



Chapter 21 – Difficult Last Years

(1855 – 1857)

The Maitland Mercury of 13 October 1855⁷⁰⁰ announced the death of William Wallace Brown, son of David Brown on 19 September 1855, *'at the residence of his father at Jerry's Plains, through injuries from fire caused by playing with 'Lucifer' matches. The afflicted parents take this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging the kind attention of so many sympathising friends'*. William was half way through his 6th year. He was buried on 22 September 1855.⁷⁰¹

Two months after the death of William Wallace, on Wednesday, 14 and 28 November 1855, the Maitland Mercury announced again in the 'Deaths' and Family Notice columns:

*'At Jerry's Plains, on the 11th November, **Harriet**, wife of Mr. David Brown, after a lingering illness of eleven months.'*

'...and leaving four children and a large circle of friends to lament her loss,...'

It is understood that Harriet sustained injuries in attempting to rescue her son. She may have sustained burns herself in attempting to rescue her son from the flames engulfing him. Harriet's lingering illness of eleven months may well have had a bearing on her young son, William Wallace, not being supervised, and thus leaving him free to get into the situation that led to his death? Such injuries, and the death of William, and the existing illness may well have all contributed to her demise.

Of interest in this regard is the report by the Jerry's Plains correspondent to the Maitland Mercury some eight years earlier concerning four year old daughter of David's neighbour, Peter Duff. See report of 20 June 1847.

Harriet was only 41 years of age when she passed away. She was buried at Jerry's Plains on 12 November 1855⁷⁰². Harriet's death left David with three young children to care for on his own. Alfred was 6 years old, Robert 5 and Henry 2 months short of his 2nd birthday.

In the same edition of the paper, the newspaper's correspondent in nearby Singleton reported:

THE WEATHER AND THE CROPS

'Ever since Friday morning we have had a succession, night and day, of hot, dry "Brickfield" winds; and it is at present blowing clouds of dust. We are afraid that these winds will

greatly injure the late crop of wheat; the forward wheat we believe to be too far advanced to receive much damage. Reaping will generally commence here next Monday.'

THE NEW DIGGINGS

Great numbers of persons are

constantly passing through this township enroute to the new 'Denison Diggings'. Should they turn out as profitable as anticipated, it will cause a great re-action in trade on this line of road.'

12 November 1855

At this time, David's occupation is recorded as being 'Grazier'; pointing to him still pursuing his squatting activities.⁷⁰³

At this low point in his life, on 24 December 1855, David sold Portion 39, Parish of Maroota 100 acres Cattai Creek property (originally granted to his brother James) to his son, Alexander, for £600.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ Maitland Mercury - Wednesday, 13 October 1855, page 2. C of E Register shows death as 20 September 1855.

⁷⁰¹ Maitland Mercury, 13 October 1855.

⁷⁰² C of E burials register V18551233 43A. Register states her to be 47. Harriet's funeral follows her son's in the church's register. Hers was the last for that year.

⁷⁰³ C of E burial register V18551233 – 4 43A.

⁷⁰⁴ Dept of Lands, Portion 39, Parish of Maroota, Conveyance Book 41 No 199 dated 24 December 1855.



The Maitland Mercury of Wednesday, 20 February 1856, included the following advertisement by David's son-in-law:

'To Let, on terms to be agreed upon, 40 acres of good agricultural LAND, on Great Lodge, cleared and fenced in - three convenient paddocks.

*Apply to Robert Hobden, Jerry's Plains
 1021'*



View of Jerry's Plains - Some three kilometres to the east of the present village. St James' Church of England is at the centre and the Hunter River flats to the right. The village, mostly to the left of the church, appears to be surrounded by fire and enveloped in smoke. Extracted from a watercolour dated 1856 at the Mitchell Library by unknown artist.

The Maitland Mercury included the following advertisements in March and April 1856 editions:

JERRY'S PLAINS

Sales by Auction

Mr. Williams has received instructions from Mr. William Simpson to sell by auction, at the Plough Inn, Jerry's Plains, THURSDAY NEXT, MARCH 13th at Twelve o'clock precisely.

All the Neat HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, Culinary Utensils, &c., of that establishment – being of a very superior description, and well worthy of attention of parties furnishing. Terms cash.⁷⁰⁵

JERRY'S PLAINS

Sales by Auction

Mr. Williams has received instructions from the importer to sell by auction, at the Queen Victoria Inn, Jerry's Plains, on Friday, the 4th of April, to commence at Eleven o'clock,

A superior ASSORTMENT of GOODS, consisting of –DRAPERY, hosery, shirts, trousers, vests, ladies' boots and shoes, blankets, children's dresses, &c, &c.

Terms cash - No reserves.

The auctioneer respectfully requests the attention of the inhabitants of Jerry's Plains to the above sale. The goods are of a superior description, and great bargains will be offered.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁵ Maitland Mercury - Saturday, 8 March 1856, Ad No 1546.

⁷⁰⁶ Maitland Mercury - Wednesday, 1 April 1856, Ad No 1872



The Maitland Mercury included the following advertisement in the Tuesday, 9th September 1856 edition:

<p style="text-align: center;">YOUNG ENGLAND will STAND THIS SEASON at JERRY'S PLAINS</p> <p><i>PEDIGREE: - "YOUNG ENGLAND" was got by the imported horse Young England; his dam was got by imported horse Glenelg; grand-dam by old Clydesdale. "Young England" was bred by William Scott, of Richmond.</i></p> <p><i>"YOUNG ENGLAND" is rising three; stands 16 ½ hands high; colour, rich brown; and is allowed by good judges to be one of the best colts on the Hunter.</i></p> <p><i>All Mares must be removed by the 1st of January, 1857, and all moneys paid.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>WM. ELLIS Jerry's Plains</i></p>

It becomes apparent from this advertisement and others by Inn Keepers: *Patrick Ward and Andrew McKenzie*, that breeding of stud horses had become a useful source of income in the Jerry's Plains area. David himself was reputed to be a breeder of horses.⁷⁰⁷ He was likely to have begun this activity at Cattai some 45 years earlier.

Less than ten months after Harriet's death David married a third time, to widow, Eliza (AKA Liza) Lewis, nee Page aged 36 years. David was now at least 65 years old. The service was officiated at Jerry's Plains on 22 September 1856 by a Presbyterian Minister James White.⁷⁰⁸ The witnesses were Catherine Hynes and Martin Rochford. At the time, Eliza's occupation is given as 'servant' and David's as 'settler'.

Little is known of Eliza Lewis. She was daughter of Henry Page and Hannah Skinner, was born at Chelmsford, Essex, England in 1820. At some point in time Eliza married a Mr Lewis who subsequently passed away. It is likely that Eliza's services had been closely associated with the care of David's three young sons, perhaps as a Nanny. In any case, Eliza gained David's trust in a big way. This and satisfactory rapport with the children may have been enough to encourage David to enter into marriage to ensure her long-term presence.

The Maitland Mercury of Wednesday, 23 September 1856, included the following advertisement that was repeated in many editions over the next several months:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>TO STAND THIS SEASON, at the Horse and Jockey Inn, Jerry's Plains,</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"LITTLE WONDER,"</i></p> <p><i>By his performances upon the Turf, Little Wonder has proved himself one of the best horses out at present day, and he has been pronounced by competent judges to be one of the handsomest, and most compact animals in the colony.</i></p> <p><i>As only a limited number of mares will be taken, early application must be made to the undersigned.</i> <i>TERMS: - £4 4s. Each mare, groom's fee included.</i></p> <p><i>Secure and well watered paddocks, for the accommodation of the mares and every care taken, but no responsibility will be incurred.</i></p> <p><i>Further particulars will appear, as to pedigree, &c, in future advertisements.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>P. WARD</i></p>
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⁷⁰⁷ Singleton Historical Society

⁷⁰⁸ NSW BDM Index, Patrick Plains, 1856, Marriage Registration No 1891.



The Maitland Mercury of Thursday, 16 October 1856, included the following advertisements:

<p style="text-align: center;">Ten Pounds Reward</p> <p>WHEREAS some persons, on the morning of the 12th instant, maliciously tore a PADLOCK from my Slip Rails, Hampton Park, I hereby offer a Reward of Ten Pounds to any person who will give such information as will lead to a conviction of the guilty party.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">WILLIAM ELLIS, Hampton Park, Jerry's Plains</p> <p>October 13, 1856</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Young Glenelg</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>To TRAVEL THIS SEASON from Jerry's Plains to Glennie's Creek, Singleton, and Wylies Flat that well-known splendid colt, "YOUNG GLENELG,"</p> <p>3 years old, 17 ½ hands high; by the imported horse "Glenelg," out of first-rate mare by "Lincoln," the property of Mr McAlpine.</p> <p>TERMS: - £2 15s. For a single Mare; where more than one, £2 10s. Mares sent to Jerry's Plains provided with a good paddock till stinted, of which notice will be given.</p> <p>No responsibility incurred</p> <p>The owner is so certain of his Horse that should any Mare miss, they will be admitted next year without charges.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ANDREW McKENZIE Jerry's Plains,</p> <p>October 14th, 1856</p>

The above advertisement by Andrew McKenzie was repeated in many editions over the next several months. McKenzie had taken over what had been the 'Plough Inn' which had its furnishings auctioned off in March earlier in that year:

<p style="text-align: center;">Jerry's Plains</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p>Days of Sale - Wednesday and Thursday, 22nd and 23rd October, 1856.</p> <p>MR. J. WISDOM has received positive instructions to sell by auction (without reserve), at Mr McKenzie's Inn, Jerry's Plains on the above days, at Eleven o'clock, A Large quantity of MERCHANDISE, the property of a gentleman relinquishing business, consisting of Seasonable Drapery Goods, Mens Clothing, and Haberdashery Groceries and Oilmen's Stores of the best quality. Boots and Shoes, and various property too numerous to advertise. To Settlers, or parties trading to the Northern diggings, this sale offers inducement to purchase on advantageous terms rarely met with.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Terms cash.⁷⁰⁹</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Caution</p> <p>ALL parties are cautioned against TRESSPASSING on any part of those Lands or Paddocks attached to the Horse and Jockey Inn, and leased by me from Mr David Brown, without my permission, or they will be dealt with as the law directs.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">P. WARD, Jerry's Plains 15 November 1856⁷¹⁰</p>

⁷⁰⁹ Maitland Mercury - Thursday, 16 October 1856, Add No 5873.

⁷¹⁰ Maitland Mercury - Saturday, 18 November 1856, Ad No 1856.



David Writes His Will

On 15 December 1856, David made out his Will. David had gone to Sydney especially for the occasion.

He gave particular mention to the children by his second wife 'Harriet': Alfred age 8, Robert 5, and Henry 3; and his grandsons by his eldest child Thomas: David age 20, Thomas Edward 12, and John James 9. His new wife, Eliza, and a George Huntley of Balmain, were nominated as executors of his Will. There were to be considerable benefits bestowed on them for doing so.

At this juncture, David had been married to Eliza eleven weeks. The nature of David's Will, and the timing of his marriage to Eliza Lewis, are indicative of a man who believes he is rapidly running out time. Possibly, he had been subject to a succession of illnesses.

Of note are the witnesses to the will: J.J. Lee of J.J Lee Solicitors, Sydney, and 'Henry J. Brown of Sydney' 'gentleman'.

The day after the will was made, 16 December 1856, matters took inauspicious turn when one of the two the executors appointed, George Huntley,⁷¹¹ died in Maitland.

The Maitland Mercury's Extra Correspondent in nearby Singleton reported this for the first day of 1857:

We have this morning to hail as bright an opening for the New Year as could be seen after the continued rain of the last week, which finished with a complete torrent, from nine last night till about three this morning, giving the last of the old and the first of the new one of the greatest blessings the country can enjoy.

We may complain of bad roads – of our amusements being interfered

with, and of the inconveniences of wet weather – but all of these out weighed by the benefits conferred by our Almighty ruler, who knows and supplies our wants more liberally than we can ask of them.

We commend the year with an indifferent supply of wheat from our last crops. We have not much corn planted, but no doubt exertions will be made for that

crop. In fruit and vegetables we abound, and in nothing have we any right to complain. The river is rising rapidly, but from the cessation of rain need give no alarm, as we may expect it fordable in three or four days. Our races are postponed till Tuesday and Wednesday next, in which we appear to follow the lead of others. best wishes for a happy new year.

*Jan. 1*⁷¹²

David the Younger's Passing

David died on 11 January 1857. Cause of death is given as constipation and inflammation of the intestine over 6 days. William Tristram was the surgeon in attendance.

David had been one of the pioneers of the district, a farmer, grazier, squatter, innkeeper, landowner, and settler.

The registration of death gives David's age at the time as '68'. This adds to the number of declarations made concerning his age. It is consistent to within one year of age he gave when married in 1815.⁷¹³ David's statement to the Maitland Mercury concerning the birth of his twins in April 1850 caused them to write that he: '*came hither before he had attained to his tenth year*'. 'David's age at the time of the first marriage in 1815 was stated to be 28. His age for the Census in 1828 was given as '45'. From the available evidence, it can be said that David's age at time of death was in the vicinity of 65 to 74 years. However, In July 1820, Captain John Piper described David 'as very industrious and deserving young man' - which was consistent David being closer to 28 than 37 years old then, and closer to 65 than 74 years old in January 1857.

He was buried in the Church of England 'Old Wambo Cemetery' at Jerry's Plains. Joseph Cooper was the Minister at the time. William Ellis, a long time neighbours; and Richard Hobden jnr, his son-in-law; were witnesses. The cemetery itself is about the size of a quarter acre suburban house block, and is

⁷¹¹ Listed as Hurley under deaths in the BDM index

⁷¹² Maitland Mercury - Saturday, 3 January 1857.

⁷¹³ Especially if his birthday fell in first half of the year.



fenced off from the private paddock in which it is located - The paddock and cemetery having been originally part of David's grant. For visitors, the hillside location provides a good view of the Hunter River.⁷¹⁴

The informant was David's twenty-five year old son, George.

George was well aware of his mother's maiden-name "McMahon", but had his father in the colony as 60 years (instead of 56 years)



David's grave as seen April 2001

David's tombstone reads:

**"TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF
DAVID BROWN WHO DEPARTED
THIS LIFE 11TH JANUARY 1857 AT
THE AGE OF 68.**

**BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM
THE DEAD, AND BECOME THE
FIRST FRUITS OF THEM THAT
SLEPT. FOR SINCE BY MAN CAME
DEATH, BY MAN CAME ALSO THE
RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.
FOR AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, EVEN
SO IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE
ALIVE.**

1 COR, 15, 20-22."

Within the iron fenced enclosure with David are two other graves. They are marked by head, and foot stones, without inscription. They indicate that an adult and a small child are buried there. My initial thought was that it was Harriet and William buried there.

Given the infant size grave and some Brown family hostility to the "Widow D'Arcy", it may be that it is Elizabeth Mary and the infant Francis who lie there with David? Their graves would have added impetus to David's inclination to donate the site for a church and burial ground. However, hard evidence (official or otherwise) of where or when Elizabeth was buried is difficult to come by. One unofficial source believes she was buried at Whittingham Cemetery, Singleton.

⁷¹⁴ The cemetery is approximately two kilometres outside the village of Jerry's Plains, on the south side of the highway from Maitland. A considerable amount of high grass is likely to be encountered from the walk up to, and in the grounds of the cemetery itself.