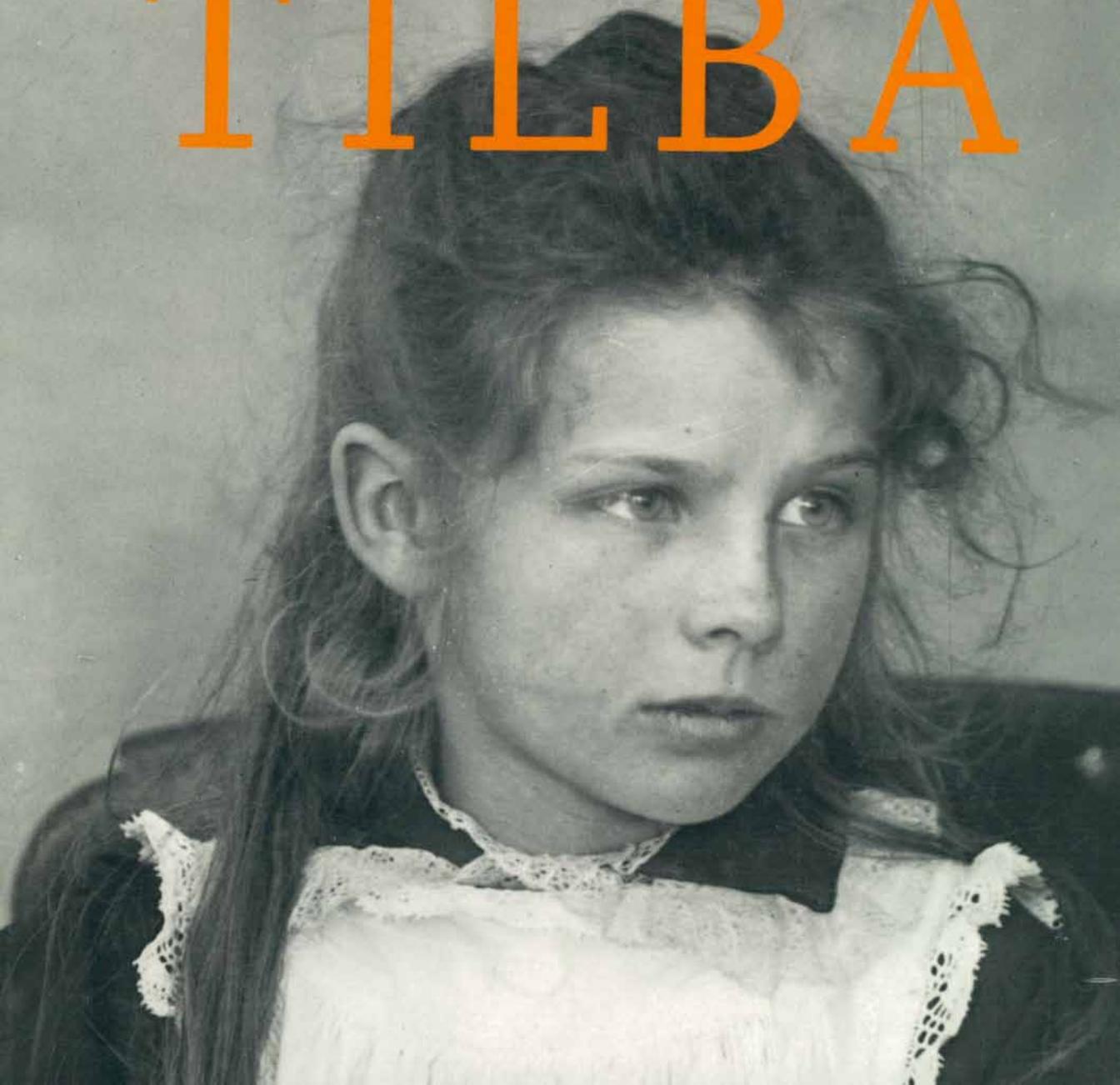


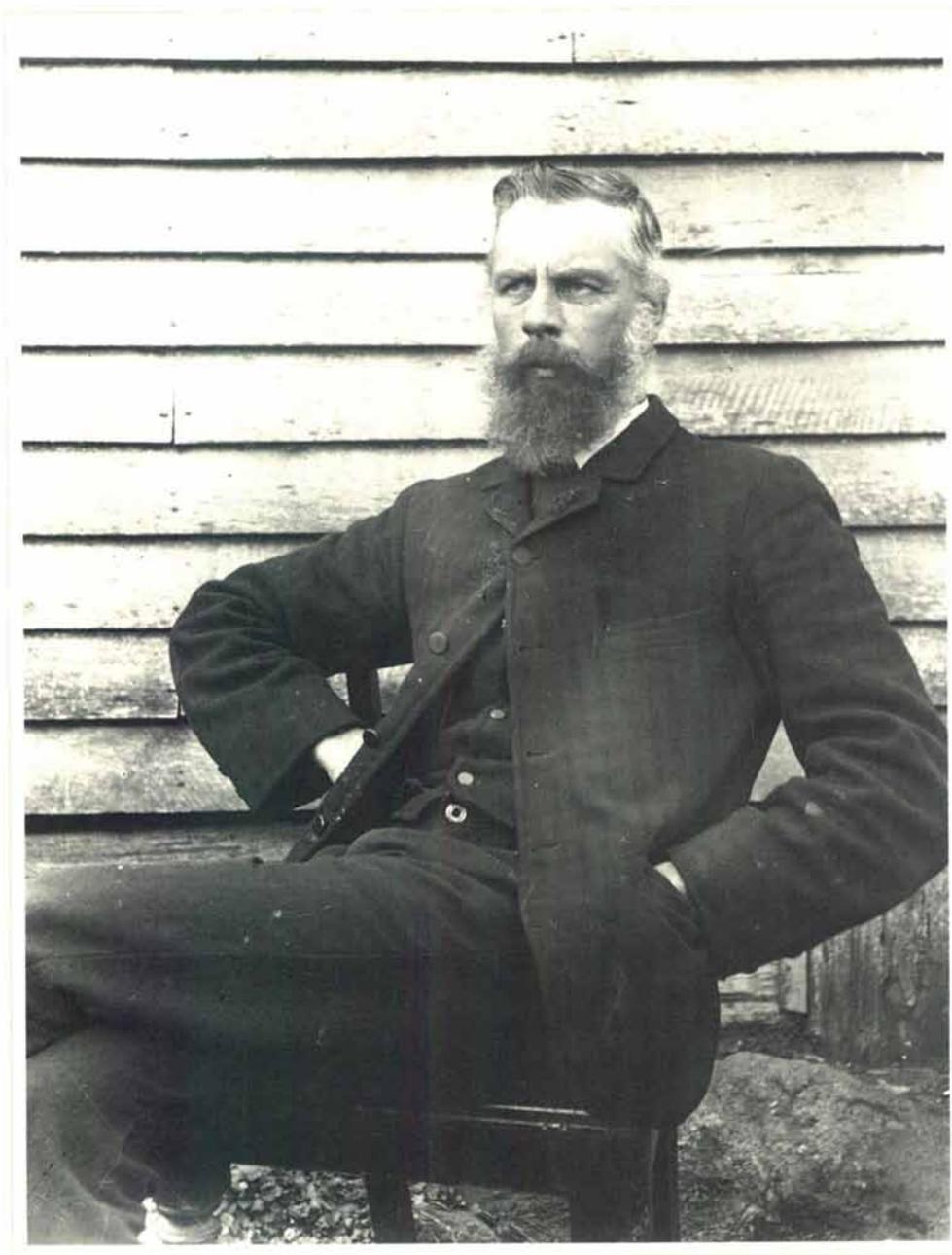
T A K E N * A T

TILBA



T A K E N * A T

TILBA



1 William Henry Corkhill.

T A K E N * A T
T I L B A

*Photographs from the William Henry Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection
National Library of Australia*

With an Introduction by
H.J. Gibbney and N.C. Hoyer

Canberra National Library of Australia 1983

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National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication entry

National Library of Australia.

Taken at Tilba.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0 642 99293 2.

1. Corkhill, William Henry, 1846-1936.
2. National Library of Australia.
3. Photography, Artistic.
4. William Henry Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection (National Library of Australia).
5. Tilba Tilba (N.S.W.) — History — Pictorial works.
 - I. Corkhill, William Henry, 1846-1936. II. Gibbney, H.J. (Herbert James).
 - III. Hoyer, N.C. (Norman Charles). IV. Title.

770'.994

Designed by Adrian Young

Typeset by Smith & Miles Ltd, Sydney

Printed by Macarthur Press (Books) Pty Ltd, Parramatta

Bound by Stanley Owen & Sons, Sydney

Conversions

1 foot 0.3 metre

1 yard 0.9 metre

1 mile 1.6 kilometres

1 acre 0.4 hectare

1 grain 0.65 gram

1 pound (lb) 453.6 grams

£1 \$2

PREFACE

The William Henry Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection

In 1975 Sister Pearl Corkhill, M.M., of Tilba Tilba, New South Wales, presented to the National Library of Australia a collection of about one thousand 6-1/2 x 4-3/4" (16.5 x 12 cm) glass negatives by her father, William Henry Corkhill (1846-1936). The negatives had lain for some years in the home of her brother, Norman Corkhill. Following his death she retrieved them and offered them to the National Library for copying. Later she presented them to the Library.

Many of the negatives had decayed with age and dampness, but staff of the Library's Photographic Unit were able to print 840 of them. There were no records of identification with the collection; however, as prints were made, Sister Corkhill and her friends and neighbours of the Tilba district were able to name many of the people and places in the photographs. Mr N.C. Hoyer of Central Tilba, who had a long-standing interest in the history of the area, lent much assistance throughout the captioning process. As many of the photographs were already eighty years old, it says something for the long lives and memories of Tilba residents that so much could be recalled with certainty.

In 1976 the National Library published an engagement calendar, *Coast and Country*, containing 53 of the photographs. The interest this aroused, and the request for other photographs to be reproduced, led to the planning of the present book. Although it was tempting to repeat favourite images from *Coast and Country*, very few photographs from that calendar have been included here.

Sister Corkhill describes the photographs in her father's collection as the survivors of thousands of negatives taken in a period of about twenty years,

from 1890 to 1910. Apart from a few glimpses of Sydney, the collection concentrates on a small area in and around Tilba. Corkhill's work is very homogeneous. The people who appear and reappear in the photographs are like the members of an extended family. The images chosen for this book express his indifference to landscapes without figures, and his recurring preoccupations with the people of Tilba: who they were, where they lived, what they did, how they amused themselves, and the events that occurred in the life of their community.

With his other occupations and interests, Corkhill must be counted a casual professional of photography. His approach often seems unstudied, as the carelessly draped backdrops to many of the portraits suggest. It is his rapport with his subjects that gives the photographs their special intensity and intimacy, and draws the observer into the small world of their village.

Harrison Bryan
Director-General
National Library of Australia

INTRODUCTION

By H.J. Gibbney and N.C. Hoyer

ABOUT 185 miles south of Sydney on the Princes Highway, the Tilba Tilba district is a land of rich volcanic soils, rugged hills, and grand rocky tors. A technical description of the district, written in 1930 by the geologist Ida Brown, concentrates — as everyone does — on Mount Dromedary, which ‘rises to a height of 2,613 feet above sea-level, and consists entirely of igneous rocks ... Differential erosion of the igneous and metamorphic rocks has produced characteristic topography, gently undulating country about the lower slopes of the mountain ... and relatively deeply dissected country in the slate area ... The drainage has a radial arrangement with respect to the Mountain, which gives rise to many permanent streams ...’¹ European natives believe that the name Tilba is the word for ‘windy’ in the Aboriginal language, repeated for emphasis. The tradition may be true: in Australian terms, the European settlement is very old and the name almost certainly came from the Aborigines.

TAKEN AT TILBA

A document of 1829 refers to the spearing of cattle 'on Captain Raine's station at Mount Dromedary',² but there is reason now to believe that this might have been a loose description of Brogo, 30 miles south of Tilba Tilba. A few years later there was a drought in the lower Shoalhaven valley and settlers there decided to seek greener pastures on the coast. In November 1833, George Curlewis and his two brothers Walter and Septimus, who farmed at Ballalaba, sent their young convict supervisor, John Jauncey, on a prospecting expedition to the area now known as Narira, near Cobargo. Jauncey picked out a block and went back to Ballalaba to report, but other settlers were also interested. When he returned to the coast in February, a party sent from Braidwood by Dr Thomas Braidwood Wilson had jumped his claim. Acting probably on Aboriginal advice, he moved north-east and picked another block just north of Wallaga Lake.

Five years later, on 8 January 1839, Crown Land Commissioner John Lambie called on a periodic tour of inspection from his Cooma base. He found a station which his clerk painstakingly transcribed as 'Tolbedilbo' (probably the real Aboriginal word from which Tilba Tilba is derived). Walter Curlewis supervised three residents who lived in one slab hut and managed two acres of wheat, with 301 cattle and 2 horses spread over 8 square miles. Within a radius of about 20 miles, there were no real roads and the only link with civilisation in Sydney was a number of tiny coastal vessels which plied up and down looking for whatever cargoes might turn up. The most regular of these was the 15-ton cutter *Industry*, sailed out of his base on the Moruya River by Captain Billy Woods.

Writing in old age, Jauncey described how, in 1843, he and Septimus Curlewis had bought the station as partners and had begun dairying and pig-raising.³ In 1846, he said, they had sold out to William Campbell of Gundary station, Moruya. The record of Commissioner Lambie's second visit on 12 April 1847 tells a somewhat different story.⁴ A station called Telba Telba was



2 Edith Honor Corkhill, the photographer's daughter, aged about 12.*

owned by James Campbell and managed by John James. Its five residents lived in three huts; they managed a mere 150 cattle and 16 horses but they were producing 1000 pounds of butter a year.

Until 1848 land south of the Moruya River could only be occupied under the shaky protection of a squatting licence. When the regulations were eventually changed, however, squatters were given the right to buy parts of their squatting runs under special conditions. In the late 1840s, Thomas Forster of Kiora near Moruya had bought the rights of Francis Hunt in a station near the present site of Narooma, and in 1856 he bought the rights over Tilba Tilba too. When the time came for him to exercise his right of 'pre-emptive' purchase, Forster chose to buy the land round Wagonga Inlet that he knew best. This left the Tilba Tilba area open for selection under the free selection legislation of 1861. When finance permitted, he later selected some Tilba Tilba blocks.

Henry Jefferson Bate, the first resident selector, arrived in 1869 and occupied a block called Mountain View, near the site of the village of Tilba Tilba. Of an old Surrey family, he was born at sea in 1816 when his family were going back to England after a first unsuccessful settlement in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Returning in 1825 with his parents, he had since farmed at Dapto, shared the management of a Sydney flour mill, and lost a second farm at Merimbula through unwise investment. His wife Elizabeth Kendall, née Mossop, was a highly intelligent woman and a powerful personality who eventually became the uncrowned queen of the small community. With their extensive family — they had nine children — the couple were able to take full advantage of the selection acts to acquire an extensive property, their two grown-up sons, Samuel and Richard, both taking up extensive holdings. In October 1872, soon after Henry and Elizabeth Bate's arrival, their daughter Matilda described the property to an English cousin:

I like Tilba very much myself but it certainly is very secluded. Bega and Moruya the two next towns are each about 40 miles distant and the roads

very bad. A small vessal [sic] comes to Bermagui about 8 miles from this to take mimosa bark [wattle bark, used in tanneries] and the produce to Sydney ... The road to Bermagui is not so very bad but there is a large lake [Wallaga Lake] to cross ... when Papa came down here first it was thick timber and when we came just a year ago, the house was surrounded with fallen trees ... The cottage ... is of slabs with a shingle roof and a porch in front. It stands on a hill. In front Mama has a pretty little flower garden. A few acres of wheat and oats and Italian Rye Grass at each side and at the back of the house they have planted fruit trees and vegetables. At the foot of the hill at the back runs the creek which with the brush it runs through is the most beautiful object in Tilba ... Nothing is talked of now but minerals ... Papa has gone to Sydney and taken some specimens of stone with him ...⁵

Despite the beauty of the setting and their large holding, the Bates, like their neighbours and indeed most farmers on the south coast, found success elusive. Their soils were good and their rainfall was reasonably reliable, but arable land was very restricted and transport always hazardous. Without easy access to markets, farming remained a constant battle.

The family of William Henry Corkhill, who created the pictures in this book, had been friends in England of Mrs Bate's family, the Mossops. Corkhill was born at Whitehaven, Cumberland, on 14 February 1846 and arrived in Australia with his parents in 1854. Educated at The King's School, Parramatta, he had worked on a North Queensland cattle station and in 1882 was invited to visit the Bates at Tilba Tilba. He liked what he saw, became an employee as cheese-maker on Mountain View and, on 22 December 1883, married Bate's daughter Frances Hawtrey. From then until his death, he was a passionately patriotic citizen of the district and, after taking up photography in 1890, he spent nearly 20 years recording every aspect of the life of his neighbours he could reach.

The Bates were followed into the district by other selectors. At first, most of them came from around Bega but a second wave in 1876 from the strong Methodist community at Kiora near Moruya rounded out the social pattern of a community which changed very little in the next fifty years. About the time of Corkhill's arrival, Henry Bate's son Richard began building houses and shops for lease near the Mountain View homestead. Tilba Tilba, as the village was named, remained the property of the Bate family for many years. It was not until the early 1970s that the first buildings were sold. The village was provided with water and electricity in the 1920s by the imaginative harnessing of a beautiful scrub-lined mountain stream (Tilba Creek), which became the setting for many of Corkhill's pictures. Tilba's small hydro-electric scheme proved both practical and efficient and was superseded by reticulated power only after 1952.

The Rev. William B. Clarke, the clerical geologist, had found traces of gold in streams from Mount Dromedary in 1852, and in 1860 there was a small goldrush to the mountain; it soon fizzled out but the village of Wagonga at the head of Wagonga Inlet, established principally as a supply point for the Gulph goldfield in the mountains to the north, ensured that the Dromedary would not be forgotten. Prospectors kept on working over the mountain, and in 1877 the Cowdroy brothers at last found the reef about 500 yards from the summit and just at the foot of the last and steepest rise. The terrain was too difficult and the prospects were too limited to attract a major goldrush, but there was, nevertheless, a small boom in mining which lasted until 1906. Joe Latimer and Horrex Read, who had taken up their selections soon after Bate, tried their hand at mining also. Their lease, pegged in 1878 near Cowdroy's claim, became the Mount Dromedary Proprietary Gold Mining Co. Ltd and proved to be the biggest mine on the field. In 1899, it employed 50 men to produce 42,522 grains of gold. Tilba Tilba, which had supported an unofficial post-office since 1873, soon boasted also a hotel, a temperance hall, two general stores, a

milliner, a blacksmith, two butchers, a coachbuilder and teamster, and six or seven houses.

According to local legend, Tilba Tilba established the first co-operative cheese factory in New South Wales. To prove this would be difficult, but there is no doubt that the establishment in 1891 of the ABC Co-operative Cheese Society Ltd was a progressive piece of pioneering. The society started making cheese in September of that year on Richard Bate's property beside the Punkally road about a mile north of the village. In 1895, with the Mount Dromedary goldfield thriving and supporting some 400 people, Richard Bate's brother Samuel advertised 40 allotments for sale in a private town on his property. The land was next to the cheese factory near the junction of the Punkally road and the Wagonga Heads road (now the Princes Highway). On 23 April, eleven blocks were sold at auction and nine privately at an average price of £35.

Inevitably, Samuel's new village, named Central Tilba, was seen as competing with his brother's Tilba Tilba and the competition became obvious in the struggle for postal facilities. A postal receiving office was opened at Central Tilba in April 1895. Residents of Tilba Tilba complained bitterly that it should have been entitled North Tilba. In December, Tilba Tilba secured the elevation of its post-office to full official status and Central Tilba at once demanded the same recognition. The demand was not agreed to until 1897 but when it was finally accepted, the end was in sight for Tilba Tilba. In April 1906, its post-office once more became unofficial. Others were amused by the rivalry, and in January 1899 the *Moruya Examiner* described it as 'slightly ridiculous'. Only the income from goldmining justified the extravagant commercial development in two villages; by 1906, Central Tilba had a School of Arts with a well-stocked public library, a hotel, two butchers, a general store, nine other business houses, a post-office, a court-house, a police station and a doctor. When the gold vanished after 1906, Tilba Tilba began to decline rapidly, but Central Tilba was strong enough to survive.



3 Mrs W.H. Corkhill at her home, Marengo.*

Although it could hardly be called a regional centre, Tilba Tilba was surrounded by a number of other settlements with which it had much in common; Corkhill sometimes photographed them. Bermagui, 10 miles south, had been the seaport for Tilba Tilba since the 1840s and remained the only outlet until the development in the 1890s of Narooma (or Noorooma) 10 miles north. The slightly larger township of Cobargo, 13 miles south, probably served occasionally for better shopping or banking facilities and social visits. The two tiny agricultural hamlets of Corunna, 5 miles north, and Dignam's Creek, 5 miles west, and the mining village of Wagonga, later called Punkalla, 5 miles north-west, were merely neighbours.

As early as 1876 a school called Tilba Tilba had been built at Hurricane Hill, 3 miles north of the village. A new school called Noorooma was built 2 miles north in 1879. The name Noorooma was transferred on 19 March 1899 to a school previously known as Wagonga Heads on the townsite of Narooma, and the school which had been called Noorooma took the name Tilba Tilba. In 1900, it was moved to a new building on the present site between the two villages. About 100 children were taught there in 1904. (In the early 1980s, upwards of 40 children were enrolled at the Tilba Tilba School.)

Unlike Moruya, which was rent from its foundation by conflict between English and Irish, Protestant and Catholic, Tilba Tilba was always a very coherent society. The respectable, middle-class English and Anglican Bates were quickly followed by others of the same stamp: the Reads, the Latimers, the Seccombes, the Hapgoods and others. Most of these lived as extended families and intermarried freely. They were conventionally religious people but saw little of the Church at first. Religious services were usually performed by lay readers in a Mountain View barn provided by Bate, who courteously made it available also to other denominations when required. When Holy Trinity Anglican Church was built in 1883 on Mountain View land, Corkhill was a prime mover; it was replaced in 1896 by the present church.

The Methodist community was launched in 1876 by the arrival from Kiora, near Moruya, of the Bates (not related to the Mountain View family), the Crapps, the Boxsells and the Neguses. Settled initially at Corunna, they gradually filtered into Tilba Tilba and also relied at first on lay readers and itinerant ministers. Strengthened by the mining influx, they were able to build in 1907. There has never been any significant Catholic population.

Because of their coherence, the villages developed a rich and successful social life. The Agricultural Society staged its inaugural two-day annual show in 1908. It was abandoned somewhere between the wars, but the October Methodist Church fête has some claims to be considered its descendant. A dramatic society, of which Corkhill was a leading member, flourished until the 1920s, and a good brass band was available in 1896-1914 to enliven social functions. Cricket, football, rifle shooting and tennis all had enthusiastic followings; indeed for forty years, until the 1920s, the football team was frequently the premier team of the south coast. By 1900 the population of Tilba Tilba, Central Tilba and district numbered about 1200.

As a long-standing local correspondent for the Sydney papers and the editor in 1898-1904 of the *Tilba Tilba Times*, owned by his brother-in-law Samuel, Corkhill was the driving force in the 1890s of a Progress Association which was the community's nearest approach to local government. Its most notable successes were the replacement of the wharf at Wagonga Heads, destroyed by a storm, the erection of the bridge over Wallaga Lake, opened in 1894, and the extension of the Bermagui wharf in 1901.

Farming practices in the district were always up to date. As early as 1897, J.P. Seccombe, another son-in-law of Henry Jefferson Bate, introduced paspalum pastures on his farm from contacts in the north and thus led the south coast to a solution of its perennial problem of summer pasture failure. His innovation also facilitated fodder conservation, and by 1921 the district had more silos per farm than any other district in the State. The co-operative cheese factory

helped, too, to enhance the sense of community. The daily meeting of farmers delivering their milk provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of pride in their cheese, which secured better prices in Sydney and London than any other New South Wales cheese for almost seventy years. The magnificent red, white and roan dairy shorthorn cattle which produced the cheese in Corkhill's day have since been twice replaced. The jerseys, their successors, were recently replaced by black and white friesians.

There is a legend that most of the original Aboriginal population of the district was lost at sea early in the nineteenth century when a southerly buster overwhelmed a canoe expedition to Montague Island. Whether or not this is true, most of the present Aboriginal families are known to have migrated from elsewhere. Many of them settled near Wallaga Lake, probably because it had been a sacred place of the lost people, and their children attended district schools. Urged by Bate, the Government established an Aboriginal school at Wallaga Lake in 1887, and in 1896, the area was gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve. Aboriginal men were usually employed as farm labourers and the women as domestic servants. The older families whom most Europeans knew, such as Haddigaddy, Piety, Penrith, Cruse, Davis and Thomas, were widely respected. William Thomas, who came from the Monaro, was the capable manager for many years of a dairy on Mountain View. Two of his sons worked for years for the Department of Main Roads, while another, Gubboo Ted Thomas, has achieved some prominence as a community leader in the recent resurgence of Aboriginal society. Corkhill made pictures of the families of Thomas and of Percy Davis, teamster, ploughing contractor and the last to speak the Djurga language of Moruya. His most comprehensive record of the Aboriginal community, however, is his series on the funeral of Narelle, wife of 'King' Merriman. The death of this last of the old tribal leaders led to a unique gathering of most of the Aboriginal people in the district.

A small group of Chinese, originally from the Gulph goldfield at Nerrigundah,

settled in the district during the 1870s. They mined on the Dromedary and, when mining was temporarily down, they took clearing contracts in gangs. One or two also did a little fishing and sold their catches around the farms.

Henry Jefferson Bate died in November 1892 but his wife survived until July 1910. She had seen the best of the district and much of its future was stagnation. The Tilba Tilba community sent what was probably more than its share of volunteers to World War I, but unlike Moruya and many other Australian towns, preserved its patriotic unity throughout. It was unable, however, to resist the slow general collapse of rural life which originated in the ferment of change after the war. The population was ageing and many of the young who left, never returned. The creation of the Princes Highway in 1922 and the introduction of motor transport removed some of the problems which had beset farmers from the beginning of settlement, but farmers who were growing old were less able to profit by the change.

The people grew older, the buildings grew older and Corkhill grew older. He was already an old man when he abandoned photography about 1910, but he lived on for nearly thirty years and died on 22 September 1936. His town changed little until, with the post-war tourist traffic, the new concept of a national heritage suddenly burst upon it. Only about a third of the farms were now engaged in dairy production. Some ran beef cattle, some had been subdivided into hobby farms and one even farmed deer commercially, but there were many new houses on the farms and the total population was increasing. In the early 1980s, the population of the Tilba, Corunna, Wallaga Lake district was estimated at from 400 to 500 inhabitants. The economic life of Central Tilba itself revolved more and more around tourism, especially following the closure of the cheese factory in March 1981. Electric power had been introduced in 1952 and town water in 1970, but these were superficial changes; there were no obvious physical changes at all for sixty years. After 1975, a fire shed and an amenities block were built and two houses disap-

peared, but otherwise Tilba remained very much as Corkhill pictured it. This extraordinary stability was recognised in 1974 when the National Trust decided to classify the whole village, signifying that in the Trust's view, the preservation of both the natural and man-made landscape of Tilba was essential to Australia's heritage. Justifying its decision the Trust wrote:

The village derives its main significance, not so much from the quality of its architecture which, with the exception of one building, is not impressive, but from the unique relationship between its clearly defined, tightly clustered urban form and the dominating, almost overwhelming scale of the surrounding landscape . . . The village itself, because of its short, rapid growth, is homogeneous and shows little evidence of change apart from gradual deterioration over the years . . .⁶

Although most of the people photographed by Corkhill are long dead — the sole survivor into the 1980s was his daughter Sister Pearl Corkhill, born in 1887 — the landscape and the village remain and, with proper care, can be preserved for a long time to come as a national memorial to a disappearing way of life.

Notes

1 Ida A. Brown, 'The Geology of the South Coast of New South Wales', *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* for 1930, vol.LV, p.638.

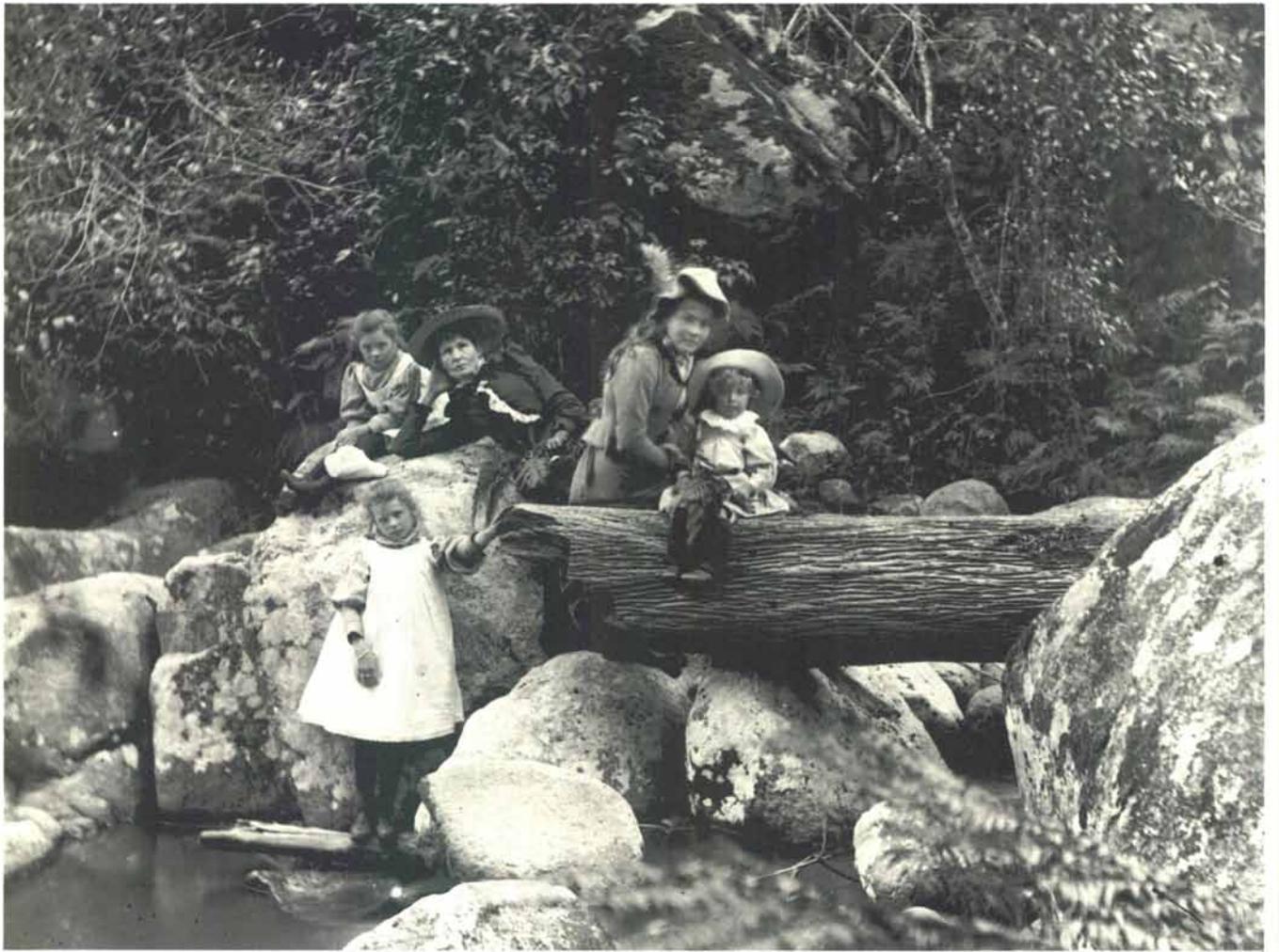
2 Letter from Frances Flanagan to the Colonial Secretary, Archives Office of New South Wales ref: 2/8020.4.

3 W.A. Bayley, 'Moruya Historical Notes', National Library of Australia MS 3031 (Xerox typescript, original in the Mitchell Library, Sydney).

4 Itineraries of Crown Lands Commissioners, Archives Office of New South Wales ref: x815.

5 Ellen J. Sides (ed), *The Letters of Elizabeth Kendall Bate*, Sydney (The Editor), 1967, p.51.

6 National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), *Listing Proposal for Central Tilba* of 18 January 1974.

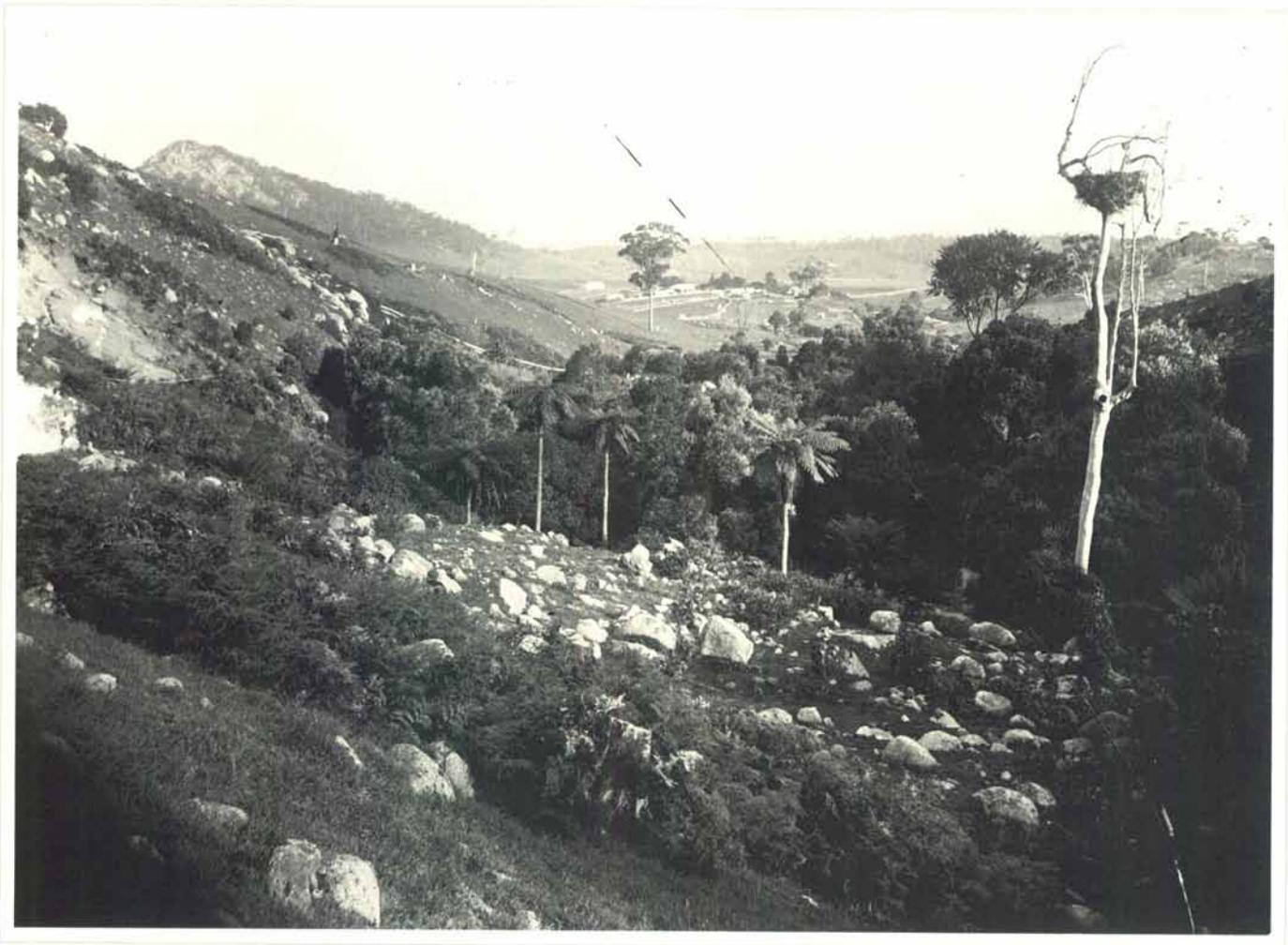


Further information about photographs
whose captions are marked by an asterisk
is contained in 'Notes on the Plates'
at the end of the book.

4 Mrs W.H. Corkhill, Maude Bate and Mrs Corkhill's children, Tilba Tilba Creek, Mount Dromedary.*



5 Norman Corkhill (1890-1975).



6 At Tilba Tilba Creek, looking east to the Bate property Mountain View, about 1895.*



7 Bate Street, Central Tilba, about 1908.



8 Central Tilba about 1897.



9 The Palace Hotel, Central Tilba, about 1900.*



10 Looking down Marshmead valley past the Tilba Tilba school from Bate Street, Central Tilba, about 1902.*



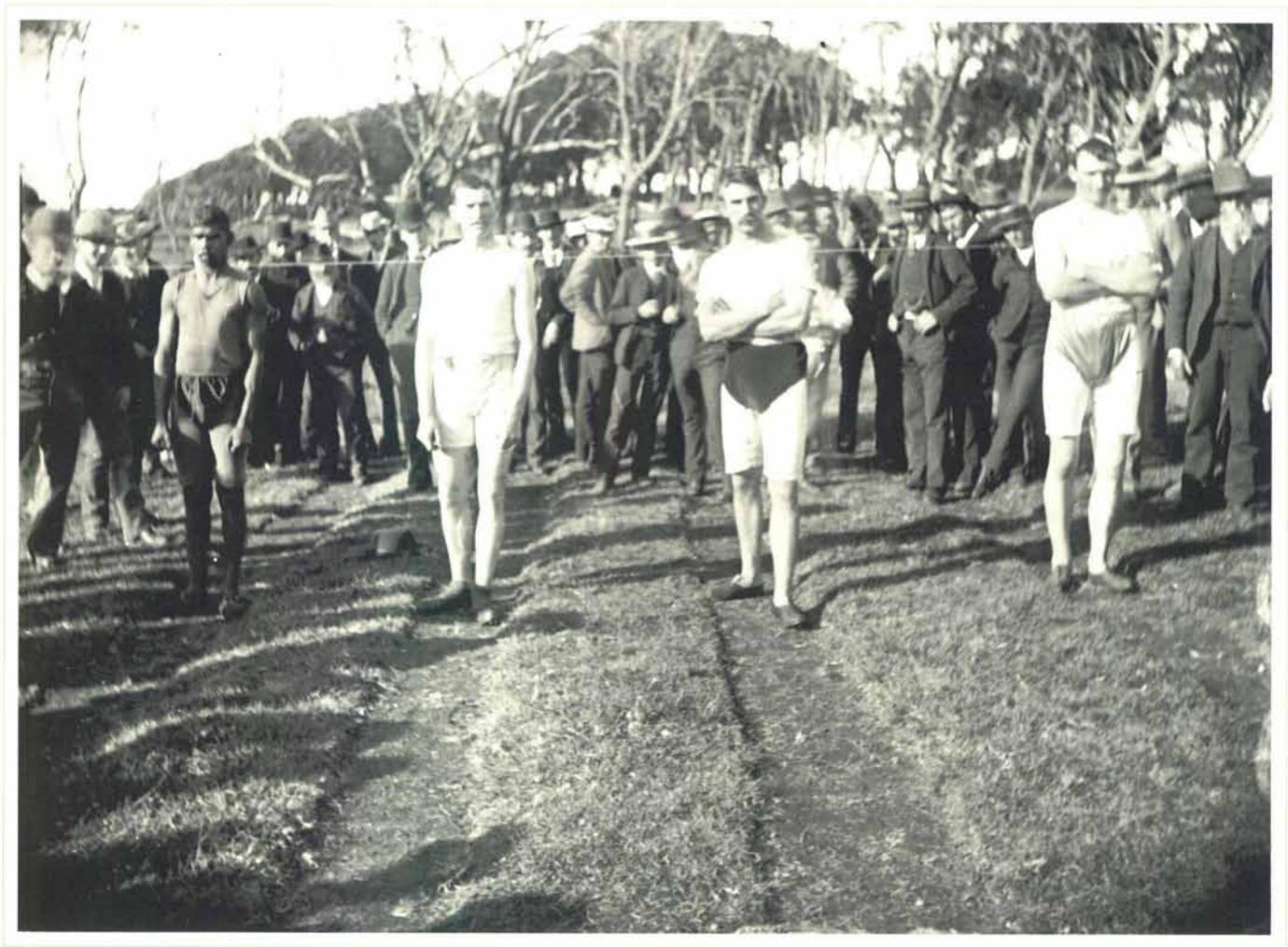
11 Tilba Tilba tradesmen.*



12 Tilba District Agricultural Show on a wet day, about 1908.



13 Pavilion, Tilba District Agricultural Show.*



14 Starters in a foot race, Corunna.



15 Members of the staff of the ABC Co-operative Cheese Society Ltd.*



16 Tilba Tilba Ladies Cricket Team about 1905.*



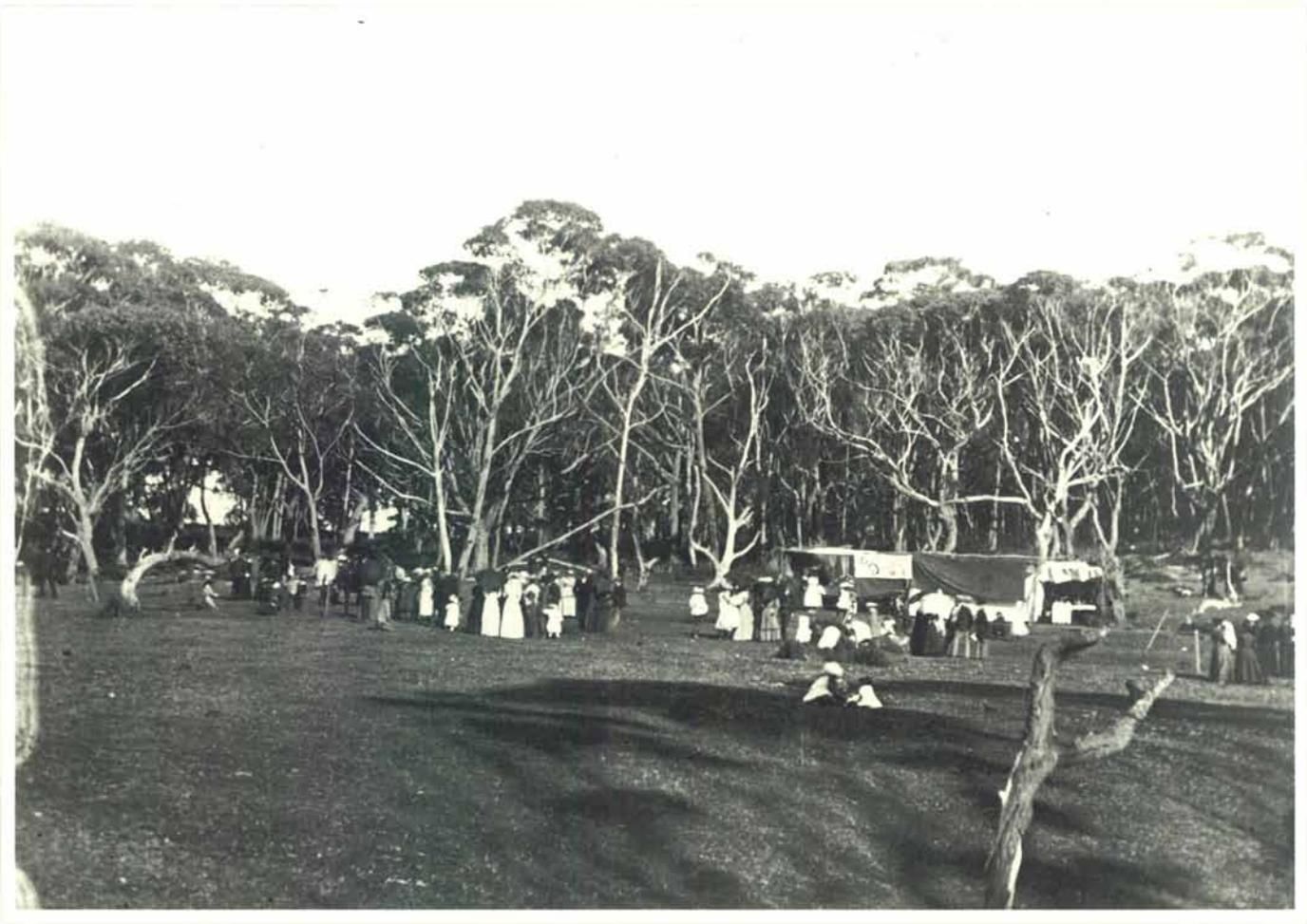
17 Tennis party at Henry John (H.J.) Bate's house, Mountain View.*



18 Bicycle club, Corunna.



19 Clem Walter and Arthur Flower at Mountain Valley, Tilba Tilba, about 1907.



20 Sports day picnic.*



21 Picnic at Sherringham.*



22 Unknown.



23 David Gilpin, the Couria Creek schoolteacher.



24 Jack Hawkins, a Tilba Tilba dairy-farmer. He worked for Maxwell and Starkey.



25 Unknown.



26 Unknown.



27 Queenie Poole. She married William Thompson.



28 A Ferguson girl.



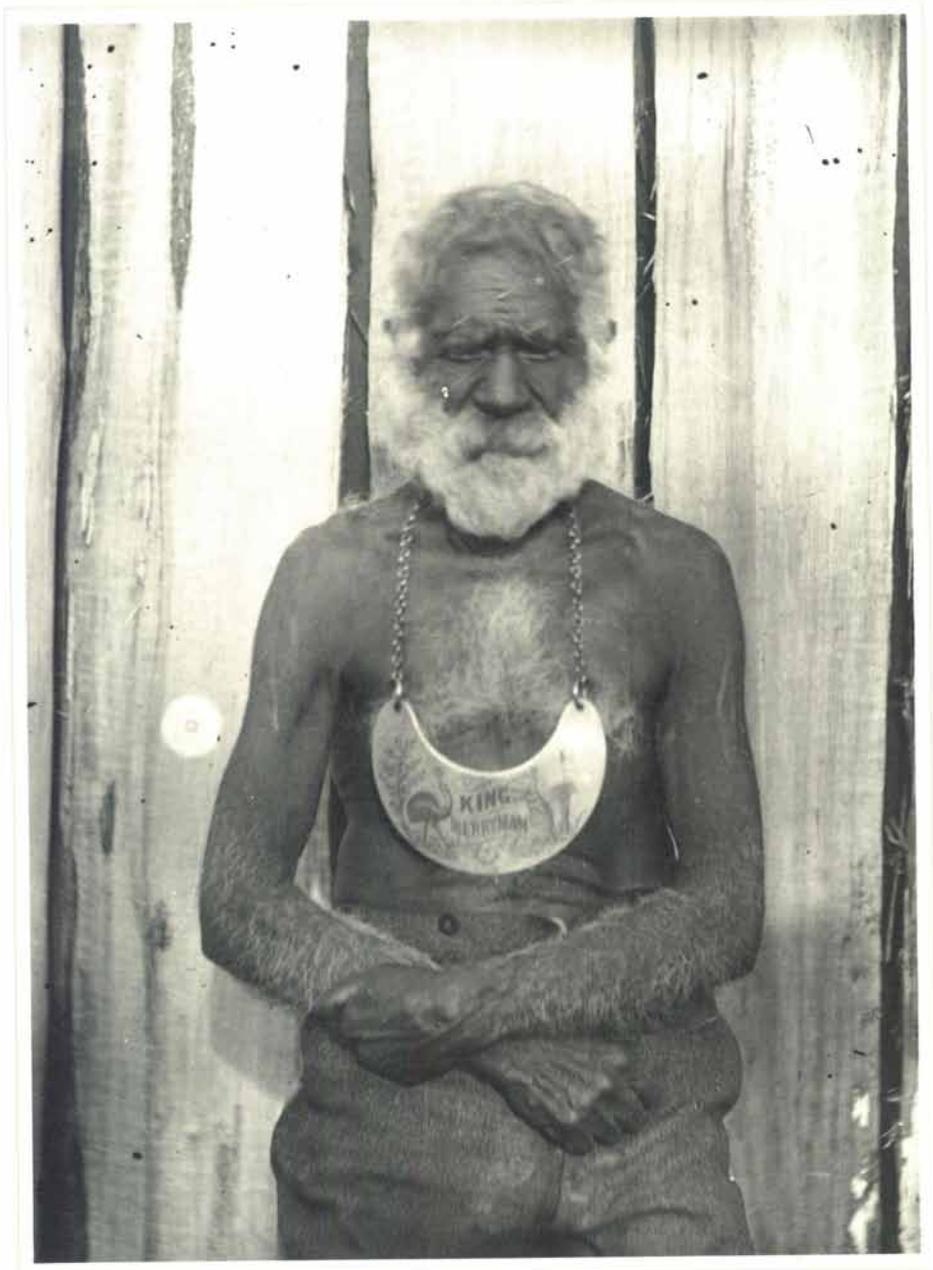
29 Alex Livingstone, manager of the ABC Co-operative Cheese Society Ltd, Central Tilba.
He was considered one of the best cheese-makers in New South Wales.



30 Unknown.



31 Mrs Catherine Maxwell, of Morangi, later known as Lustleigh Park.*



32 'King' Merriman of the Wallaga Lake tribe.



33 Unknown.



34 Beatrice Trewenick with her pony.



35 Washing day at W.H. Corkhill's home, Marengo. Gertrude McKern and Maude Bate.



36 The wedding of Fred Charlewood and Sarah Poole.



37 Unknown.





39 Miner's hut, Mount Dromedary.





41 Mr and Mrs Henry John (H.J.) Bate (centre) on the veranda of their home on the flat at Tilba Tilba.*







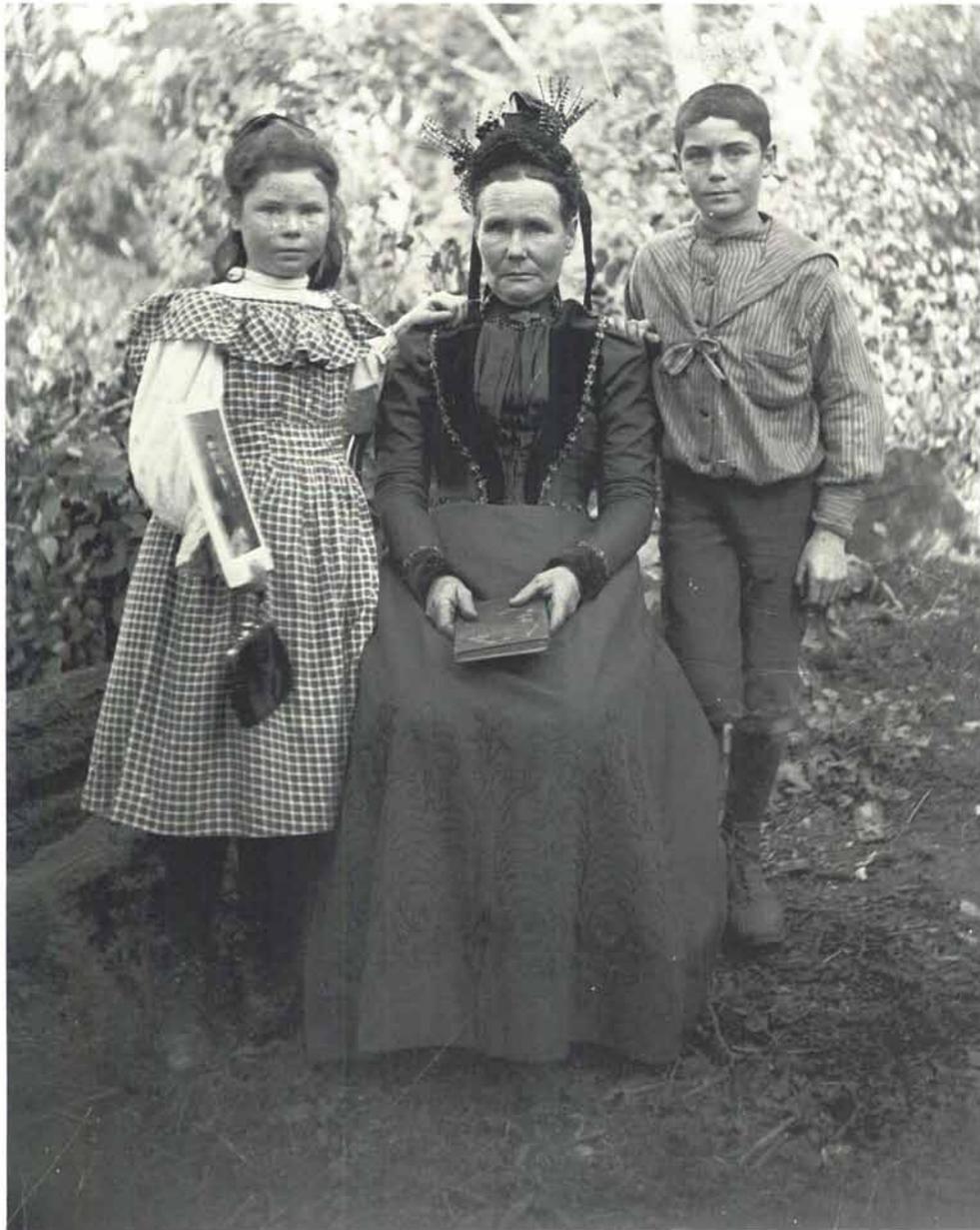
44 Mr and Mrs W.E. Seccombe and their children of Morangi.*



45 Starkeys and Maxwells in the garden of Lustleigh Park (formerly Morangi).*



46 Four generations of the Bate family.*



47 A widow and her children, one holding her father's photograph(?).



48 The Simms family of Tilba Tilba.*



49 Unknown.



50 Children and their teacher, Corunna.



51 Stan Flower as a racegoer.



52. Tilba Tilba Dramatic Society players.*



53 Mrs Henry John (H.J.) Bate and Annie Hopkins in stage or fancy dress.



54 Group on Mount Dromedary road.*



55 The same group with a horsewoman.*



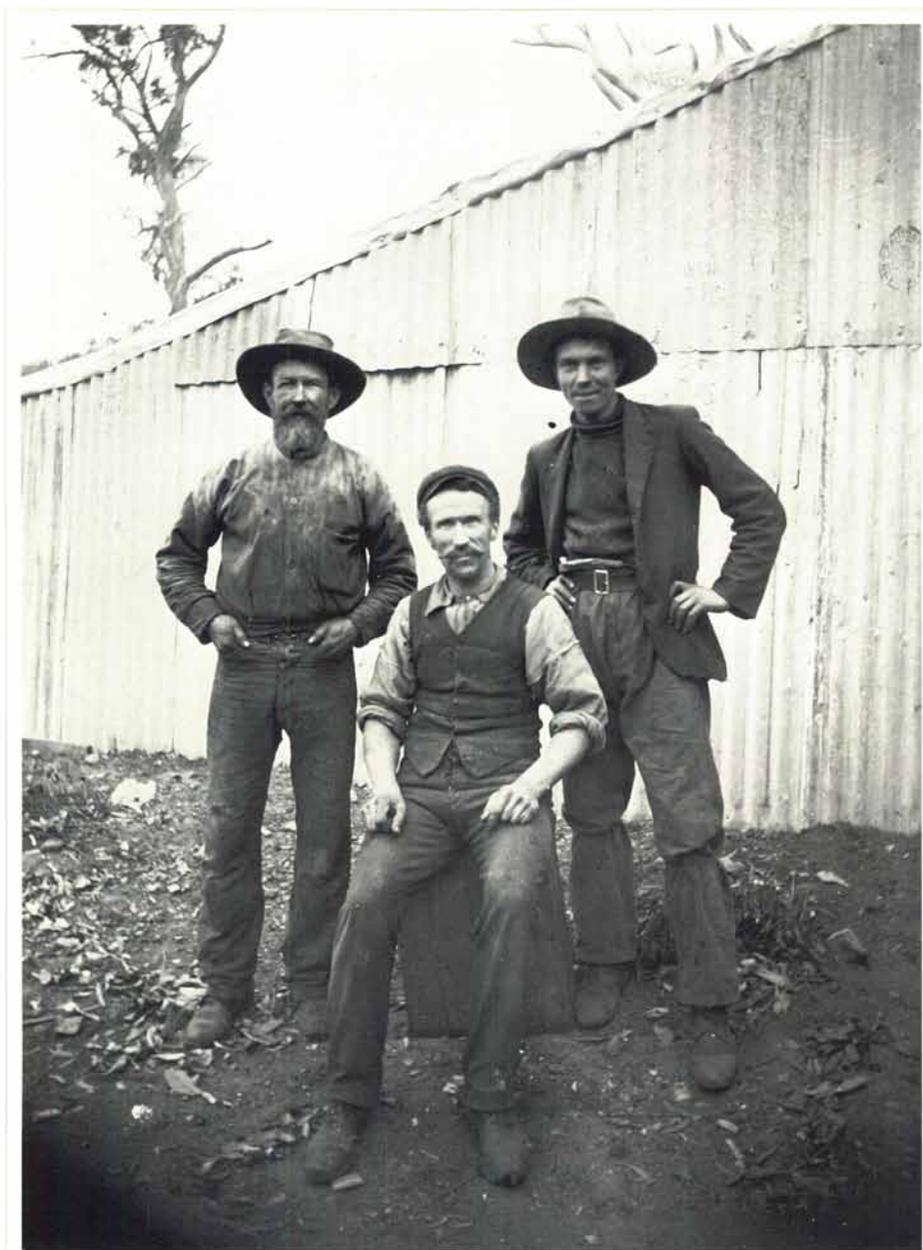
56 Tilba footballers about 1907.*



57 Tilba cricket team about 1902.*



58 Bandsmen — but apparently not of the Tilba band. These may be visitors for a contest.



59 Unknown.



60 Louis Poole driving a spring cart to the ABC cheese factory. Three families of Pooles held neighbouring properties.



61 The first farm dam in the Tilba district, built at Henkley, Central Tilba, about 1902.*



62 Building the Cora Lynne in what became the quarry at Narooma, about 1902.



63 Workshop of Sam Sinclair (centre), blacksmith and wheelwright of Bermagui, about 1908.*



64 Wreck of the Kameruka on Pedro Reef, near Moruya Heads, 17 October 1897.



65 The Clyde Sawmilling Co. steamer Coomonderry in the Narooma River.



66 William Braithwaite, a master-bricklayer, beside a new silo.
Much of his work was still standing in good condition in the 1980s.



67 Water wheels to drive the battery of the Enterprise mine, Mount Dromedary.*



68 A goldmine of the Narooma district.



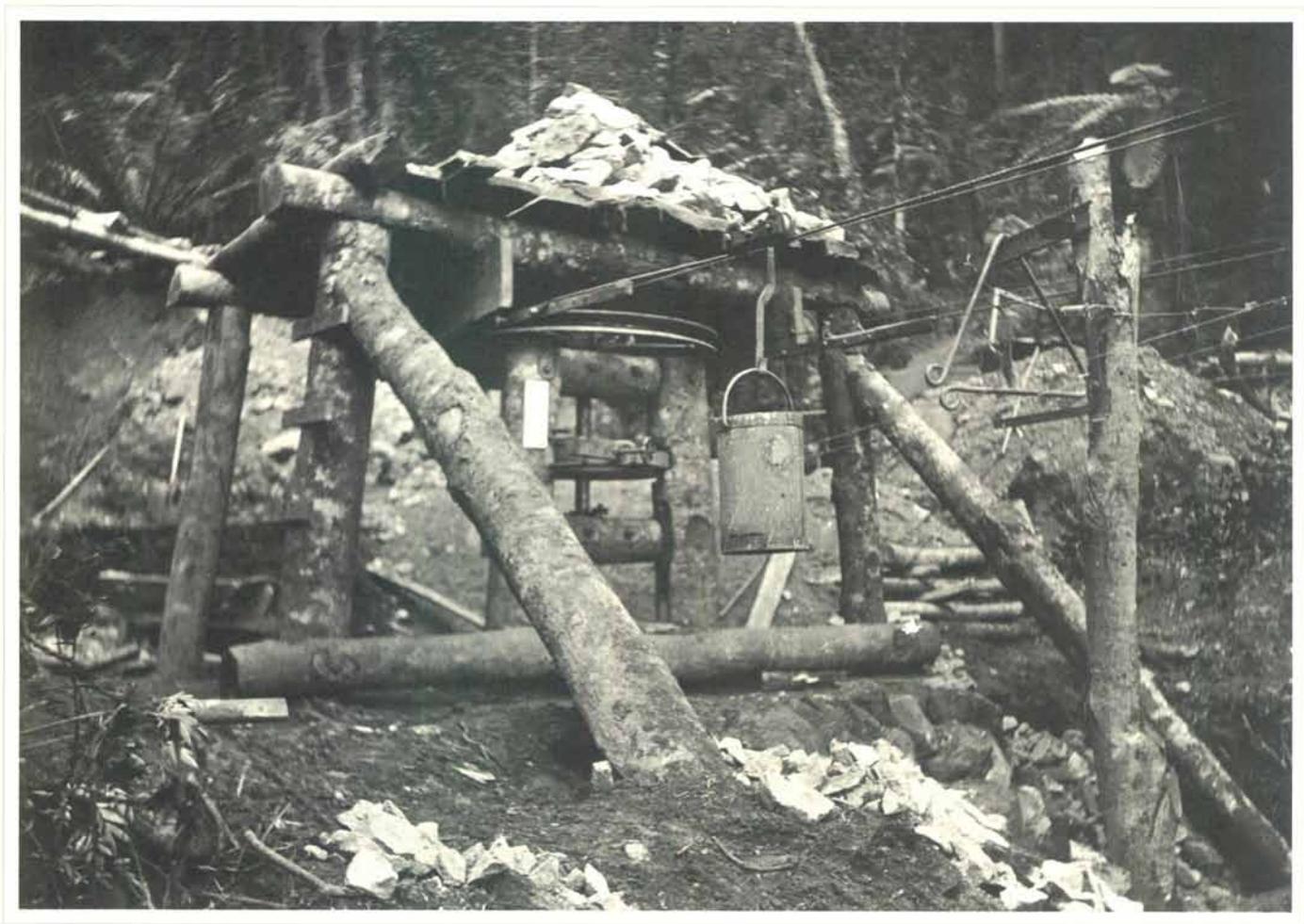
69 Crib time at No. 6 tunnel, Mount Dromedary Gold Mining Co. This mine was owned by a company based in Sydney.



70 Gold sluicing up Tilba Creek about 1898.



71 Mount Dromedary Gold Mining Co. battery, with mine manager's house beyond.*



72 Mine-head flying fox and bucket, Mount Dromedary Gold Mining Co.



73 Mount Dromedary Gold Mining Co. battery (see also Plate 71). Mrs W.H. Corkhill is thought to be the woman in this photograph.



74 Miners, Mount Dromedary. The man in the centre is Harry Greatrex.



75 Charlie Mercer and Oliver Landsdowne, delivery boys.*



76 Opening the Wallaga Lake bridge, April 1894.



77 Wallaga Lake in flood. On the bridge, left, is Norman Corkhill, held by his mother.

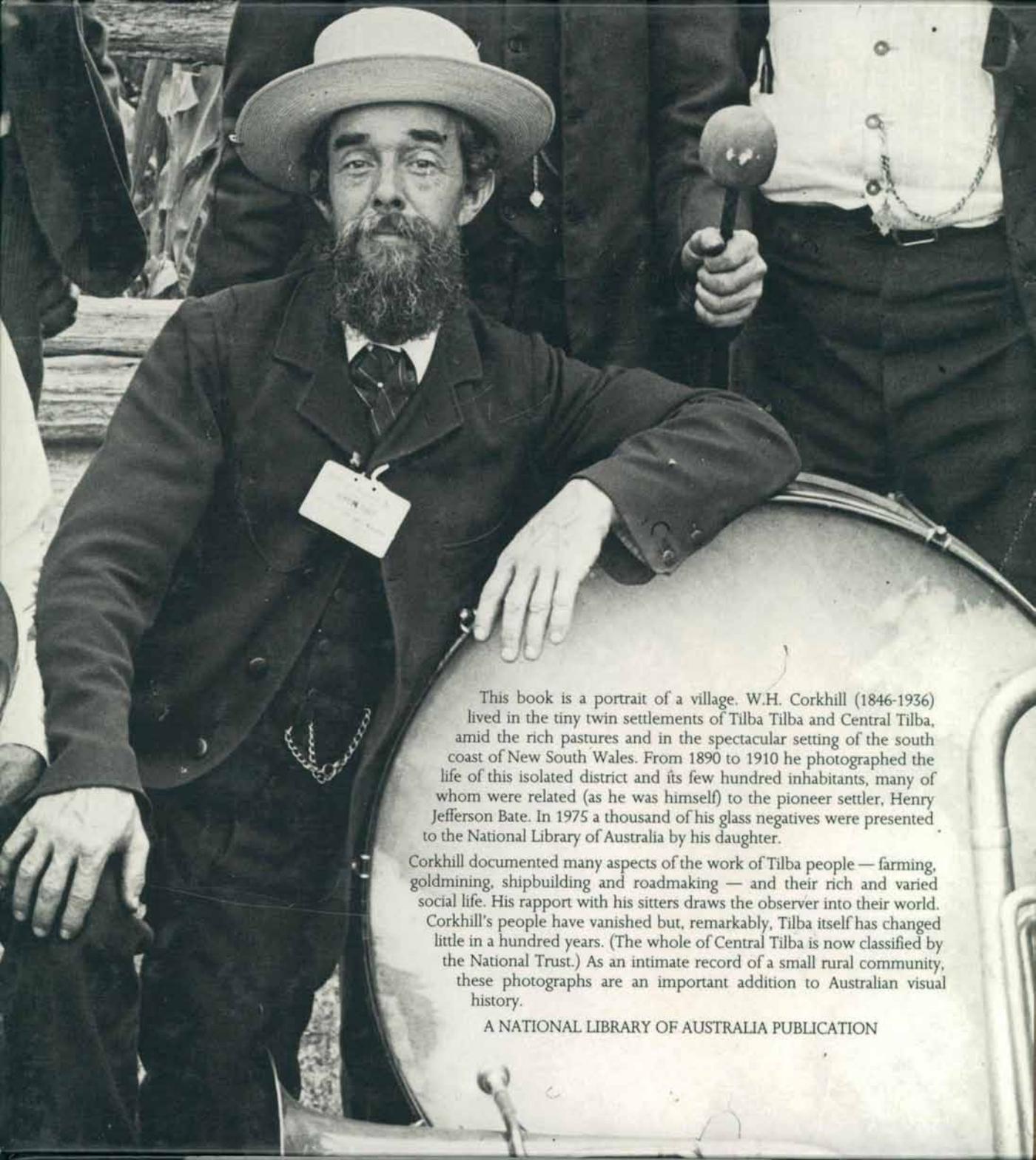


78 Funeral of 'Queen' Narelle of the Wallaga Lake tribe, the wife of Merriman.

Notes on the plates

- 2 Cover photograph: Edith Corkhill married George Parkins and had one son, Arthur. She died on 21 December 1961 aged 75.
- 3 Mrs Corkhill was born Frances Hawtrey Bate. She died on 23 November 1953 aged 93. Marengo was built about 1881 and was still standing a century later.
- 4 Back: Pearl Corkhill, Mrs W.H. Corkhill, Maude Bate, Norman Corkhill.
Foreground: Edith Corkhill.
Maude Bate married Lionel Hurley, Commonwealth Director of Migration and Settlement (1920-7).
- 6 The area in the foreground had reverted to bushland by the 1970s. The pipeline for the Mountain View water-supply is just discernible left. Five generations of the Bate family have owned Mountain View between 1869 and 1980s: Henry Jefferson, Richard Mossop, Henry John, Richard Clement and Richard Mossop.
- 9 The Palace Hotel is thought to have been built about 1895 as a 'coffee palace'. At the time of this photograph its proprietor was William Priddle. About 1946 the building became the Dromedary Hotel.
- 10 Marshmead was owned by Samuel Walter Bate, eldest son of Henry Jefferson Bate.
- 11 George Parkhill (butcher), _____, Steve Knapp (saddler) and Otto May (storekeeper).
- 13 The man in the centre is identified as Joe Latimer. The show was a two-day event.
- 15 Back: William Livingstone, _____.
Front: Russell Boxsell, Dave McGregor.
- 16 Back: William Rumph, H.J. Bate, Elsie Hobbs, _____, ? Constable, Pearl Corkhill (captain), _____, ? Constable, Jacob Shottin, Otto May.
Front: Elsie Mead, Elsie Russell, Edith Corkhill, Daisy Mead.
- 17 Back: Clem Walter, Mrs Thomas Flower (born Maria Murphy), Elsie Hobbs, Reg Hapgood, Clem Bate.
Centre: Jack Flower, Edith Corkhill, Arthur Flower.
Front: Ted Boxsell, Mrs William Rumph, Norman Bate, Elsie Mead (the second Mrs H.J. Bate), Florence Mabel Stephens (Mrs Stan Flower), Ossie Harding.
- 20 Sports day picnic on the Haxted sandy flat on the southern side of the mouth of Tilba Tilba Lake. 'Haxted' was owned by Horrex ('Honk') Read. This was part of the area of several hundred acres known to the old Aborigines as Tilba Tilba. One of the tents in the picture bears the sign, 'A good dinner within'.
- 21 Sherringham, the Hoyer family property, about 1897. Left to right: Mrs John Bate (Edith Dawson), Lizzie Forster (Mrs Walter Boxsell), Pearl Corkhill, Willie Roberts, ? Nott, Alice Bate, Agnes Roberts, John Forster, Maude Bate, Hope Bate, Charlie Hobbs, John Palmer Seccombe, Oliver Reece, unknown woman

- with baby, Edith Corkhill, Miss Scheekel, Nell Seccombe, Miss Mandell, Norman Corkhill, Mrs W.H. Corkhill.
- 31 Catherine Maxwell died on 9 September 1907 aged 84.
- 32 Merriman was the last of the Aboriginal 'kings' of the Wallaga Lake tribe. His wife was 'Queen' Narelle. Although the name is spelt 'Merryman' on the plate he is wearing, 'Merriman' has been the accepted spelling for many years.
- 41 Lily Bate's mother, Mrs Percival, from Sydney, is at left. Her unmarried sister is at right.
- 44 William Eastcott Seccombe's children are (left to right): Frank, Gwen, Gibb, Harold and Edith. The Seccombe house, Morangi, became Lustleigh Park.
- 45 Back: ? Starkey, Ben Maxwell, _____, Frank Starkey, ? Starkey.
Front: Mrs Starkey, Mrs Catherine Maxwell, Mr Maxwell.
- 46 Four generations of the Bate family: Nell Seccombe (Mrs Charles Livingstone) (3) and son (4), Mrs W.H. Corkhill (2) at back, Elizabeth Kendall Bate (Mrs Henry Jefferson Bate) (1), Mrs Draper (born Annie Seccombe) (3) and her daughter Elinor (4).
- 48 Irene Simms (Mrs James Mathison), Mrs George Simms (born Charlotte Quinn), Cecil (on horse), George Simms, Florabelle (Mrs Mark Whelan). Photograph taken in Corkhill's paddock beside the Princes Highway about 1904.
- 51 Stan Flower married Florence Stephens and was the father of the artist Cedric Flower. Photographed at Mountain Valley.
- 52 _____, _____, W.H. Corkhill, Charlie Livingstone.
- 54 Above, on rock: Edith Corkhill, Norman Corkhill, Norman Bate.
Standing: Muriel Bate, W.E. Seccombe, Mrs Seccombe, Edith Seccombe, Daisy Parkhill, Frank Higman, Mrs W.H. Corkhill (hand to face), Pearl Corkhill, Clem Bate, H.J. Bate, Gertrude McKern.
Foreground: Hope Bate, _____.
- 55 Constable E.C. Branch, left.
- 56 Back: Vic Cork, Heric Cork, _____, Horrie Kemp, _____, _____, Dave McGregor, _____.
Centre: Allan Read, _____, Adrian Cork, Barney Graham. Front: _____, _____, Eric Bate, Richie Read, Lindsay Read, Toby Cork.
- 57 Back, third from left: Ted Boxsell.
Front, centre: Charlie Hobbs, Charlie Livingstone.
- 61 The dam was built for Arthur Caffin, who owned Henkley in 1900-8 in succession to John Palmer Seccombe. It was still in use in the 1980s. Vere Livingstone, the eight-year-old son of the cheese-maker at Tilba, was tragically drowned in the dam in 1909.
- 63 Sinclair was the model for the symbol of Tooheys Brewery, Sydney, showing a blacksmith holding a foaming tankard.
- 67 The wheels were built by William Braithwaite (see also Plate 66) and Mr Pye, owners of the Enterprise mine.
- 71 The emulsion on this negative was scratched by the photographer or another to show more clearly the wire of the mine flying fox.
- 75 Charlie Mercer was the delivery boy for Crapp and Boxsell, general storekeepers of Central Tilba, and Oliver Landsdowne was delivery boy for Otto May of Tilba Tilba. They took stores and mail at least twice weekly to mining families on Mount Dromedary.



This book is a portrait of a village. W.H. Corkhill (1846-1936) lived in the tiny twin settlements of Tilba Tilba and Central Tilba, amid the rich pastures and in the spectacular setting of the south coast of New South Wales. From 1890 to 1910 he photographed the life of this isolated district and its few hundred inhabitants, many of whom were related (as he was himself) to the pioneer settler, Henry Jefferson Bate. In 1975 a thousand of his glass negatives were presented to the National Library of Australia by his daughter.

Corkhill documented many aspects of the work of Tilba people — farming, goldmining, shipbuilding and roadmaking — and their rich and varied social life. His rapport with his sitters draws the observer into their world. Corkhill's people have vanished but, remarkably, Tilba itself has changed little in a hundred years. (The whole of Central Tilba is now classified by the National Trust.) As an intimate record of a small rural community, these photographs are an important addition to Australian visual history.

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