

George Hedgeland: A Colossus of Roads

Angela Pippen

Local Studies Librarian, City of Ryde

angelap@ryde.nsw.gov.au

Fred de Belin

City of Ryde

fdebelin@ryde.nsw.gov.au

ABSTRACT

The first author has been researching the life story of one George Caleb Hedgeland. He was an Alignment Surveyor with the Lands Department from 1874, with a direct link to Ryde, but he was much more before. Here we present the more survey-centric edited and abridged highlights from her research on George Hedgeland. He was a well-to-do Englishman who sailed to Australia in 1859 at the age of 33. Eventually, he trained as a surveyor, becoming licensed in New South Wales in 1871 and working for the Lands Department over the following 18 years. We are told that anyone born today will have four or five changes of profession during their working lifetime. George Caleb Hedgeland was such a 21st century man, even though he lived entirely in the 19th century. This paper follows his early career in England, his migration to New South Wales and his path to becoming a major figure in surveying. A recently created street in Ryde is named 'Hedgeland Close', and he remains close as his bones are interred in Ryde's Field of Mars Cemetery.

KEYWORDS: Cadastral surveying history, stained glass, early Queensland, alignment, City of Ryde.

1 INTRODUCTION

Being the Local Studies Librarian at City of Ryde, the first author has been researching the life story of one George Caleb Hedgeland who was a Lands Department Alignment Surveyor from 1874 (Figure 1). This paper is a re-presentation of edited highlights from her presentation on George Caleb Hedgeland. He was a well-to-do Englishman, who sailed to Australia in 1859 at the age of 33 years and stayed. Eventually, he trained to be a surveyor, becoming licensed in 1871, and working for the Lands Department over the next 18 years.

In 1833, legislation was introduced requiring the Surveyor General "to set out the breadth of the carriageways and footways in the town and cause the footways to be marked by posts at the corners and intersections" (Marshall, 2006). Consequently, alignment posts are survey marks (monuments) placed at intersections and bends in the roadways to indicate the kerb lines. The first alignment posts were 6 inch (150 mm) square, dressed hardwood timber posts and appeared in Sydney City from 1836.

Mr Surveyor George Hedgeland undertook street alignment surveys in newly created Municipalities such as Ryde, Ashfield, Prospect, Waverley, Marrickville and anywhere in between (Figure 2). His advice was also sought as to whether roads should even be formed when the street alignment was requested by the local Councils.

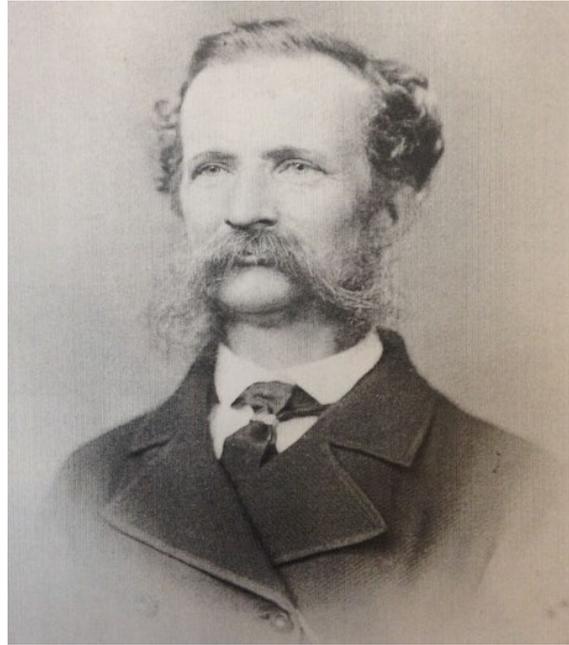


Figure 1: George Caleb Hedgeland (1825-1898).

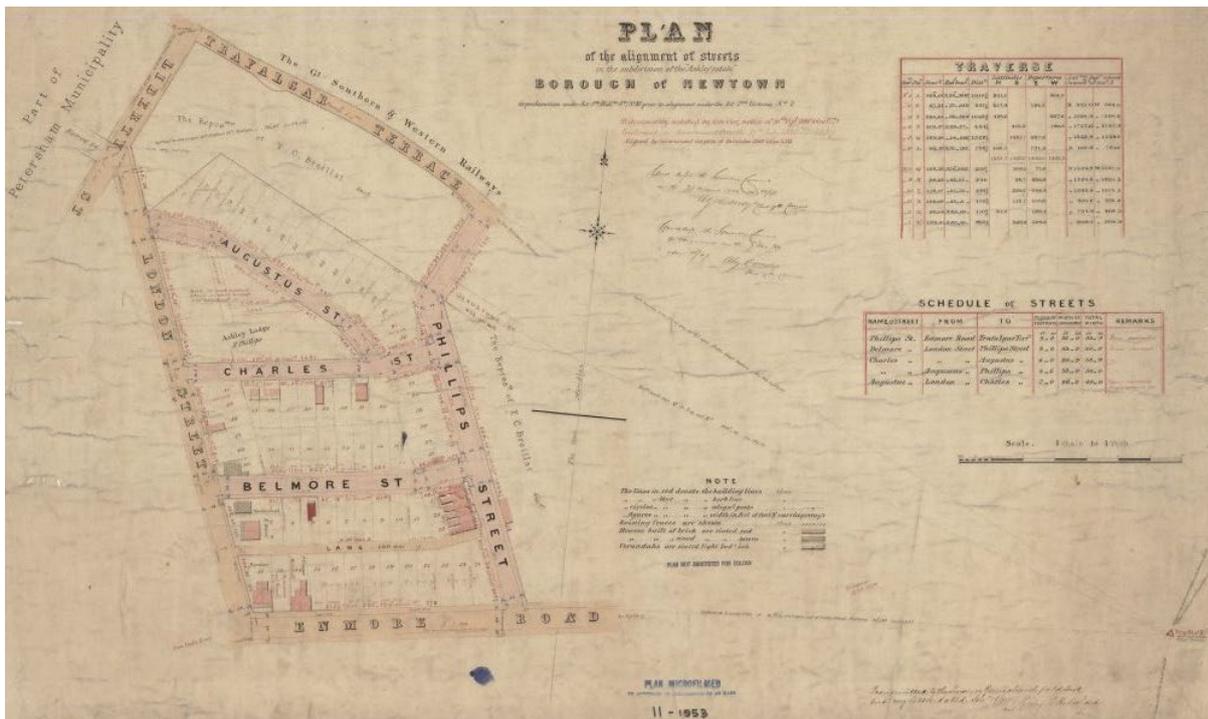


Figure 2: Crown Plan 11.1953, showing alignment survey in the Borough of Newtown – 1879.

The first alignment posts were made of hardwood timber and it was such timber posts that Hedgeland was using to mark his kerb lines (Figures 3 & 4). Stone alignment posts were first used in Parramatta, by surveyor Charles Ebbsworth in 1882, followed in Ryde by surveyor Charles Scrivener in 1885 (de Belin, 2014).

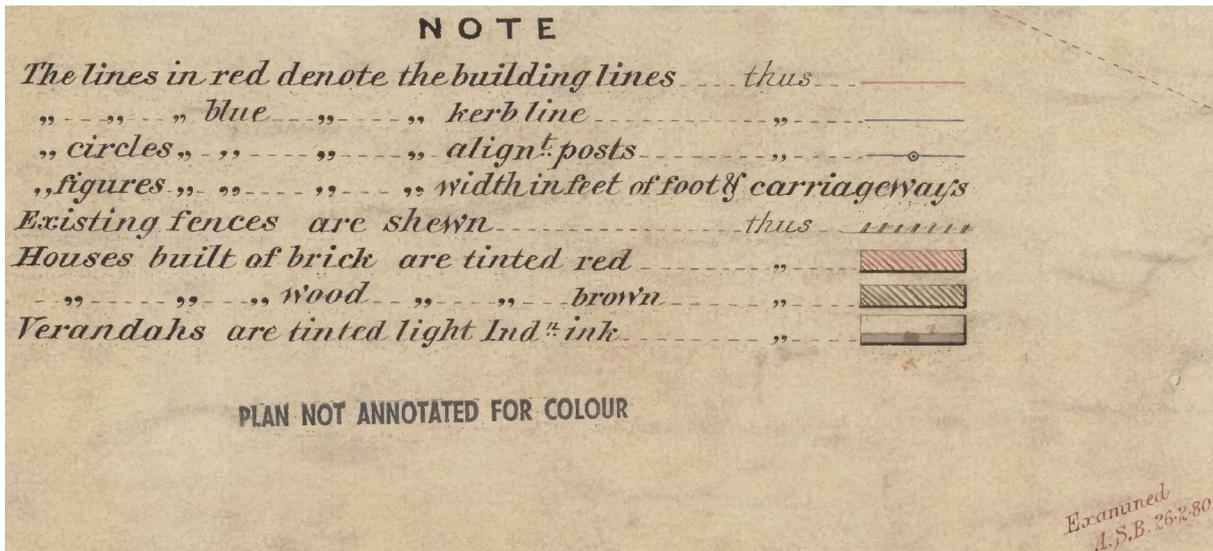


Figure 3: Detail from Crown Plan 11.1953, showing timber alignment posts were placed – 1879.



Figure 4: Examples of timber alignment posts that have survived to this day – 2014.

Images of two of George Hedgeland’s Ryde alignment field books are shown in Figure 5, with the interesting side note that one is titled Field Book 10½ (indicating shades of Harry Potter). Both have been signed G. Hedgeland LS Parramatta 1874, which begs the intriguing question: Did the Department of Lands have an office in Parramatta in 1874?

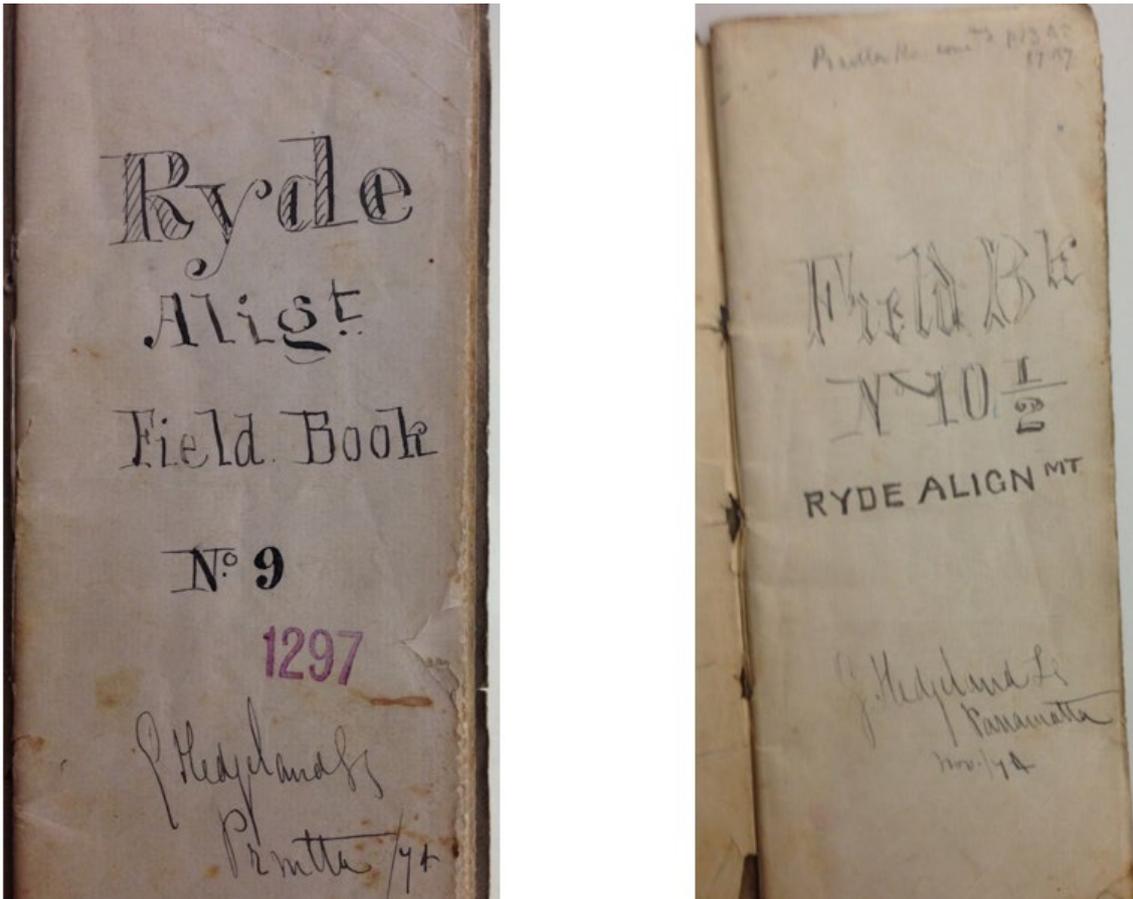


Figure 5: Two of George Hedgeland's Ryde alignment field books, including one titled Field Book 10½ – 1874.

Theodolites (Figure 6) were being used to read angles, with chains and short tapes being used to measure distances (Figures 7 & 8).



Figure 6: An early theodolite.

2 A 21st CENTURY MAN

We are told that anyone born today will have four or five changes of profession during their lifetime. George Hedgeland was such a 21st century man, even though he lived entirely in the 19th century. George had five distinct occupations: Artist, stained-glass artist, pastoralist, land surveyor and fruit grower. George Hedgeland was born in 1825 and was baptised in Guildford, Surrey, in 1826. His father, John, was an architect and later a stained-glass artist. George did not immediately follow into his father's profession. In 1845, aged 19, he was admitted into the Royal Academy of Arts in London (Figure 9) to become a painter.



Figure 9: Royal Academy of Arts in London, which is now the National Portrait Gallery.

The qualification for admission was a “proficiency in drawing in chalk from an undraped antique”, i.e. classical statue. The candidate needed to be “recommended by any person of known respectability”. In George's case he was recommended by Sir John Prescott who was himself from the Royal Academy and Professor of Perspective. The full tuition would be three ‘schools’ over a 10-year period. First was Antique School, next was Life School (drawing from live subjects) and the third was the School of Painting.

Few students completed the full 10 years, and it is not known exactly when George left. In 1851 he entered a sample piece of stained glass into the Great Exhibition of London. It was described as the best piece of coloured English glass there. During the 1850s George designed more than 26 windows in 23 locations throughout England. These works included cathedrals, parish churches, school chapels and university chapels. His first major window was completed in 1854, which was the great west window of Norwich Cathedral (Figure 10).

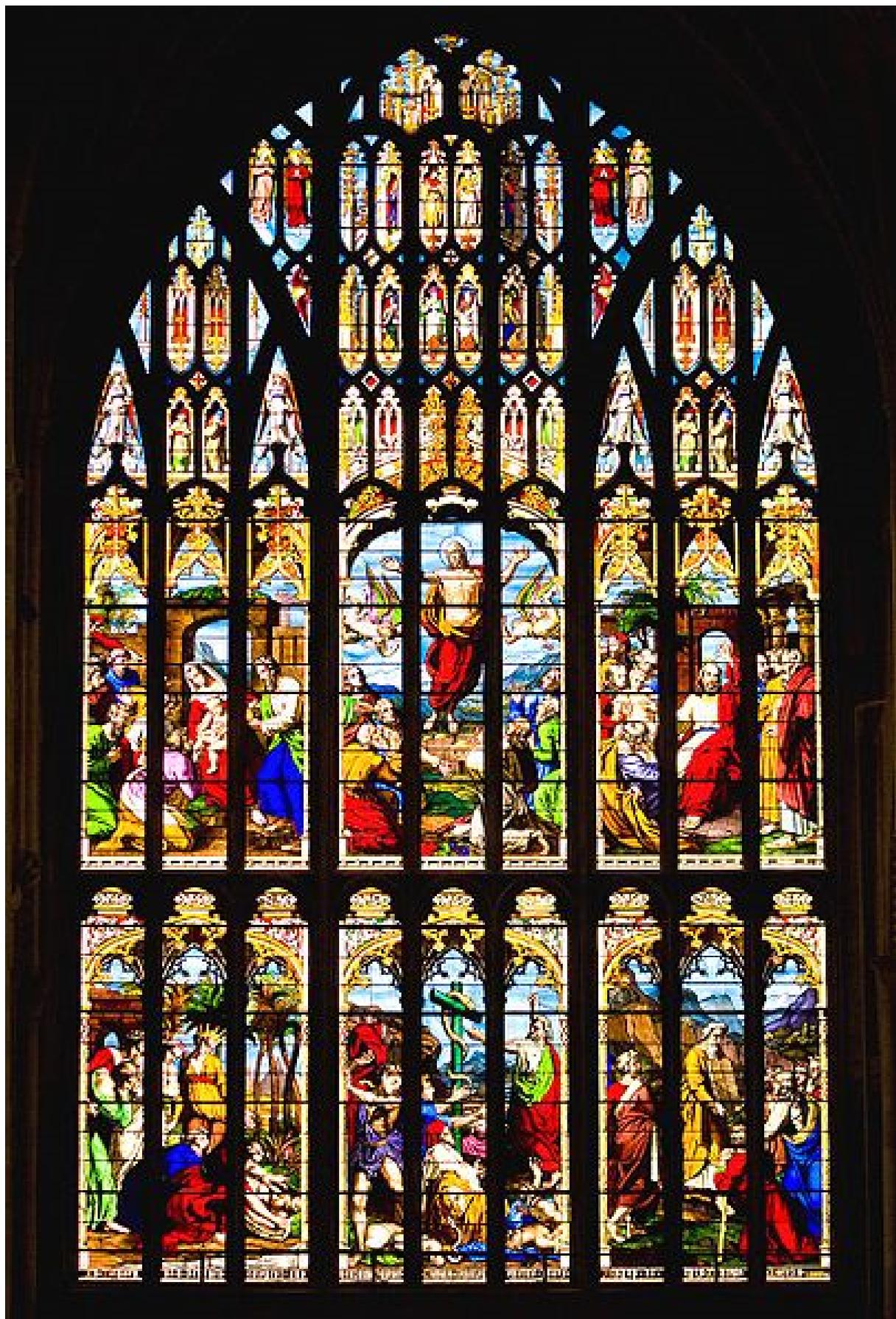


Figure 10: The great west window of Norwich Cathedral.

This window, an exceptional explosion of colour and artistry, created much controversy because of its vibrant colours, its naturalistic approach to the human figure and because the Christ figure was being intersected by the window mullions (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Detail from the great west window at Norwich Cathedral.

In December 2018, George Hedgeland's great-grandson who lives in Perth, Western Australia, revealed that he had, in his possession, a trunk which contained many of George's artworks, including his design sketch for the top of the west window at Norwich Cathedral (Figures 12 & 13).



Figure 12: Recently uncovered design sketch of the top section of the west window – 2019.

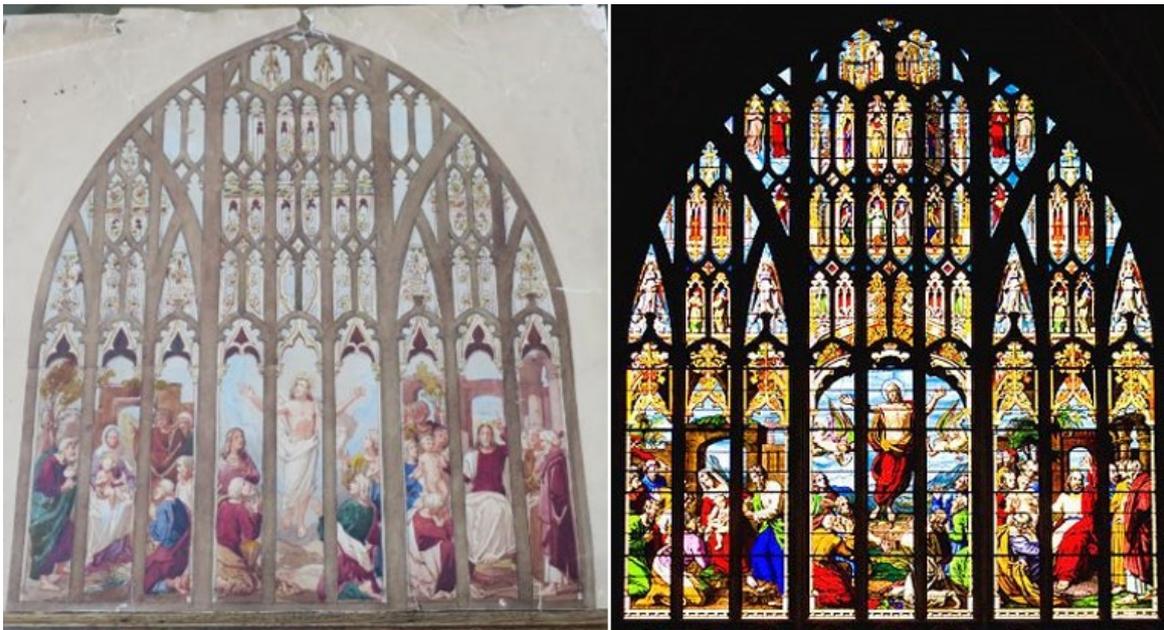


Figure 13: Comparison of sketch and as built.

This is a fine example of offering the client what they want but giving them instead what they really need (another surveying maxim). His window for the Ely Cathedral depicts Jonah and the Ninevites (Figure 14). George has included in this window the winged bull statue, which had recently been discovered by Austen Layard during archaeological excavations at Nineveh in the early 1850s (Layard, 1854). Notice that the winged bull has five legs, so that it displays two legs when viewed from the front and four legs when viewed from the side.



Figure 14: Window at Eli Cathedral, including the winged bull statue.

George Hedgeland received only minor recognition in England for his work, and in one writing he is simply described as a person “who went to Australia and died”. It has been stated that George emigrated to Australia “because of his health”, but he had a brother and close family friends, the Hennings (Edmund Biddulph Henning, Annie, Rachel and Amelia Henning), who had already emigrated in 1852 and 1853. George left England in 1859, aged 33, and sailed to Melbourne.

3 A LIFE IN THE NEW COLONY

In 1859, Queensland had separated from New South Wales and the new state government was offering leases of frontier land to those people who would stock and manage the land. Edmund Biddulph Henning took up several of these north Queensland leases. A lease comprised a parcel of 40 miles square. George Hedgeland lived and worked on Biddulph’s Queensland property, Exmoor (Figure 15). Details of his life in Queensland are known from his work and living with Edmund Biddulph Henning and two of Biddulph’s sisters, Annie and Rachel Henning, who also lived at the Exmoor homestead. Another sister Amelia was married and lived in the New South Wales town of Bathurst.

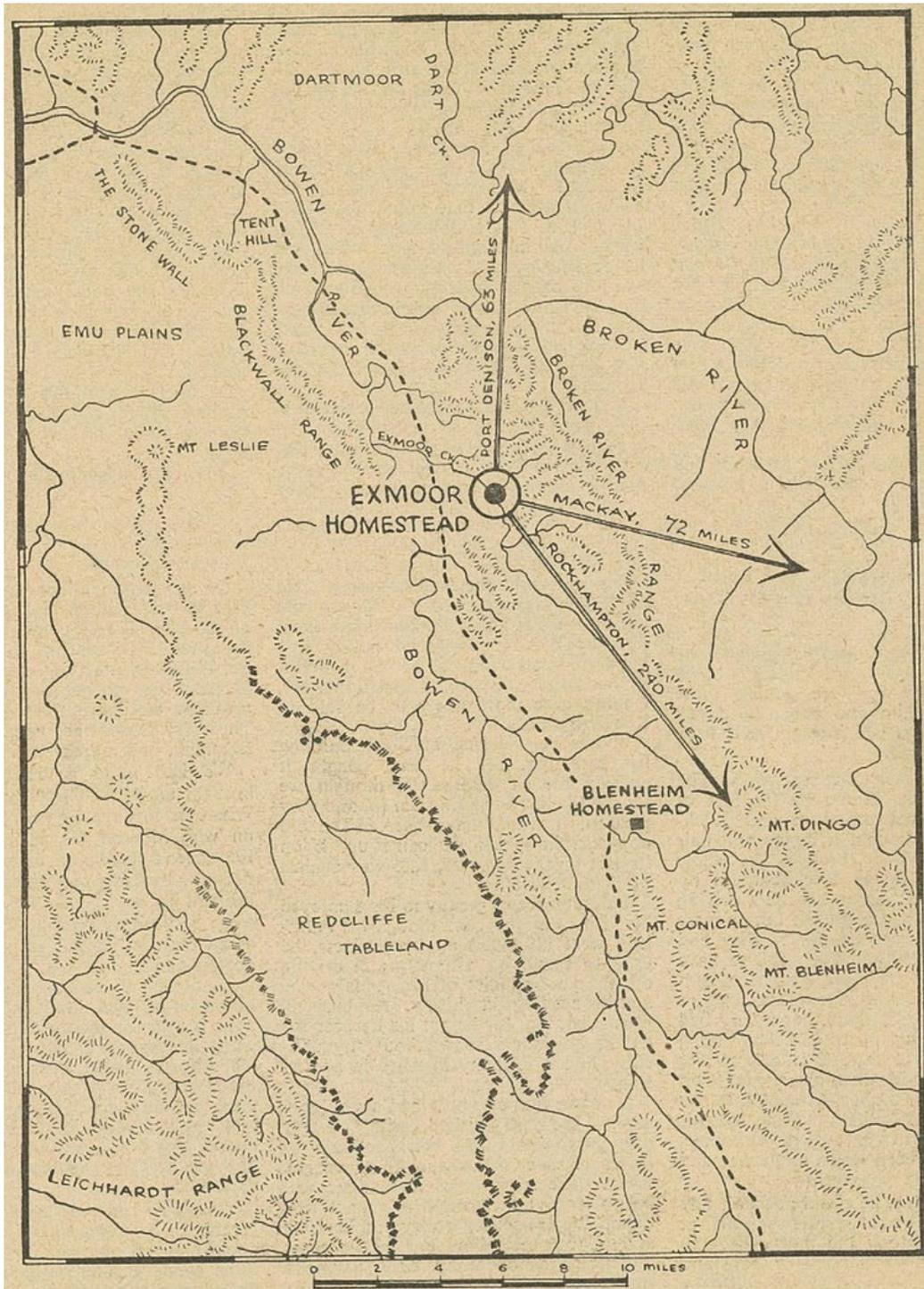


Figure 15: Exmoor Homestead, 72 miles inland from Mackay, Queensland.

So, what did George do on the Queensland lease? There is no evidence of any of his writings, so it is entirely dependent upon references made by Rachel Henning in letters which she sent back to her sister, Henrietta, who had remained in England. Rachel always referred to George as “Mr. Hedgeland” and described him as “hardworking and methodical”. George maintained the station’s store (Figure 16), and once a week would ride out to supply the widespread shepherds with rations. George was a good horseman and loved horses, and he was adept at droving sheep, as evidenced in 1865 when he helped move thousands of sheep hundreds of miles inland to central Queensland.



Figure 16: Sketch of Exmoor Station by Rachel Henning – c. 1860.

George helped wallpaper the rooms of the homestead and made furniture for the house (Figure 17). This sketch by Rachel Henning shows a slung canvas verandah chair, as designed and built by George. Rachel commented: “It was a very comfortable chair.” George also appears to have been a dab hand in the kitchen, although there may have been an ulterior motive, because there was a romance blossoming between himself and Annie Henning (Figure 18).

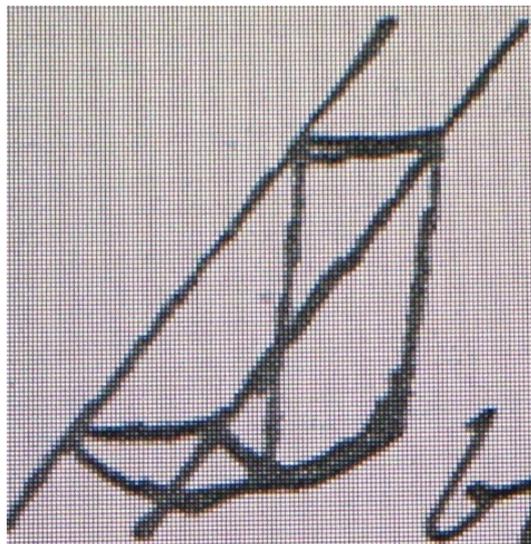


Figure 17: Design of slung canvas verandah chair.



Figure 18: Annie Henning and George Hedgeland.

Rachel Henning's letters from the 1860s were discovered in England in 1950 and published in Australia by the 'Bulletin' (Henning, 1951-52), with illustrations by famous artist Norman Lindsay (Figure 19). George and Annie were married at St Marks church at Darling Point in Sydney in January 1866 and afterwards returned to Queensland. The birth of George and Annie's only child, Edmund Woodhouse Hedgeland, in 1867 brought them once again back to Sydney, where they remained. The name Woodhouse does not appear to be of any family significance. However, the last stained-glass window that George created was at Woodhouse in Leistershire. All up, George spent eight years in the Queensland bush.



Figure 19: Pen-drawing of Annie and George by Norman Lindsay.

4 A NEW LIFE IN SYDNEY

Why did George then choose the surveying profession? Annie's cousin Lindon Biddulph was a surveyor in the Wollongong/Shoalhaven area, and close family friend George Armitage was a clerk in the Surveyor General's Department. So, George began a new career as a Lands Department surveyor and became a colossus of roads (see section 1). There may appear to be no similarity between stained-glass window making and surveying, although of course "One is beautiful and sublime, while the other deals with coloured glass." George Hedgeland's final survey was an alignment of streets at Marrickville. He retired in 1887, aged 62. He then moved to Canley Vale where directories describe him as a fruit grower, with further information about his final profession being very hard to come by (Figure 20).

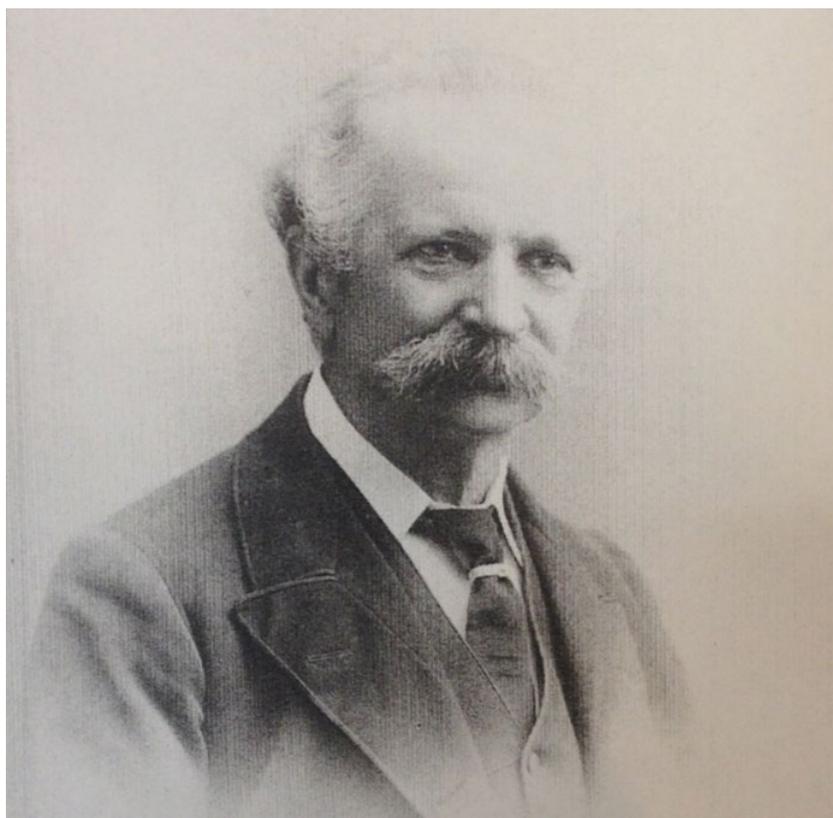


Figure 20: George Hedgeland in his later years.

Finally, in 1896, George and Annie moved to Denistone, in the Ryde Local Government Area, where they shared a house with Annie's sister Rachel and her husband, Deighton Taylor. It was here, in Ryde, where George died of cardiac failure in 1898. His obituary, as published in *The Surveyor* in November 1898, states in part: "Those who came in contact with Mr. Hedgeland during his career as a surveyor, held his professional qualifications in the highest estimation, and his alignment surveys of many of the more populous and wealthy suburbs, such as Waverley and Bondi, were made mainly by his skill, ... and provided a means of supplementing the lamentably deficient records of the offices of the Registrar General." A recently created street in Ryde is named 'Hedgeland Close', and he remains close as his bones are interred in Ryde's Field of Mars Cemetery (Figure 21).



Figure 21: George's gravesite in a family plot at Field of Mars Cemetery in Ryde.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The letters of Rachel Henning (Henning, 1951-52) are highly recommended reading for anyone who wants to vividly experience the historical times of the early settlement of New South Wales and Queensland. George Hedgeland's son, Edmund Woodhouse Hedgeland, passed his surveying exams in 1895 and eventually worked in Thailand. By 1907, he was in Malaya, working in the Trigonometric Survey Branch and was appointed Assistant Surveyor General to the Federated States of Malaya in 1920. After the eventual deaths of their respective spouses, the three Henning siblings, Annie, Rachel and Edmund, ended up living together again, as when they first came to Australia in 1853 and 1854. Their final Sydney residence was in Hunters Hill (Figure 22). The house still exists to this day, and now its claim to fame is that it is the home of Eddie Obeid!

This paper has followed George Hedgeland's early career in England, his migration to New South Wales and his path to becoming a major figure in surveying. Being a 21st century man living in the 19th century, he had five distinct occupations: Artist, stained-glass artist, pastoralist, land surveyor and fruit grower – quite a remarkable man indeed.



Figure 22: “Passy”, the house in Hunters Hill where the Henning siblings resided.

REFERENCES

- de Belin F. (2014) Game of stones... The big stone alignment posts of Ryde, *Proceedings of Association of Public Authority Surveyors Conference (APAS2014)*, Pokolbin, Australia, 31 March – 2 April, 115-128.
- Henning R. (1951-52) *The letters of Rachel Henning*, Project Gutenberg Australia eBook, <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0607821.txt> (accessed Mar 2022).
- Layard A.H. (1854) *Discoveries at Nineveh: A popular account of discoveries at Nineveh*, J.C. Derby, New York, 402pp.
- Marshall I.H. (2006) The history of alignment surveys in New South Wales: A retrospective, http://www.bossi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/54632/BOSSI_History_of_Alignment_Surveys.pdf (accessed Mar 2022).