

## The Valley of the Esk

OUR peregrinations have taken us some distance away from the highway, so let us return to it near Symmons' Plains, to recall an unhappy incident which took place in 1839. A young convict named Tom Rares who had been sentenced to seven years in London at the age of nine, found himself facing another seven because of his incorrigible behaviour at Port Arthur. Rather than submit, he made his escape through Eaglehawk Neck, guarded though it was by savage dogs and armed sentries. Stealing a boat, he crossed the Derwent at Bellerive and made his way to New Norfolk where he had the temerity to hold up the police station.<sup>372</sup>

Then he appeared here at Symmons' Plains, springing out from the trees to confront the mailman and shooting his horse from under him. In falling, the animal crushed the mailman's leg, fracturing it. Disregarding the man's plea for a drink of water, the brutal young Rares seized the mailbag and made off, leaving his victim to groan in agony on the hard road until some good Samaritan should come along to assist him. Rares now joined two outlaws, Lawton and Cowden, in raids upon lonely settlers, but Nemesis overtook him at the farm of Mr. Parsons on the Lake River. As he scrambled over the roof of the house, he slipped and fell, and his gun exploded, blowing off his right hand. He was almost dead from loss of blood by the time he arrived in Launceston after two hours' jolting in a farm cart. Dr. Mountgarrett cauterized the stump with a red-hot iron, but soon afterwards, following a brief trial, he was hung at the gaol, already more dead than alive. It was a dreadful destiny for a lad of sixteen, yet such reckless violence is not so uncommon in the twentieth century that we can contemplate the story of poor Tom Rares with any complacency.

Adjoining Symmons' Plains is another Youl property known as Elsdon, a highly improved estate which owes as much to the skillful management of the proprietors as it does to that prodigious plant, subterranean clover, which by

its very growth fertilizes the soil with nitrogen. Here on their lush pastures the Polwarth sheep, introduced into Tasmania in 1902, have attained a very high standard.

From this point you may clearly see the spire of the Evandale parish church, St. Andrews, which rises a hundred feet among the trees some three miles to the north-east. John Whitehead, a veteran of Waterloo, gave one pound for each foot of height in that spire when it was erected in 1871. Across the road from it stands the Presbyterian kirk, also St. Andrews, a building in the simple classic style which was constructed in 1838 through the energies of that vigorous pioneer, Rev. Robert Russell,<sup>373</sup> supported by the laird of Pleasant Banks, Mr. David Gibson. When Lachlan Macquarie camped on the hill at Evandale among the honeysuckles in 1811, it was an empty land with not a single settler. On his next visit, ten years later, he crossed the river in flood at Pleasant Banks with great difficulty and some danger, so he gave orders for the construction of a ferry at Perth, which might be used at all seasons of the year. He was hospitably entertained at Mr. Gibson's homestead.

Evandale was named in honour of G. W. Evans, our first surveyor-general, who was given a grant of land in the district. His explorations in New South Wales earned him great fame, but his labours in Van Diemen's Land were no less arduous and much more prolonged, earning him a pension in 1825, when he retired.<sup>374</sup> His book on the island, published in 1823, was plagiarized by Lieutenant Jeffreys, but won for its author wide recognition, being translated into French and German. In his old age Evans was much crippled with rheumatism, a legacy from the years he spent in the field, when he surveyed Major Bell's road and marked out the grants of the early settlers, sometimes wading through flooded creeks in the depth of winter and sleeping in damp clothing for days at a time. He was much criticized for measuring out more land for some settlers than they were entitled to. One of his most harrowing experiences occurred one fearful night in 1806 when he was living at the Hawkesbury in New South Wales; a sudden flood obliged the family to take refuge on the house-top, expecting every moment that their dwelling would be engulfed in the swirling waters. Many lives were indeed lost and such damage caused as has not been equalled; as a result the whole colony was starving for over a year.

Soon, on the left, appears a signboard announcing the road to Longford, which gives access to several of the oldest and wealthiest estates in Tasmania. The first to be met with on this road is Rhodes, granted to Commissary Thomas Walker, who was an official under Sorell and settled here in 1826. Bushrangers burned down his new barns and wheat stacks at this time, in bitter personal enmity against a hated taskmaster, though their leader Brady was not present. Several new farms, subdivided from large estates, have been



allotted here to soldier settlers in recent years and are already in efficient production.

Another commissary, Thomas Archer, built his home on a bank overlooking the Lake River, calling his homestead Woolmers;<sup>375</sup> a lovelier site for a home would be hard to find. The old timbered house where Governor Macquarie dined in 1821 has been incorporated in the substantial brick and stone dwelling which was visited in turn by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868. Mr. and Mrs. Archer can show you with pride the chair which the duke occupied in the dining room, where the fitful light from the candelabra still flickers on the crimson wallpaper, while the portraits of Thomas Archer and his wife look down over the great dining table at which many a distinguished guest enjoyed their proverbial hospitality.

Originally consisting of twelve thousand acres, the estate now comprises only eight hundred, because of closer settlement. You may still see the orchard which supplied apples for the cider press, while the press itself is in good working order after a century of use. It consists of a great stone wheel running in a circular trough which holds the fruit, and is situated in the great barn itself where the shearing takes place. The grand old oaks which were seen by Macquarie as young trees are an eloquent reminder of the toil and patience of these pioneer families, which have brought about such growth and development during our short history.

Returning to the Main Road you may notice the gateway leading to Woodhall, a farm that belonged to an early magistrate of the district, Captain Laing Smith. It was later acquired by Joseph Bonney who distinguished himself in 1855 by selecting a fine type of mechanic and settler for St. Andrew's Immigration Society in Scotland, at a time when every available workman had left for the goldfields.<sup>376</sup>

Also to the left of the road and a little further on is Leighlands, granted to John Helder Wedge, one of the early surveyors who distinguished himself in traversing some of the roughest country in the island. While assessing the value of the Van Diemen's Land Co.'s land, Wedge and his companions on one occasion found themselves unable to cross a flooded stream, so began cutting down a tree to bridge the racing current. Unhappily, the head of their only axe flew off the handle into the river and was lost. They then attempted to burn the tree down, but in the pouring rain and bitterly cold wind had much difficulty in accomplishing it. When it eventually fell, the trunk did not reach the far bank, so the wretched explorers had to wade to their middles in the racing stream to reach dry land. This was not the end of their troubles, however, since the last of their provisions was lost during the crossing, and they were still some days' travel from Circular Head. They completed the journey subsisting only on the few birds they were able to bring down with their rifles.<sup>377</sup>

On another occasion Wedge attempted to cross on horseback over the South Esk in flood, being carried downstream some fifty yards before he was able to feel solid ground again under the horse's feet. That night he slept in a shepherd's hut, being much tormented by fleas, but in the morning managed to reach the other side in David Gibson's boat.

Once while traversing the country round the Arthur Lakes, he fell in with Matthew Brady, that ubiquitous outlaw, who took possession of the telescope and other valuables that Wedge carried, but permitted him to retain his watch.

At Leighlands the surveyor had a difference with his irascible neighbour, Timothy Knowlan, who erected a hut on land that Wedge claimed as his own. Wedge promptly burned it down, but Knowlan had his revenge by rounding up the surveyor's bullocks on the disputed land and driving them off to the pound, the disgruntled owner was obliged to go to Launceston to replevin the animals. Later he leased his land to Bonney for an annual rental of seventy ewes.

One of his last exploits before resigning from the department in 1835 was to go with his chief, George Frankland, on a journey overland from the upper reaches of the Derwent to the headwaters of the Huon, via the Gordon River.

The cause of Wedge's resignation was his projected expedition to Port Phillip, with John Batman, as representative of the association which was to "purchase" half a million acres from the blacks for a few knives and trinkets. They had talked over the subject for some years, perhaps from the time that Batman dined in the surveyor's tent when the latter was engaged in marking out the boundaries of Kingston. So it was Wedge who carried out the first surveys in the future Victoria, who named the River Yarra (from the native name for a waterfall) and who interviewed Buckley, the Wild White Man who lived for over thirty years with the natives.<sup>378</sup>

While returning from a visit to England in 1843, Wedge successfully courted a Miss Wills, who was coming to Van Diemen's Land as companion to Mrs. Nixon, the wife of the first bishop of Tasmania, on board the *Duke of Roxburgh*.<sup>379</sup> As might be expected, the bishop's lady was not at all pleased at this development; she described the surveyor as a man who was not polished, but quite well-read. Early in the new year he brought his bride to Leighlands to the long, low, timbered cottage which remained much as it was in those days, set in a secluded garden, until it was burned down in March 1955. Thither came Mrs. Nixon in the spring of 1844 to attend poor Maria Wedge, desperately ill in her first confinement. When she died her husband was inconsolable, though he accepted the bishop's offer to manage the estate attached to Christ's College at Bishopsbourne. For a number of years he led an active political life, being a member of the Gregson ministry of 1857. He left Leighlands in 1865 to live at the Forth, where he died in his eightieth year.<sup>380</sup>



The road to Evandale branches off at Leighlands, passing the Chest Hospital and Pleasant Banks on the way. Mention has already been made of the latter as the estate of David Gibson,<sup>381</sup> the earliest settler in the district. Surrounding this splendid homestead, which is built in the American style of red brick and white facings, are numerous English trees, adding atmosphere to a building already distinguished in its architecture.

An ancient brick barn dominates the hill above the house, its great doors able to admit a fully-loaded wagon, which having unloaded might pass on through a similar pair of doors on the other side. Most of the buildings in this part of the country are of bricks made in nearby quarries, or of the rough, uncut dolorite, a stone almost as hard as granite. Pleasant Banks is noted today for its high-quality stud Merinos.

As we approach the South Esk, the road drops gradually towards the bridge, though it once followed a course nearer the timber on the right. Near Perth the road crosses a hollow where a house once stood, though only a few trees now mark the spot where William Eyres, a highwayman, robbed and assaulted John Vicars in 1845, receiving fifteen years penal servitude for his brutality.

Soon on the right the wayfarer will notice the entrance to Native Point, a highly improved holding that was purchased a century ago by William Gibson and still remains in the family. It was granted first of all to Timothy Knowlan who took possession in 1823. He had arrived from Ireland in the ship *Mangles*, bringing fifty Merinos, two wool-sorters and two shepherds, in addition to his household.<sup>382</sup> He once complained to Governor Arthur that government buildings across the river from Perth were erected on his land, but did not pursue the matter further when told that he already had more land than was ordered for him.

The buildings referred to above comprised a convict station which was in use while the bridge was building and road works were in progress. Knopwood mentions a military guard as early as 1814, under Lieutenant Lyttleton, whose sketches are prized as being the earliest to be executed in the north of the island. In those days you needed a pass to cross the Esk, since so many absconders were at large and anxious to negotiate stolen goods. Of the convict station, part of which was used as a brewery in after years, very little remains, though what was probably the commander's house is now occupied by the Forestry Commission.

Although the South Esk seems a harmless enough stream in the summer, it can become a raging torrent during the rainy season, when it receives a dozen tributaries draining an area of three thousand square miles. Over a period of six months in 1956 no less than eight successive floods swept by under the bridge. Governor Macquarie paid a visit here in 1821 when the river was in flood; he was delayed a good deal in getting his baggage across at

Pleasant Banks. He came to see the punt that was being built here and which served for nearly twenty years,<sup>383</sup> until the bridge was erected. Holman says that during its first ten years this ferry was frequently washed away, and was once completely wrecked. At first it was a government ferry, but in 1827 it was operated by a private contractor. Mr. Knowlan had occasion to complain when one of his bullock-drays was tilted off the end of the punt into deep water by a careless puntsman who at the time was fuddled with drink. The Sawpit Ford here was viable for only six months of the year.

A petition from the settlers in 1835 succeeded in convincing Colonel Arthur that a bridge was a necessity, so Lieutenant Kenworthy set about the task the following year, only to be superseded by Captain Cheyne, newly appointed director of roads and bridges.<sup>384</sup> The work was carried out expeditiously enough, but the structure was never satisfactory, which may come as a surprise to those who recall, almost with affection, the fine old bluestone bridge that served generations of Tasmanians. As early as 1840 both ends were severely damaged, when it had been completed only two years. It was stated then that the walls were too thin, the interior being filled with rubble. However, repairs were effected and all went well until 1852, when a heavy flood swept away several arches, and it was decided to order an iron bridge from England. When Governor Denison of the Royal Engineers came to inspect the damage, he found much of the structure undermined, but ordered repairs to be made, which were so successful that the iron bridge was not required.<sup>385</sup> In fact, no one seemed to want it and it lay rusting on the wharf at Hobart, its final destiny unknown. It was suggested at this time that there be more arches at the extremities of the bridge so as to present less obstruction to flood water.

Then for seventy-five winters Perth Bridge withstood many a flood, and would be there still but for the frightful deluge of 1929, when forty feet of water came roaring down from the mountains as the result of a cloudburst in the north-east. Stacks, dwellings and livestock were swept downstream amidst a welter of logs and rubbish. Homes were inundated to a height of several feet, their contents smothered with a thick coating of slime that penetrated into every crevice. Expensive pianos fell to pieces, and walls took months to dry out. One young couple were obliged to take refuge upon the roof of their house, not having time even to loose the horses in the stable, where they could be heard screaming as they strove to keep their heads above the rising water. This young farmer and his wife spent several hours waiting to be rescued, while the raging torrent buffeted their trembling cottage, part of which collapsed as they watched. Meanwhile, a frantic search was made for a boat to rescue them, but the only one available was a little cockleshell eight feet long. In this an Evandale man rowed all day long to rescue the marooned couple, since he could take only one passenger at a time. Fences, a railway embank-



ment, trees, hedges and a telegraph line were major hazards. For this he received an award from the Royal Humane Society. Only a few dejected fruit trees can be seen by the chance passer-by on the spot where the farmer's cottage once stood—he has moved his establishment to higher ground.<sup>386</sup>

At Perth it was as though the bridge had never been; only a few stones at either end were left to show where it had stood. It was the talk of the whole country; people were amazed that such a stalwart bastion could so speedily be demolished. But it was not long before plans were drawn up for a new bridge. Approaches to the old structure had been difficult for fast motor traffic, so the new one was built at a greater angle to the stream, but with the piers presenting a minimum of surface to the waters. Also, the new bridge is four feet lower than the old. Now, in 1968, we are told that the present structure will have to be widened and the approaches reconstructed.

In the autumn of 1951 occurred the first fatal accident on the new bridge when a truck skidded on the wet bitumen, crashed through the retaining wall near the middle of the river and fell thirty-four feet to the rocks below. Two men on the tray were killed instantly. A few months later, two men travelling at high speed in a new car were unable to make the turn at the southern end of the bridge, crashed through the fence and toppled over a stone wall to the river-bed below. The driver was killed.

But the river has claimed other victims besides those involved in motor accidents. Even within living memory almost a dozen persons have been drowned while swimming at Perth, where there are several dangerous holes. Skilful canoeists, on the other hand, have often made the journey from Fingal to Hadspen without mishap, in spite of numerous reefs, shoals and snags. Portages are sometimes necessary, and if some hapless fellow swamps the boat, much work is entailed in drying out the gear. This journey of almost a hundred miles is full of interest, especially to those who have a knowledge of the early settlers and their estates, which are strung out along the river at intervals of a mile or so.

One of these which you can see splendidly from the bridge is Eskleigh, now a home for crippled and incurable folk, but which, under its old name of Scone, was the palatial home of Mr. William Gibson.<sup>387</sup> Some rooms were decorated by an artist brought specially from Europe, whose work visitors may still see in the foyer, having lost little of its freshness over the years. The house was built in 1870 to the design of H. Conway in the Italian style. It was one of the first places in the country to be lit with electricity, generated by a water-driven dynamo, thus anticipating the great hydro-electric development by some thirty years.

There is on the estate a very fine collection of trees, brought by Mr. Gibson from many parts of the world, which includes cedar, spruce, larch and wellingtonia, to mention only a few. Originally granted to Captain John

Ritchie in 1809 by Macquarie, the property passed to a brother, Thomas Ritchie, who erected a mill there with a long race which, passing beneath the bridge, ended at the large mill-wheel some distance beyond the present house. One writer tells of the creak of the wheel, the murmur of the stream and the cooing of white pigeons, recreating a scene that would make many an exiled Englishman long for his native land. But this peaceful idyll was shattered more than once; first of all when the bridge work collapsed in 1840 and choked the race. Then a decade or so later the rickety old mill (so pleasantly depicted by Mrs Meredith)<sup>388</sup> was washed away in the same flood that partially destroyed the bridge. Then, a few days after William Gibson purchased the place in 1867, the new mill was burnt to the ground. Today, the pumping plant humming busily in its shed is all that disturbs this lovely haven for the maimed and helpless, with its old-world garden and sunny walks. You can sit under the great oak—is there a finer in the whole island?—and muse that he who planted these stately groves spreading their boughs above the mellow walls did not live to see the beauty he created.

In case the reader should think from the foregoing that the Esk is always preoccupied with floods, it must be stated that there have frequently been droughts when the stream has almost ceased to flow, though of course it has never, like the Jordan, become a dry river-bed. In 1834 and many times since, there was not enough water to drive the mills, either this one or that of Major Macleod, situated a mile upstream. This was a serious matter for farmers for miles around, who depended on the mills to grind their wheat. The only alternative was to grind it laboriously with a steel hand-mill, or live on potatoes instead!

Until 1956 floods had not been severe for some years, so there has been a splendid growth of willows, blackwoods, and tea-tree along the banks, thus providing cover for many kinds of wild life. Grebes and bitterns, teal and swans may be seen more frequently than the shy little reed-warbler whose ecstatic song is often drowned by the raucous calls of the native hen. That timid creature the platypus, though not often seen, is quite plentiful and may be observed swimming quietly under the banks in search of his perennial delicacy, the worm.

The bald-coot and the cormorant also inhabit these waters, but the latter was once an outlaw with a price on his head. Yet one cannot help thinking that man is as much to blame as he for the poor fishing along the South Esk. Illegal practices employed in taking fish and the pollution of the stream by mining operations may be factors in the depletion of the trout. Too often the fly-fisherman may cast till his arms ache while the fellow with a home-made rod and a grub on his hook will pull out nothing but monstrous, squirming eels, or at best a perch.

At the turn of the century, Perth Regatta was the Mecca for hundreds of



visitors, many of whom joined in the aquatic events which included such hilarious diversions as the greasy pole; the prize was a pig in a box which had to be retrieved from the end of the pole and brought back safely to land. The crowd was also regaled by the spectacle of several gay spirits in pursuit of a duck which, squawking and splashing, resorted to its natural element, often defying its captor to bring it ashore, as it struggled for dear life. Swimming and skiff-racing were taken much more seriously, and winners in these classes would compete at other meetings.

Our earliest account of this district is from the pen of Lachlan Macquarie who rode out from town on December 11th, 1811, and along the river towards Norfolk Plains, as Longford was then called, to find land for the settlers from Norfolk Island. Covering thirty miles on horseback in one day, he expressed himself as well-satisfied with the extensive open country which he himself named in honour of its future settlers.

During his second visit in 1821, Macquarie laid out the future township and directed that work on the road to Launceston be speeded up. Lieutenant Hughes and his party completed their task in three years,<sup>389</sup> enabling Johnny Fawcner to run a coach service some time later with a coach imported by Lieutenant Friend. This service operated three times a week, the first enterprise of this sort in the north of the island, showing that Perth was becoming a place of some importance. There was a police magistrate, Major Macleod, whose chief duty was the punishment of offenders. Though drink was the chief cause of wrong-doing, one cannot help feeling that the sheer misery and loneliness of the prison population (with no facilities for amusement, nothing to relieve the tedium of their hours off duty) was at the root of the trouble.

In a letter to the secretary of state, the major stated that he had arrived in the colony on the ship *Skelton*, and now (1822) had an establishment of twenty-two souls, which included a family of five sons and four daughters. Seven convicts had been allotted him to labour on his farm at Talisker, but he hoped that government would allow him a grant for each of his sons as they came of age.<sup>390</sup> Eventually he became master of seven thousand acres of land, but lost much of it through poor management.

Edward Markham, that caustic but entertaining chronicler, paid a visit in 1834 to the major at his home, Perth Cottage, a long, low, wooden building overlooking the river, which until destroyed by fire about 1950, was very much as it had always been. The diarist complained of the effluvium rising from beneath the house, where native cats had made their lair. He also asserted that the high Scottish pride of the Macleods prevented the eligible daughters from finding favour with the somewhat rough and ready colonial youth. The sons, however, did very well for themselves in the western district of Victoria.<sup>391</sup>



*The Leather Bottle, Perth*



*Young Town Inn*





*All the Year Round, Wellington Street, Launceston*

Perth at this time consisted of the barracks, two hotels, and eight houses. The Norfolk Islanders were slovenly farmers, sowing wheat that was full of wild oats year after year in the same ground which yielded only twelve bushels to the acre. When their land became quite worn out, these improvident people would move to another corner of their property, erect a small cottage, and proceed to exploit more land. On many farms today there are small heaps of brick and stone where once stood a hut with its patch of cultivation.

A great personality at Perth in its early days was Jane Youl, the widow of the Rev. John Youl, who when her husband died settled here and commenced a large Sunday school, the first in the north. For fifty years she and her daughter carried on this school, until she died in 1877. Such a school was held all day on the sabbath, the children being taught the three R's as well as the rudiments of religion. For many of them it was the only instruction received, since few could afford the fees charged at ordinary schools, and youngsters went to work at a very early age.

Mrs. Youl's home is still to be seen on the esplanade at Perth, and well-known as the Stone House. Owing much to the zeal of Mrs. Youl and the enthusiasm of Rev. Davies, a church was erected in 1834 on ground which is now the cemetery. It was consecrated four years later by Bishop Broughton, but soon, like the churches at Evandale and Longford, great cracks began to appear, showing that the foundations were faulty. However, the building of the present Church of England was not undertaken until 1876,<sup>392</sup> the corner stone being laid by Miss Youl, with the church choir from Longford leading the hymns. There was to have been a spire, but up till now no move has been made in the matter. In the cemetery the most notable tombs are those of J. H. Wedge, Thomas Gee and William Wood, each of whom is mentioned elsewhere.

A pleasant old house on the esplanade, now called Beulah, was for many years the rectory, which was visited in the forties by Mrs. Nixon (wife of the bishop), who executed several sketches along the South Esk during her stay here with the rector and Mrs. Stackhouse.<sup>393</sup> A later incumbent, the Rev. Galer, once caught some of the lads of the village in his apple trees, and angrily demanded that they come down, but the only answer he received was a fusillade from a battery of pea-shooters, which dented his glossy top-hat. This was produced as evidence before the assembled school next morning, but no amount of coercion or threats from the glowering schoolmaster would reveal the culprits.

Not far from the esplanade is the unusual Baptist Church, an octagonal building in the Indian style, surmounted by a dome, and built through the generosity of Mr. William Gibson of Native Point, while still under the spell of a visit to the East. The acoustics are very good indeed and the building is



well-lighted from every angle. An older chapel has stood for a century across the way and has long served as a schoolroom.

In the main street is the Methodist Church,<sup>394</sup> which has witnessed a hundred and twenty years of change along the old road. It was being built (through the substantial help of Mr. Palmer Ball) at the same time that Perth Bridge was under construction. Before this time, the road to Launceston had run up from the ferry through Punt Lane, across the present line, and straight on to the Longford road, before turning right (at the present railway crossing) for Launceston. It will be apparent how the Main Road cuts across the original plan of Perth, running in a comparatively straight line from the bridge to Gibbet Hill.

Thus the neat little chapel was among the first buildings to be erected along the new road, and drew many a hardened sinner from the highways and byways to hear those two stalwart preachers, Henry Reed and Rev. James Manton, who walked or rode the twelve weary miles from town and back again, in wet weather or fine. They came here to preach long before there was a church, and Mr. Manton was very nearly drowned trying to cross the river while on the way to Hobart.

Close by the chapel (but not so close as to embarrass either party) is the Perth Hotel, better known to old-timers as the Queen's Head. Simon Scrivener had it built in 1845 though it was kept for a number of years by a German named Schultz. Sir William Denison stayed there while inspecting repairs to the bridge in 1852, and the Duke of Edinburgh called in 1868, being greeted by a number of ex-convicts who having celebrated too freely shouted, "We built the roads for the Government!" The inhabitants showed their patriotism by erecting a splendid arch in the township, from which hung the words, "Welcome, Prince Alfred" with two side arches displaying a star and anchor.<sup>395</sup>

The Queen's Head was also a staging inn for Page's coaches, and a team of his horses was always in readiness.

Another noted innkeeper at the Queen's Head was William Russell, a keen hunter and crack pigeon-shot, whose skill as a floriculturist is detailed by Arthur Guillemard in his book *Over Land and Sea*, published in 1875. His verbenas, gladioli, zinnias, and petunias were particularly fine, winning numerous prizes at horticultural shows. In later years he had an excellent rose garden, surely an unusual proclivity for an innkeeper, especially in Tasmania, where not many hotels can boast the luxury of a garden. All that remains of its former loveliness is an old magnolia tree which blooms bravely in solitude, oblivious to its drab surroundings. Guillemard tells how he joined Mine Host in a kangaroo hunt, when three were bagged but none of them by the newcomer, who sighted nothing but a snake.

Mr. Russell had earlier held the licence of the Blenheim at Longford.

where the agricultural shows of the northern society were first conducted, in the extensive grounds behind the hotel. The Blenheim was later kept by his son George, an even keener naturalist than his father, whose interest in all wild creatures was proverbial. Both father and son hugely enjoyed entertaining their friends at the hotel, sometimes for days at a time.

At Perth the earliest tavern seems to have been the St. Andrew's Inn, closely followed by the Plough, in the name of the proprietor of the ferry, Alex McLemmon (or McLennan) who flourished during the twenties. He was succeeded by Richard Heaney in 1832, who four years later presided at the Tasmanian Inn, a house that was burnt down in the sixties. Another inn, dating from 1833, stood until recently, a high-roofed wooden building on the corner of Drummond St. and the Main Road.

Another hostelry built in the days of the ferry was the Crown Inn, still standing in Punt Lane, where John Dryden and his wife Isobel dispensed strawberries and cream to gratified travellers. Dryden was a connection of the famous poet, and was granted Haggerston, an interesting old property near Perth, in the thirties.

A bushranger is said to have been shot through the window of the Leather Bottle by special constable Will Saltmarsh, while he was drinking at the bar. The building, though it has lost its upper story, may yet be seen with its three-sided front, commanding a corner near the war memorial. On the far side of the town slumbers the Jolly Farmer, where a young poetess, Norma Davis, once lived. She wrote some appealing and significant verse, but unhappily died quite young. Close to the Main Road rail crossing is a tall red-brick building that was at one time the Railway Tavern. Other taverns, such as the Star and the Commercial are no longer remembered, even by the oldest inhabitants.

One last inn at Perth must be mentioned, namely Benjamin's which stood in Scone Street near the present police station. It was a coaching hotel, where Burbury's conveyance changed horses. This place was destroyed by fire some fifty years ago.

Quiet as it appears these days, Perth had its wild times in years gone by. Bloodshed Lane doubtless earned its name from the fights which took place in this secluded spot, away from the eyes of the law. The boys of the village played great pranks on New Year's Eve. Not content with proclaiming the fact in white paint on walls and fences, on one memorable occasion they whitewashed Harry Pye's black pony. In the morning an indignant Harry impounded the unfamiliar grey, and made a fruitless search for his beloved Kitty, encouraged with bright suggestions from the young innocents who were abroad early to see the fun!

It may have been the same night that old Joe Clayton, finding himself unable to sleep because of the noisy revellers, rushed outside in his nightshirt



to put a stop to the row. He found himself swiftly encompassed by the hilarious youths, who promptly laid him low and proceeded to whitewash the posterior of their struggling victim! Perhaps it was by way of celebration that they set fire to an empty barrel smothered with tar and bowled it merrily along the main street. The chaos brought about early on New Year's Day by the wholesale removal of gates can scarcely be imagined, as cattle, sheep and horses began exploiting their new-found freedom, devouring flowers, fruit, and vegetables with reckless abandon, almost insensible to the threats and blows directed at them by exasperated householders.

In 1874 Bird the runner, newly arrived from England, raced the coach from Perth to Campbell Town, winning because he was able to outdistance the coach on hills and gradients. It was surely a marathon performance to better ten miles an hour over such a distance. W. Emmerton in 1949 covered the eleven miles from the Perth Hotel to the Duke of Wellington in Launceston in fifty-eight minutes, no mean effort.

As the Western Railway crosses the Midland Highway at the northern end of the town, it may not be amiss to mention something of its history. For ten years the people of Launceston and Deloraine agitated for a rail link between their two towns, but the landholders fearing a heavy rate if the line did not pay, opposed it in parliament until the pressure of public opinion forced the bill through. After many set-backs, not least of which was a bitter depression, this the first railroad in Tasmania was opened in 1871, to the great jubilation of the northerners who were highly delighted at obtaining their line before the people of Hobart had even begun to construct the Main Trunk. They even composed a song about it, the chorus of which commenced, "Hurrah, Hurrah for the Deloraine Railway."

However, the times were out of joint and the line did not pay. The gloomy prognostications of the pastoralists were confirmed, and a heavy rate was levied on all the districts supposed to benefit from the railway. Many refused to pay, guarding their households with mastiffs against the collectors. Then ensued what was known as the "Launceston Riots", when malcontents resisted the distraining of their goods. When these were offered for sale, there were no bidders, hundreds were fined in the courts and in the end the company was obliged to sell to the government, the shareholders receiving only ten shillings in the pound.

Originally the gauge of this line was five feet four inches, the same as Victoria, but in 1886 a third rail was added to conform with the three feet six inches of the main line. Much has been made of the rivalry between road and rail, but really the two are complementary, neither being able to usurp the functions of the other. Each has to be paid for by the ratepayer or taxpayer as constituting a vital artery in the life of the state.<sup>396</sup>

Leaving Perth the road winds up and round the Gibbet Hill, so named from the sinister post with its swinging corpse that adorned this place in 1836. Mr. von Stieglitz tells a gruesome tale of a woman at Cressy who, when a harvest hand put two sovereigns on a hotel counter, seized them as quick as a flash and swallowed them. Three of the men forced her jaws apart but finding that the money had gone out of sight, they hit her on the head and killed her. It is said that the three men were hanged on Gibbet Hill for this murder.

But the occurrence which is best known was the mail-cart murder which took place in the autumn of 1837.<sup>397</sup> One James Wilson took the only passenger seat on the mail-cart, vacated by somebody else. Near Perth they were held up by an escaped convict named Mackay who shot Wilson dead. Constable James Hortle set off in hot pursuit and captured his man on May 1st. Mackay was executed in Hobart, but instructions were given that the body was to be hung on a gibbet at the scene of the crime. Martin Cash describes how he met up with two constables driving north in a cart bearing a coffin containing the remains of the murderer. Henry Reed saw a crowd of sight-seers gazing at the gibbet on a Sunday afternoon as he was on his way to preach at Perth, and improved the occasion by delivering a homily on the reward of wickedness, with the object lesson before their very eyes. Backhouse and Walker saw the repulsive sight which so offended the sensibilities of the settlers that the ghoulish experiment was never repeated.

These rocky hills above Perth were partly cleared by patient settlers in earlier times, the rock being used to build stone walls along the boundaries. Some of them are still in existence, lending colour to an otherwise drab landscape. There are, however, some splendid views to be had from these hills of the Esk Valley and the mountains spread out on either hand.

After passing the crest of the watershed, the highway begins its slow descent towards Launceston, passing on the left an abandoned quarry where the bricks were made for the railway viaduct near Perth. On the right, in a very pleasing position, is Rathmolyn, one of the several farms comprising the estate of Thomas Scott the surveyor, granted to him in the eighteen-twenties.

This brings us to Breadalbane, named by Macquarie in 1811, though it was first known as Brumby's Plains. (The wild horses of Queensland, called Brumbies, owe their name to the sons of this early settler.) However, the district between here and Evandale was long entitled The Springs,<sup>398</sup> from five streams that flowed down from here to join Rose's Rivulet. Visits were paid by the Rev. John Youl who started a school here about 1820, with ten scholars, according to the historian Ernest Whitfeld.<sup>398</sup> The ancient school building was accidentally burned down in March of 1948, all that now remains of it being the rusty, cracked old bell hanging forlornly from its post. For a century and a quarter church services were regularly held, from



the days when Rev. Youl walked round the settlement in his cassock and surplice, or thumped an iron barrel, to let the people know that divine worship was about to begin.

John Youl was sent as a missionary to Tahiti in the year 1800 but was expelled by the natives, who had eaten most of his companions. They spared him because he was too lean, and on condition that he would shave thirty of the head-hunters! Appointed to northern Tasmania in 1819, he often married couples with several children to be baptized, one ring serving a number of people, since there had been no minister to perform these offices.

Afflicted with ill-health, Mr. Youl often despaired of his unregenerate flock, but was sustained by his splendid wife through many a sea of trouble.

It would seem that John Youl had reason to despair of those who dwelt at The Springs, for a more lawless community it would have been hard to find. Its long suit was sheep-stealing, in spite of the penalty of death for this offence, imposed by Governor Arthur. Fourteen were executed in 1826 for this crime, so prevalent was it throughout the settled districts. Six years later eight of the Cocked Hat Hill Mob were committed for trial.<sup>399</sup> In those days sheepmen went to a good deal of trouble to mark their animals, using distinctive notches in their ears, fire-brands on their noses and the customary tar-brand on the pelt. So it was the business of the men of the Cocked Hat to obliterate these brands and disfigure the ears of the stolen sheep, before delivering them to certain butchers in Launceston, who conveniently asked no questions. Stolen sheep were once found here hidden under a few loose boards in a pit beneath a pig-sty.

It is not surprising then, that Matt Brady found refuge among these people. Calder tells how he came very early in the morning of March 5th, 1826 to the Opossum Inn at the Cocked Hat and routed out the wretched Thomas Kenton from his bed,<sup>400</sup> accusing him of betraying the gang to the police. Kenton replied with a torrent of blasphemy and abuse, which Brady cut short by shooting him dead on the spot. But the end was near for the wild Irishman, who soon after this fell in with Lieutenant Williams and a party of soldiers on the way to the North Esk. In the ensuing struggle, several of the bandits were killed and Brady himself was wounded in the thigh, losing all the plunder and, worse still, his arms. However, he eluded his excited pursuers (Wedge, Sinclair and Bartley among them) for a time, finally giving himself up to John Batman, who came upon him hobbling along on a stick. The main scuffle had taken place near the spot where the Perth railway viaduct was later built.<sup>401</sup>

Great trepidation was felt by travellers who ventured this way during the thirties, especially when they heard how young Alan Mackinnon had been robbed of all his clothes, arriving at Perth clad only in his shirt. It was certainly safer to travel in company, even with someone uncongenial.

Judge Montague in 1844 described the Cocked Hat as a terrible place where nobody was safe, though the residents should be grateful for their Constable Harvey who had captured two bandits, Fletcher and Lee, found guilty of "sticking up" and robbing Daniel Griffin. They were transported for life to Norfolk Island, though they threatened the judge that they would disembowel him if they ever got out.<sup>402</sup>

Things weren't any better in 1850, for a watch-house was being erected and court was held every Tuesday. Yet, in spite of its evil reputation, there were not a few respectable settlers round Breadalbane.

Thomas Gee was granted the Springs Farm at an early date, and was renowned as a breeder of fine horses, one of his best being Miss Grizzle, purchased from James Cox. This mare began a remarkable pedigree that reaches down to the present day. Henry Gee, a brother of Thomas and also a breeder, was thrown from his horse and killed in 1862.

Clairville was the home of John Sinclair, once chief constable in Launceston, who earned his grant by capturing a bushranger. One of Batman's cronies, he did some pioneering work in Victoria, but returned to represent the district in parliament, in an age when independent men were expected to serve their country in this way, and without remuneration. He died among his friends the Hentys at Portland.

The Breadalbane of ninety years ago was a busy little hamlet, with a blacksmith, a school, two inns and some fifteen houses. On Sunday afternoons some twenty young fellows would forgather on the corner, to discuss the young ladies who passed on their way to church, and watch the turn-outs of the well-to-do go spanking by on their Sunday jaunts, while they smoked their pipes and recounted the doings of the week.

So many old inns have been allowed to fall into disrepair, that it is refreshing to see that the Woolpack has lately been restored.<sup>403</sup> It dates from 1839 and only in the last few years was it sold by Scott's estate. For a time the place was known as the Breadalbane Coffee House, but held a licence until 1920. In the sixties it was half-way house for the coaches from Evandale and the Nile, then called Lymington. Morrison and Hannay plied to Evandale, while Ayton ran to Nile. Early in the morning of January 4th, 1863 Page's night-mail broke down when one of the horses fell, breaking the pole. The mail was transferred to a chaise which in turn came to grief when it left the road on the Sandhill, the horse breaking its neck. Ayton carried both mail and passengers to their destination.

Opposite the end of the Evandale road stood the Albion, erected at the same time as the Woolpack, and owned by William Kitson, who had also a small farm close by. This inn may be remembered as the Temperance Hotel, which was pulled down at the turn of the century. In 1847 a trotting match from Launceston to the Albion took place between two ponies,<sup>403</sup> but it



ended ingloriously when the drivers were arrested for furious driving during the return journey. Kitson went insolvent at this time of depression, when so many businesses went to the wall, and died soon afterwards.

J. F. Hobkirk in his interesting book recalls being forced off the road in his buggy by the racing coaches at night, none of them carrying lights. He also tells of buying hay and grain at Breadalbane during the Ballarat gold rush at fantastic prices, which would be judged excessive even by today's standards. No doubt it enabled farmers to pay off mortgages contracted during the dismal forties.

It is only a couple of miles from here to the Western Junction airport, on the Evandale Road, along which come speedy motor coaches and freight wagons, bearing the commerce of the air. It is a far cry indeed from the age of the horse, and the times of the bushrangers. The road over Evandale Bridge is an alternative to the route via Perth.

Continuing on your way, you pass the entrance to Tara, which marks the spot where a toll-gate stood in 1855. It was removed because of the protests of residents, who objected to paying toll twice (here and at the Sandhill) when on their way to town.

Next you pass old Meadowlands, where Archibald Chilcott and his wife reared seventeen of their twenty-four children. This place may well have been the Rob Roy inn of 1833, built on the new line of road under construction at that time. That savage disciplinarian Bobby Nottman had charge of the gang of convicts engaged on this project.<sup>404</sup> Frankland the surveyor describes this new road as commencing at the foot of Magpie Hill, following an easy ascent to the east of the old line, crossing it at Kerry Lodge, and running to the westward of the Cocked Hat Hill, at the back of Carolan's public house and joining the old line a considerable distance on towards Perth.

Portion of this old road may still be traced where it veers away over the hill towards Marchington, just opposite Strathroy. Beside it is a waterhole, some ancient hawthorns and, on the bank nearby, the ruins of a stone barn. Perhaps this was Peter Carolan's Tasmanian Inn of 1826, situated on Prospect Hill. Certainly there are some splendid landscapes to be seen from these eminences, especially the panorama of the White Hills from the top of the Cocked Hat itself. Much surmise surrounds the origin of this name, but its contour certainly suggests the upturned brim of such a hat.

There is plenty to be found in the papers of the day about Nottman and his party. This man of unflinching temper, credited with having throttled a robber, had scant mercy on the abandoned wretches in his charge. He ordered 3,300 lashes as punishment for thirty men on one occasion, while over eighty of the men worked constantly in chains. Each had a chain attached to his ankles and kept from the ground by a thong hung from his waist, to facilitate his work. The cat-o'-nine-tails was illegal but too much

was left to the discretion of the flagellator, who might tie a number of knots in his scourge, especially if the doctor, ordered to be present, avoided the nauseating task.

G. W. Walker informs us that the prisoners lived in rude huts, twenty in each, and were "as men without hope", filled with despair, having little prospect that they could ever lift themselves from the degradation into which they had fallen. In his compassion the good man knew that there was little to lighten their misery, and prayed with them that they might even yet be able to lift up their heads as honest men.

Although it is now some distance from the present main highway, Marchington stood close to the old route which skirted the eastern side of the Cocked Hat Hill. It was built by Lieutenant John Smith, R.N., when he settled there in 1823. He and Frances his wife raised a large family, to feed whom a large orchard and garden were planted; indeed his fame spread across the world when he exhibited his jams and preserves at the great London exposition of 1851. His vines are credited with yielding five tons of grapes in a single year, while the cherry orchard was unequalled in the country.<sup>405</sup>

Mark Jeffrey, the notorious, quick-tempered burglar, who had obtained a ticket of leave, worked here for Mr. Alex Stewart in the sixties as a harvest hand. Times were hard, and droves of these fellows roamed the countryside, a sickle in one hand and a bundle containing a few requisites in the other. The farmer provided their food, and maybe there were worse places to sleep than barns and haystacks. Bread and cheese was the usual fare in the field, with a mug of beer to wash it down. A man was expected to "knock down" an acre of grain a day, followed up by old men and boys, tying the swaths into big sheaves which they stooked into rows. Evening would find them at the local pothouse, drinking the "advance" the farmer had allowed them, and singing some mournful ditty that personified the misery of their lot and vain regrets for a happier life that they once threw away.<sup>406</sup>

Surely the goddess of fecundity must have dwelt in this valley, for to Theodore and Hannah Bartley of Kerry Lodge were born sixteen youngsters, for each of whom a room was added to the old house that stood near the present entrance to Strathroy. Kerry Lodge, which at first reached to the Sandhill, belonged successively to W. G. Walker and William Kenworthy, until it was purchased in 1887 by C. B. Grubb, who built a new house further from the road. There is a story telling how Edward Gee, returning from Carrick Races, put his horse at the parapet of Kerry Lodge bridge when confronted by bushrangers. He was thrown, however, breaking his arm and lost his trophies to the highwaymen.

Kerry Lodge Bridge dates at least from 1836.<sup>407</sup> Joshua Higgs the artist delighted to sketch it half a century ago, before it was encumbered with ivy



and blackberries which make it difficult to appreciate the mellow old stonework, even from the vantage point of the creek below. But there is no denying that the bridge has atmosphere, at least for those who will take the trouble to clamber down, as M. S. Sharland did, into the rocky gorge, where you can be almost oblivious of the busy highway up above.

A little beyond the bridge is Greycliff, a fine old house built about 1834 by Britton Jones, who called it Prospect Hill.

Coming round the shoulder of the Magpie Hill as you approach Franklin Village, you will have a momentary glimpse of the White Hills, with Mt. Barrow beyond, across the Camden Valley, as it was known in the early days. In it lies the little village of Relbia, a native name meaning "long way, long time", which probably expresses aboriginal distaste at being sent on an errand there all the way downhill, only to have to climb to the heights again.

The country here is much more clear than it was in 1830, when according to Ross, it was all open forest to the edge of the town. Franklin Village, which at first was called Longmeadows, was named after the governor of that name, just as Young Town appears to have been derived from Sir Henry Fox Young.

At the centre of the village is the little church of St. James', which was opened in April 1845, six months after Bishop Nixon had laid the foundation stone.<sup>408</sup> Messrs. Bartley and Hawkes had collected the money for the building, one of the eleven churches erected through the energy of Archdeacon Davies of Longford. Lads from the nearby home for boys often provided an unexpected treat for visitors, brightening the singing with their clear soprano voices. Many an orphan boy has received a better start in life at this generous home than is accorded many youngsters brought up by their own parents.

The modern child would be alarmed if he were told that Sunday school would last from 9 o'clock till 12, and from 2 till 4—as it used to do here at Franklin Village in 1847. It says something for the zeal of the teachers, and a great deal for the good fortune of the parents who enjoyed a quiet sabbath, that the school was well-attended.

No doubt some of these pupils came from across the road at Mr. W. K. Hawkes' school, now called Franklin House, where young gentlemen were boarded and educated at a cost of £45 a year. Next door to it one Joshua Moore conducted an inn entitled the Rose and Crown, but which he had earlier called the Grazier's Delight.<sup>409</sup> Since the boys at the school took great delight also in the doings of this establishment, Mr. Hawkes had a high brick wall built between the two places. The schoolmaster was an ill-tempered man and often belaboured his charges unmercifully, one lad dying from these ministrations. As a result the school had to be closed, and Hawkes took

up politics instead. His was not the first academy at Longmeadows, for a Mrs. Townson had a school for girls here in 1832.<sup>410</sup> Franklin House was built by Britton Jones in 1838 and now belongs to the National Trust, who restored it in 1960 and opened it to the public.

Quite the best-known hotel at the village was the Sir William Wallace which flourished in the 1840's when it was in the expert hands of Britton Jones.<sup>411</sup> It had belong to Charles Lucas in 1832 under the sign of the Punchbowl, but this gentleman had lost his licence because he harboured assigned servants who came there without passes, a serious offence in the eyes of Governor Arthur. Soon after this Jones gained possession of it and commenced to set that high standard of service which was characteristic of the coaching age. The drover, his horse and stock found equal hospitality there, meals were served cheerfully at inconvenient hours, while on sale days at his yards every facility was offered by the host to transact business. The whole place might be crowded with the most dubious-looking fellows, but always the strictest decorum and orderliness were observed.

But the lure of the goldfields in California drew Britton Jones away from his comfortable inn, and for a year or two he endured the hardships of life in that rugged wilderness on the west coast of America; nor did he have any success in his search for the elusive metal, returning to his home almost bankrupt and broken in health. The Sir William Wallace came into the possession of John Cole and Jones died in 1856 from severe burns. The inn, long known as Tallentyre, was pulled down in 1967.

Two other inns at the village were prominent during the eighteen-sixties, namely the Prince of Wales and the Portland Inn, the latter kept by Thomas Fall who afterwards adorned the Patriot King and the Clarendon at Evandale.

On the chart of this district appears the name of Edward French whose father in the early days held the contract for transporting the military baggage of the regiments stationed in the island. This would include the household goods of those officers whose wives accompanied them to Van Diemen's Land. The wagons, which carried ammunition and explosives, were obliged to camp outside town limits during their journey along the Main Road, in case of fire or accident. These wagons which were covered against the weather, would traverse up to twenty-five miles, moving in trains and pausing every ten miles or so to rest, feed, and water their horses. James French bred these fine draught animals here on his farm and had contracts for carting the first building stone in Launceston.

At the top of Young Town hill still stands the Young Town Inn, which was licensed to John Baker in 1874, and seems to have enjoyed an unsavoury reputation. Baker was keeper at the Sandhill toll-gate for a time.

Two early grants at Young Town were those made to Mrs. Elizabeth Paterson,<sup>412</sup> wife of the first lieutenant-governor in 1808 and to Dr. Thomas



Landale whose life was spared by Brady during the attack on Elphin in 1825, though Dr. Priest was mortally wounded. Landale was one of the founders of racing in Launceston. Mrs. Paterson's grant of two thousand acres was the first to be made in the north of Tasmania, being one of eight made by Paterson during the period when he was in charge of the government after the deposing of Bligh. These grants were confirmed by Macquarie in 1810.

As you reach the concrete highway and cross the boundary of the City of Launceston, you are close to Carr Villa, the general cemetery, the name of which derives from the residence of John Knight that once stood there. Mrs. Knight conducted a fine school for girls there in 1849 on the lines of Ellenthorpe Hall, where for seventeen years she had served under the incomparable Mrs. Clark.



Tamar River  
 POST OFFICE  
 Staffordshire House, Chas.-st.  
**LAUNCESTON**



Wellington-st.  
 All-the-Year-Round Inn

High-street.

BASS HIGHWAY 2

site of Sir William Wallace Inn (Tallentire)  
 St. James' Church

Kings Meadows

Young Town Inn

Franklin House.

Magpie Hill  
 to Relbia.  
 Greycliff

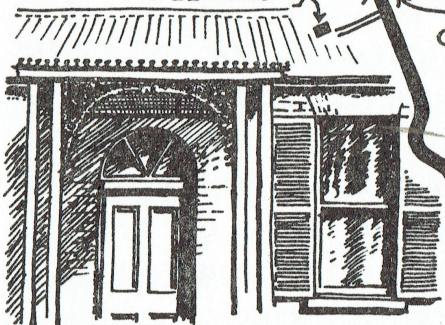
Franklin Village

Strathroy

JINGLERS CREEK  
 Kerry Lodge Bridge. 1836.

Convict Station (ruins)

to Marchington  
 Cocked Hat.



former Woolpack Inn

Breadalbane

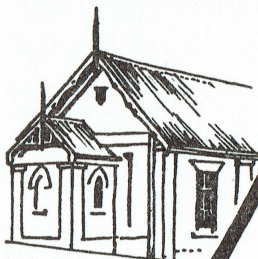
Raeburn

Rathmolyr

Clareville

Clareville Lodge

LAUNCESTON AIRPORT.



Methodist Chapel, Perth.

Convict Station Ruins, Perth

Western Junction  
 Railway Sta. & Water Tower.



Gibbet Hill

Leather Bottle

Perth

Beulah Stone House

Glendessary

River View  
 Water Tower  
 Cambock

to White Hills.

Perth Inn  
 F.G.R. WESTERN LINE (old L'TON. & WESTERN R'LY. 1871)

remnants of Convict Sta.  
 to Native Point

Evandale  
 Clarendon Inn.

Eskleigh Mem. Home (once 'Scone)

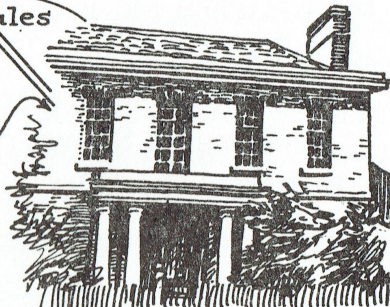
St. Andrews Prince of Wales Inn.

Pleasant Banks.

to Nile, Clarendon and Deddington.



Leighlands Woodhall



Woolmers Lane to Longford

E.R. 68 former inn, Blenheim, Evandale.