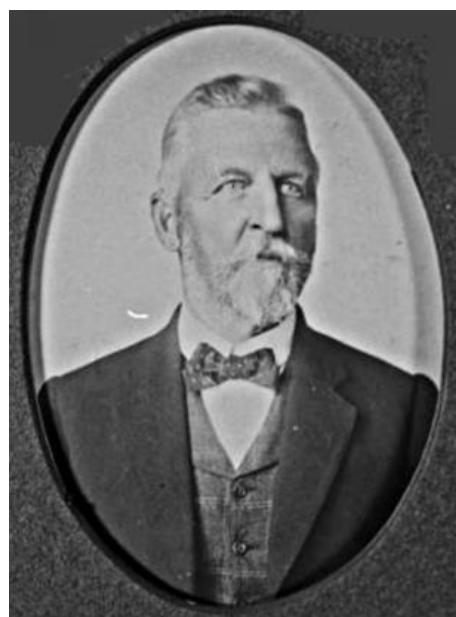
Stop 4: Chapman's Store

This row of shops, also known as the Chapman Building, is named after William John 'Dah' Chapman, one of the most prominent pioneers in Wyong.

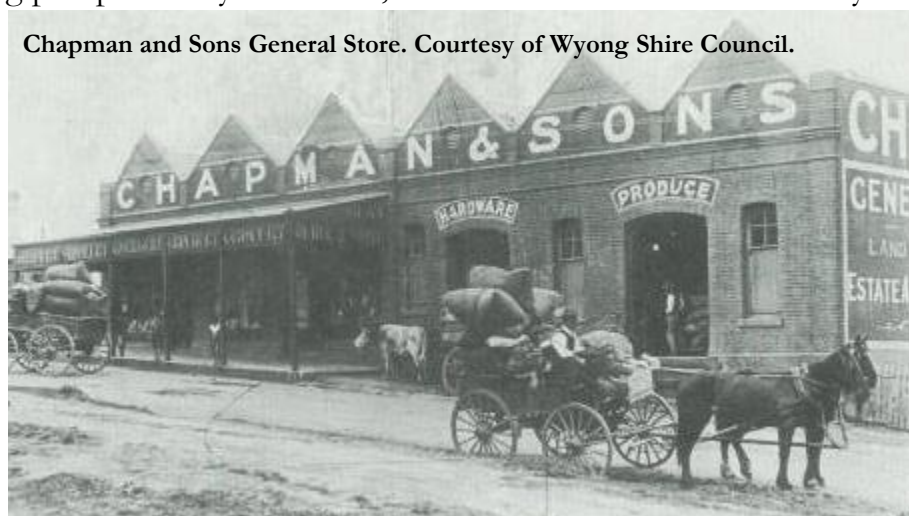
In the early 1870s, Dah Chapman settled with his wife Grace in Yarramalong Valley. Not long afterwards, he opened his first Pioneer Dairy at South Tacoma. In the years that followed, Dah Chapman became the driving force behind the dairy industry in Wyong. In 1907, he founded the Wyong Co-operative Dairy Society, later known as the Butter Factory. Previously, raw milk was sent everyday by train to Sydney, but with the opening of the factory, butter and cream could now be manufactured in the town instead. As a consequence, the dairy industry in Wyong prospered. By the 1920s, a new and more efficient factory had been built on the site of the previous one, which had close to 200 local suppliers and the industry was thriving!

Aside from his role in the dairy industry, Dah Chapman was also one of the earliest shopkeepers in the region. Due to his

prosperity, Dah was able to open the Chapman and Sons General Store in 1901 with his three sons, Owen, William and Alfred. Throughout the township, the Chapman's were renowned for their exceptional customer service, including their ongoing policy to deliver goods right to their customer's doors. In order to provide this service, the family owned several horse-drawn carts and vans, which they operated in the town and the outlying districts. For some time, Chapman and Sons were the largest general merchants between Newcastle and Sydney. Their original store, remains a distinguishable landmark in Wyong.



William John 'Dah' Chapman c.1909.
Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.



Chapman and Sons General Store. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.

→ Cross the intersection of Alison Road and Hely Street and continue walking along the right-hand side of the road. Stop walking once you reach the corner of Alison Road and Margaret Street.

Stop 5: The Astra Theatre

This corner of Alison Road and Margaret Street was originally the site of a blacksmith shop, owned by the pioneer Thomas Chester Lloyd.

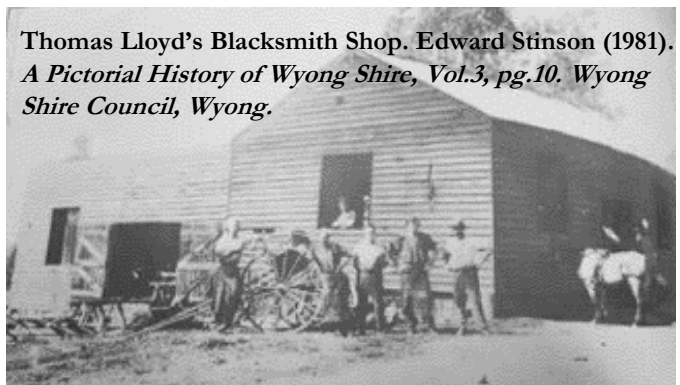
In the pioneering days of the country, it was said that a blacksmith's shop could be found in almost every town. The burgeoning town of Wyong was no different. From the time he first opened his shop in late 1903, Lloyd's principal business was the shoeing of horses. Lloyd was considered a skilful tradesman by many in the region, and his shop was well patronised by other pioneers until he sold it several years later.

The first picture theatre to operate in Wyong was the Coronet Picture Palace, located on Church Street. Although it was a popular picture theatre in its time, the Coronet was gutted by a mysterious fire in 1936 and failed to reopen. That same year, the Astra Theatre was built on this corner of Alison Road and soon became the main picture theatre in Wyong.

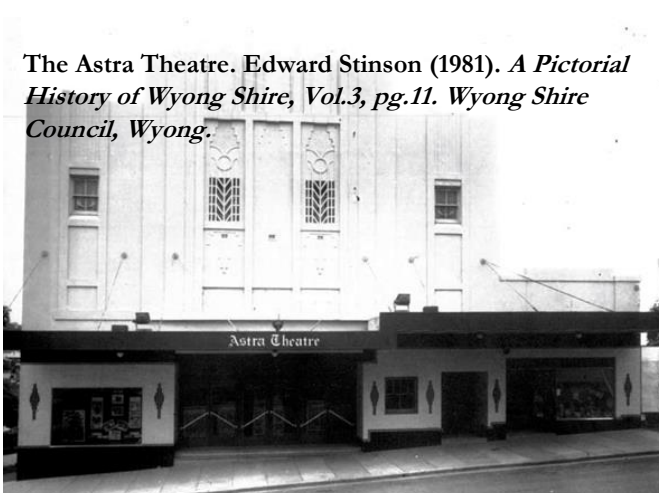
The Astra Theatre is notable for having been designed by the well-known theatre architect, Aaron Bolot. Bolot was a Crimean emigrant, who fled his homeland in 1911 to escape the increasing violence and victimisation of the period. In Australia, Bolot studied architecture and as the years progressed, he found success in the theatre building era of

the 1930s. The Astra Theatre proved to be one of Bolot's most successful designs, recognisable for its attractive interior, comfortable seats and first-class acoustics. In its prime, the theatre was considered to be one of the finest movie theatres outside of Sydney.

After almost 40 years in operation, the Astra Theatre screened its final film, 'Play Misty for Me' on the 14th October, 1972.



Thomas Lloyd's Blacksmith Shop. Edward Stinson (1981). *A Pictorial History of Wyong Shire, Vol.3, pg.10. Wyong Shire Council, Wyong.*



The Astra Theatre. Edward Stinson (1981). *A Pictorial History of Wyong Shire, Vol.3, pg.11. Wyong Shire Council, Wyong.*

→ Cross over to the left-hand side of

Alison Road and walk down the hill until you reach a block of red brick apartments which now stand on the site of the original School of Arts.

Stop 6: The School of Arts

This block of red brick apartments is the site of the former School of Arts hall, also known as the Literary Institute. The building was officially opened in 1898 and a grand ball was held at the hall to mark the occasion, with most of the town's pioneers in attendance.



School of Arts. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.

In 1907, Wyong Musical and Dramatic Society staged their first recorded performance in the School of Arts hall. A review published in the local press described the program as attractive and commended the society's successful performance

of Hook and Eye and Joffin's Latchkey. No doubt, this first performance in the hall marked the beginning of a long history of amateur dramatics in Wyong.

Over the years, the School of Arts hall was used for practically any purpose that a public hall could be used for, including as a dance hall, art exhibition centre, picture theatre, public library and also the site of the first agricultural show in Wyong.

In early 1906, the first agricultural show was held in the hall. Organised by William Baldwin, the show exhibited a range of local produce and animals from the region. A total of £30 pounds was raised in total (the equivalent of fifteen weeks' work for the average person in the period)! This led to the formation of the Wyong Agricultural Association, which continued to hold the show every year thereafter at Warner Sports Ground on the eastern side of the railway line, which is known today as Baker Park.

→ Turn around and walk back up the hill in the direction of the railway station. Cross over the intersection of Alison Road and Margaret Street and continue walking until you reach the Old Court House – you can't miss it!

Committee Members of the First Agricultural Show. Edward Stinson (1981). *A Pictorial History of Wyong Shire, Vol.3, pg.34. Wyong Shire Council, Wyong.*



Stop 7: Old Wyong Court House (built on the site of the First Post Office)

After the Great Northern Railway line was opened in 1887, Wyong Station served temporarily as the first office for posting and collecting mail in the town. In 1892, after representations were made for an official post office, Charles Alison donated the land on which the first post office building and residence in Wyong was built.

For some time, the postmaster at Wyong was Mr. W. J. Stafford, who worked in the office and occupied the residence to the rear of the building. In 1906, a great scandal enveloped the town after Stafford failed to open the post office. The postmaster was later discovered to

be missing, along with a considerable sum of money from the office! As it was reported in one newspaper, at least £400 was unaccounted for. Despite many rumours circulating around the town about his disappearance, Stafford was never found and the money was never recovered! (As mentioned at Stop 3, a new post office was built in 1911).

For many years, the settlers of Wyong campaigned for the erection of an official Court House building. After several unsuccessful appeals to the Public Works Department, the funds were finally allocated for the construction of the building. In 1924, it was built on the site of the previous post office, for the cost of approximately two thousand pounds.

→ *Continue walking in the direction of the railway station. On the corner of Alison Road and Rankens Court, walk up the stairs (or take the ramp) into Wyong Town Park.*

Wyong's first Post Office building. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.



POST MASTER MISSING.

DEFICIENCY OF '£400.

SYDNEY, Thursday.

The post master at Wyong, W. J. Stafford, has suddenly disappeared, and as a shortage has been discovered in his cash, a warrant has been issued for his arrest. He left Wyong on Saturday night to come to Sydney, for the expressed purpose of receiving medical advice, and has not been seen since. Before leaving Wyong, Stafford wrote a note to his wife, asking her to meet him with the family at Redfern railway station. Mrs. Stafford came to Sydney, but was surprised to find that her husband did not meet her, as promised.

The postal authorities made an inspection of the books at Wyong post office and the reserve cash in connection with the Government Savings Bank. It was discovered that there was a deficiency in cash amounting to £400.

POST MASTER MISSING. (1906, July 13). *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1854 - 1954), p. 8. Retrieved November 18, 2016, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article189368781>

Stop 8: Wyong War Memorial

The Wyong War Memorial was erected by the pioneers of Wyong in order to honour those who enlisted from the district and served in World War I between 1914 and 1918. The memorial, which was originally located in Railway Square, was unveiled in 1923 in a ceremony led by General Ryrie.

In 1915, Raymond Leslie Goldsmith was the first soldier from the Wyong district to be killed in the war. At just 20 years of age, Goldsmith was injured at Gallipoli and later died of his wounds. In the same year, Leonard Jean Kelle, aged 34, and William John Woodbury, aged 18, were also killed in the fighting at

Raymond Goldsmith c.1914.
Courtesy of the Wyong Family
History Group.



Gallipoli. Their names, along with thirty other men from the district, can be found inscribed on the memorial.

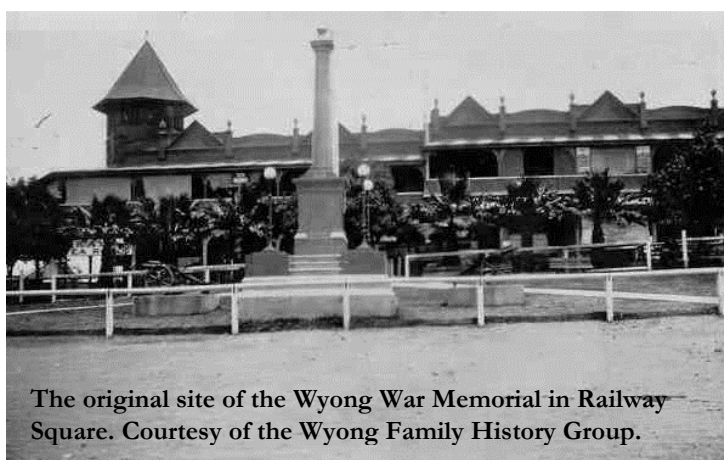
In 1994, the memorial was relocated in to its current position in

Wyong Town Park. Following its relocation, the memorial was re-dedicated to the memory of the servicemen and women involved in all conflicts from WWI to the present day, including the conflicts in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam.



Unveiling of the Wyong War Memorial,
1923. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.

→ *From your position facing the War Memorial in Wyong Town Park, notice the grounds of Old Wyong Public School to your right. This site is now the location of several community organisations, including the Wyong Family History Group.*



The original site of the Wyong War Memorial in Railway Square. Courtesy of the Wyong Family History Group.

Stop 9: Old Wyong Public School

In the weeks following the opening of the railway line, the population of Wyong began to rapidly increase. By late 1887, there were enough children living in the town to necessitate the formation of a school to accommodate them. That same year, Charles Alison wrote to the Department of Public Instruction seeking an application form for the establishment of a public school in Wyong. He also offered land for the school, provided that a school building was built within the year.

Wyong Public School. Edward Stinson (1984). *A Pictorial History of Wyong Shire*, Vol.5, pg.10. Wyong Shire Council, Wyong.



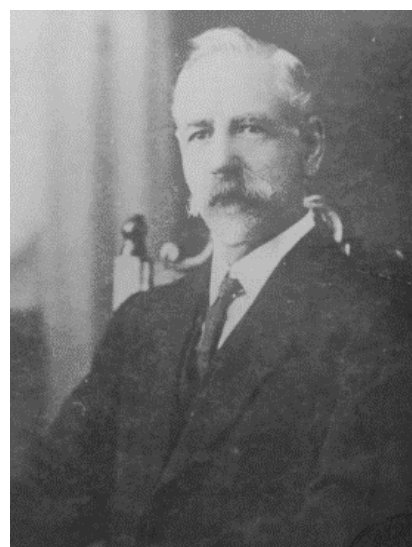
After some consideration, the Department of Education agreed to this condition and construction of Wyong Public School was completed by 1889.

The first teacher at Wyong Public School was William Berry. Berry was teaching at

Wyong Creek Lower School when he accepted the transfer to Wyong in 1888. As a teacher, he was highly regarded and managed the new school with much success. Berry continued teaching at Wyong Public school for many years until he was transferred to another school in 1906.

The enrolment of students at Wyong Public School increased so much that William Berry requested the assistance of a pupil teacher. In 1893, his request was granted and Florence Richter became the school's first pupil teacher. In her assistant role, Richter taught lessons all day to the younger children and continued her own studies before and after school. Richter continued teaching at Wyong Public until she left the town in 1895.

After the turn of the century, Wyong Public School continued to rapidly expand. In order to accommodate the increasingly enrolments, several renovations to the original school building were carried out, including the addition of more classrooms and the installation of a playground. In 1979, Wyong Public School moved to a new location in the town and the old buildings were repurposed for different community uses.



Wyong Public School's first teacher, William Berry. Edward Stinson (1980). *A Pictorial History of Wyong Shire*, Vol.2, pg.25. Wyong Shire Council, Wyong.

→ *Walk back down the sandstone stairs (or ramp) and cross over Ranken Court towards the railway station. This concludes the main walking tour of Alison Road. Here you may wish to end the walking tour and return to the railway station. Alternatively, you may turn right at the corner of Alison Road and the Pacific Highway and continue down the road towards Church Street. On the corner of the Pacific Highway and Church Street, you will stand under a building with a distinctive turret.*

...
Alison Road
Walking Tour
...

Stop 10: Turton's Corner

The corner on which you are now standing is known colloquially throughout the township of Wyong as Turton's Corner. It is called Turton's Corner after Leslie 'Les' Arnold Turton, a pharmacist and one of the long-term occupants of the building. For many years, Turton successfully operated his pharmacy out of the shop on the corner and he was known for his exceptional customer service. Not only were you able to fill your prescription at Turton's Pharmacy but you could also have it delivered to you by bus! Rather surprisingly, the pharmacy also boasted a large range of veterinary and photography requirements!

The building itself is distinguishable by the high turret which adorns the roof. It was constructed in 1915 by Ernest Bedding, a master builder who emigrated from Yorkshire, England. Bedding was responsible for the construction of many important buildings in Wyong, but this turret is

© Erin Blanchfield, 2016.



perhaps his most well-known work.

→ *(Optional) Cross over Church Street and continue walking down the right-hand side of the Pacific Highway until you reach the Royal Hotel.*

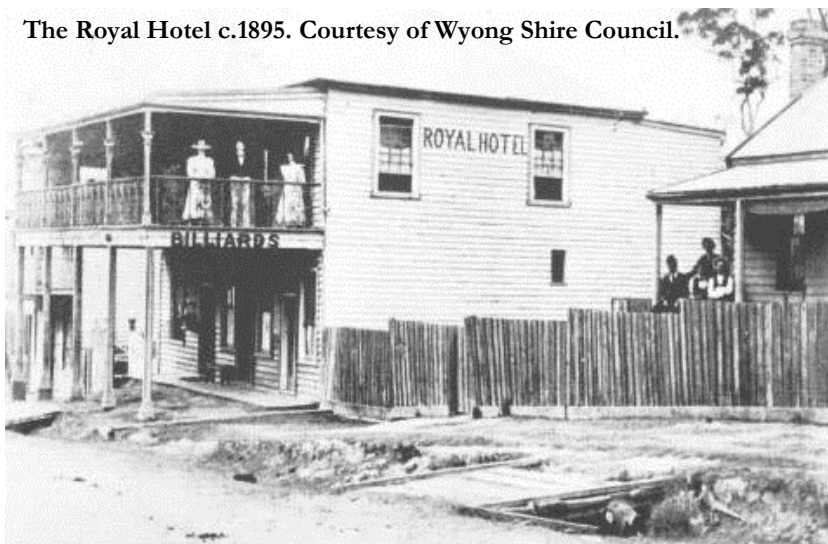


Turton's Corner during construction, 1915.
Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.

Stop 11: The Royal Hotel

The Royal Hotel was one of the earliest hotels built in Wyong. It was originally built by John Robley and opened in early 1889.

The Royal Hotel c.1895. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.



In 1899, the Royal Hotel was purchased by John Gascoigne, who later sold it to his brother Robert in 1904 who had settled in the region with his family. From then onwards, Robert successfully ran the Royal Hotel with the assistance of wife Marie, and their two sons Robert and John. In 1932, Robert retired and his son John purchased the hotel from his father.

Aside from his role as hotel keeper, Robert Gascoigne also founded the Wyong Sports Club in 1905, established the town band and founded the Wyong Bowling Club in 1912. After his retirement, Robert remained in Wyong until his death in 1951.

Over the years, the Royal Hotel has undergone many transformations. In 1919, the original wooden building was torn down and rebuilt in brick. It continues to stand to this day.

→ *Cross over the intersection of Church Street and the Pacific Highway and walk towards Railway Square Shops.*



Wyong Football Team, c. 1910. Robert Gascoigne Snr, back left (with white hat and moustache), Robert Jnr in front of him (with cap), John Gascoigne, 3rd from right in centre row seated. Courtesy of the Wyong Family History Group.

Stop 12: Railway Square Shops

The shops at Railway Square were built in 1926 by Albert Warner, one of the town's most influential pioneers. A plumber by trade, Warner proved to be a remarkable businessman and entrepreneur. In 1903, he purchased 12 000 acres of land in the Wyong region which he later subdivided and sold.

The Warner Family. Courtesy of the Wyong Family History Group.



After his business affairs in the region prospered, Albert Warner built his first home on the banks of the Wyong River and soon after, settled in the town with his wife, Mary Anne and their children. In the following years, Warner built more than one hundred private homes in the Wyong region, with some still standing today. In 1915, he also built several shops along the main road, which are still identifiable by their distinctive triangular roofs.

Albert Warner contributed greatly to the development of the Wyong Township. He established the Warner Sports Ground, (now known as Baker Park), sponsored many football and cricket teams, donated the first ambulance to Yarramalong and purchased the first Australian flag for Wyong Public School. No doubt, his immense generosity allowed the township to prosper and progress! Warner remained in Wyong until his death in 1933 and was buried in Jilliby Cemetery.

→ *Finish the tour by returning to Wyong Railway Station.*

Warner Buildings, 1915. Courtesy of Wyong Shire Council.



This tour was prepared by Erin Blanchfield, from the University of Sydney, with assistance from John Selwood and the Wyong Family History Group.